

# The Eschatological Design of Truth in Hegel's Philosophy of Art

José Luis Fernández (Stony Brook University)

Hegel's theory of aesthetics cannot be divorced from its metaphysical underpinnings, which are broadly eschatological. In Theodore Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, the author writes that Hegel pronounced the "death of art" (*AT*: 4) and heralded what amounts to "a premature eschatology of art" (*AT*: 423). *Pace* Adorno, in this paper I wish to argue that Hegel's aesthetic eschatology should not be viewed as an 'end time' after which aesthetic truth is stopped dead its tracks. Rather, far from having entered the age of its ultimate "demise" (*AT*: 4), aesthetic truth remains open to future epochal revelation. My paper is organized into three sections. In section 1, I outline Hegel's aesthetic theory to show that artworks possess truth insofar as their 'end' reveals the immanent structure of the concept embodied in objects, and falsity if they provide no more than a trifling diversion by expressing an external chaos of contingency through mere sensuous feeling. In section 2, I examine Adorno's use of the eschatology trope and demonstrate that Hegel's aesthetic theory does not hold with the Christian eschatological notion of a final end and of everything unfolding in accordance to a transcendent power. And in section 3, I suggest that Hegel's 'end of art' thesis is neither prophetic nor suggestive of an aesthetic apocalypse, thus leaving open the possibility for art to continue revealing truth.