

The Poietic Circle and the Hermeneutic Circle: A Legacy of Romanticism

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This paper investigates artistic creation, interpretation, and criticism by focusing on two concepts: the poietic and hermeneutic circles.

The “poietic circle” is a term I coined by analogy with the “hermeneutic circle” addressed by Friedrich Ast (1778–1841), a classical philologist, in the early nineteenth century. However, this term is not based on arbitrariness. This is because, as I will show in the following, we can find an outline of what I call the poietic circle in *The System of Transcendental Idealism*, the 1800 major work of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), who exerted a strong influence on Ast. By exploring the characteristics of artistic creation—that is, the criteria that distinguish artistic creation from production in general—Schelling thematizes the poietic circle. Schelling’s theory that production becomes artistic creation when incorporated into a poietic circle is a pinnacle of the aesthetic theory of Romanticism.

The question of how artistic creation differs from production in general became pivotal when the concept of art (in the sense of fine art) was established in the mid-eighteenth century. Therefore, in the first section, I examine the classical theory of production in general, which preceded that of Romanticism, as a background to Schelling’s theory. Second, I reconstruct Schelling’s theory of artistic creation, particularly in terms of the poietic circle. In the following sections (3 and 4), I reexamine the relationship between the poietic circle and the hermeneutic circle in light of Schelling, thus reformulating the hermeneutic circle. The final section addresses Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), another Romantic, and T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), a well-known anti-Romantic, thereby highlighting the circular structure that innates in criticism.

1. The Classical Theory of Production

The idea of creation in Western aesthetic theory dates back to the ancient Greek word *poiêsis*.

In ancient Greece, the word *poiêsis* meant not only production in general, in a broad sense, but also, in a narrower sense, creation as typified by poetry, that is, artistic creation.

In Plato’s *Symposium*, for example, Diotima says: “Of anything whatever that passes from not being (*to mê on*) into being (*to on*) the whole cause is *poiêsis*; so that the productions of all arts (*ergasia*) are kinds of *poiêsis*.” But “a single section divided from the whole of *poiêsis*—merely the business of music and meters—is entitled with the name of the whole” (Plato, *Symp.* 205B–C).¹ The definition of *poiêsis* in general as a cause of anything that passes from not being into being is, however, vague, in that it is not clear what Diotima, or Plato, means by being and not being. For Plato, who advocates the theory of ideas, it is not a phenomenal object but an idea that truly exists.

¹ All references to Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus appear in parenthesis in the text. The quotations are my translations, referring to various available translations.

However, Diotima does not mention this crucial distinction. Moreover, the definition does not specify the characteristics that distinguish poiêsis in a narrow sense from poiêsis in a broad sense.²

The same is true for Aristotle's use of the word poiêsis, which is twofold. In *Poetics*, the word poiêsis means "poetry," and it is opposed to "history" (Poet 9, 1451 a37–b7).³ In *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, poiêsis means production or making in general, and belongs to the activities of the mind, along with *epistêmê* (knowing scientifically) and *prâxis* (acting or doing). (Poiêsis, in the broad sense, is hereafter translated as production.) While scientific knowledge concerns "what cannot vary, or be otherwise," that is, what is necessary (EN VI 3, 1139 b22), action and production concern "what could be otherwise," that is, what is accidental (EN VI 4, 1140 a1). Action and production are distinguished as follows: "Production aims at an end distinct from the act of producing, whereas in acting the end cannot be other than the act itself: acting well (eupraxia) is in itself the end" (EN VI 5, 1140 b6–7). As opposed to action—of course, there may be many actions that are means to an end, but the end-means relationships ultimately lead to a self-purposive action—production aims at making a certain product. Aristotle calls the mental state of being capable of such production *technê* (art) and defines it as follows:

Things are generated by art whose form [*eidōs*] is contained in the mind (by form I mean the essence of each thing, and its primary substance); [...] Therefore it follows in a sense that a house comes from a house; that is, a house which has matter [*hylê*] [i.e., an actual house] from that which has not [i.e., a house in the mind of an architect]. (Met. VII 7, 1032 a 32–b2, b11–12)

Production is a process by which a form in the mind of the artist—which Plotinus later called "the innate form [*to endon eidōs*]" (Plotinus, I 6, 3)⁴—is actualized in matter, and thus an individual object arises (i.e., is generated). This means that for Aristotle, neither form nor matter is generated, but an individual object. We produce, for example, neither "bronze" as a matter nor "the sphere itself" as a form, but "this [particular] bronze sphere" (Met. VII 8, 1033 a28–31).⁵ Plato's above-mentioned term "whatever that passes from not being [*to mē on*] into being [*to on*]" (Symp. 205B) can also be understood as referring to the genesis of an individual object. Plato's description of an artist's activity (in the sense of artisan) in *Cratylus* corresponds precisely to what we have already clarified above concerning Aristotle and Plotinus: "The artist must discover the [form of] the instrument naturally fitted for each purpose and must embody it in that [material] of which a product is made" (Cr. 389C). That is, a form brings formless matter together in a certain way so that a certain thing is generated; in other words, formless matter becomes a certain thing when form is embodied in it. To use Plotinus' wording: "the form is a unity, and what is formed must come to unity as far as multiplicity will admit"

² By poiêsis in the broad sense, Plato understands "agriculture and all kinds of care of any living beings, and that which has to do with things which are put together or molded (utensils we call them)" (So. 219A–B).

³ Aristotle argues: "Poetry is something more philosophical and serious than history because poetry describes the general [*ta katholou*] while history gives the particular [*ta kath' hekaston*]" (Poet 9, 1451 b5–6).

⁴ See Otabe, "'Raphael without Hands': The Idea of the Inner Form and Its Transformation," 57.

⁵ In classical antiquity, concepts such as "new ideas" and "new materials" did not exist. The notion of "new ideas" comes from Nicholas of Cusa who was active in the mid-fifteenth century. See Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vol. 3, 64.

(Plotinus, I 6, 2). Certainly, the form is one, but the innate form is absolutely one, whereas the form embodied in the matter is “divided by the external mass of matter” (I 6, 3). Thus, the latter form is linked to multiplicity and diversity. The common definition of beauty as “unity in diversity”⁶ is based on the classical theory of production.

The classical theory of production serves simultaneously as a guiding principle for understanding a product and, in the case of art, for interpreting the work. To understand what the product is, it is necessary to reverse the process of production and return the product to the innate form. Plotinus argues:

When sense (*aisthêsis*) beholds in certain objects the form which has bound and governed shapeless matter, opposed to form [...], it gathers into unity what remains multiple, carries it within [i.e., into soul], and renders it to the innate form as something consonant, congruous and friendly to the latter. (I 6, 3)

To understand a product, the process from the innate form to the materialized form reverses its direction and returns from the materialized form to the innate form. Thus, the circle is closed.

2. The Poietic Circle

The classical theory of production applies not only to artistic creation but also to production in general, as is clear from the fact that both Aristotle and Plotinus use the examples of houses and statues (Aristotle, *Met.* VII 7, 1032 b12, 1033 a7, Plotinus, I 6, 2, 9). What distinguishes artistic creation from production in general? Since the mid-eighteenth century, when the modern concept of art in the sense of fine art was established, people have attempted to answer this question in various ways. An example is the theory of genius, a theme favored by many theorists in the eighteenth century. Here, I will focus on Schelling’s philosophy of art in his 1800 major work, *The System of Transcendental Idealism*.

Schelling, as well as Kant in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, insists that the genius is necessary only in art and not in sciences—for everything that a great discoverer of science (e.g., Newton) has accomplished “can still be learned” (Kant, KU § 47, 5:308),⁷ in Kant’s words. That is to say, scientific discoveries are accessible to any person through a certain instructional process, while in contrast, the creative process of art is, to again use Kant’s words, “free from all guidance by rules” (§ 49, 5:317), and genius “cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being” (§ 46, 5:308). Both Schelling and Kant insist that learnability or publicness distinguish science from art.⁸

⁶ Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vol. 3, 431.

⁷ All references to Kant’s works appear in parentheses in the text. Page references are to the *Akademie-Ausgabe*. For quotations from Kant, I consulted *Critique of Judgment*, translated by Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, and *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

⁸ See Otabe, “Genius as a Chiasm of the Conscious and Unconscious: A History of Ideas Concerning Kantian Aesthetics,” 94–98.

At the same time, Schelling (though not Kant) argues that there are also some characteristic traits, however few they may be, from which we can infer the existence of genius in science:

Genius is certainly not present where a whole, such as a system, arises piecemeal and as if by composition. Conversely, it would have to be presupposed [in science] wherever the idea of the whole has preceded the individual parts. For, since the idea of the whole cannot grow distinct except by unfolding itself in the individual parts, while, again, the individual parts are possible only through the idea of the whole, there seems to be a contradiction here which is possible only through an act of genius, i.e., through an unexpected concurrence of the unconscious and the conscious activity. (I,9, 324)⁹

The issue here is the relationship between the whole and parts. In the ordinary productive process, in which genius is not involved, the whole is merely the sum of the parts; in other words, the parts precede the whole. This is easy to understand if we consider the example of constructing a machine. However, the reason why the whole is merely the sum of the parts is that the clearly grasped whole—that is, the concept of the whole—determines the parts in advance, and the parts merely fulfil the roles predetermined by the whole. Therefore, the whole—or, more precisely, the *concept* of the whole—precedes the parts. And it is “the conscious activity,” to use Schelling’s term above, that pervades the process of production. Thus, the classical theory of production, in which a form brings formless matter together in a certain way, applies to this process.

By contrast, in production involving genius, the whole is still not clearly understood, but remains obscure. Therefore, the production process cannot be determined in advance by the whole; whether a certain part fits into the whole can be known only when this part is made, and it is through making the parts that the whole is revealed. The production of the parts—that is, the “conscious activity”—is, thus, a process of trial and error to concretize the whole toward which the “unconscious activity” has been directed, and of which one had formerly only a vague presentiment. Thus, when an artwork is “completed” through this process, the artist “feels herself astonished and *blessed*” (I, 9, 315). In other words, the artwork is not simply something that the artist herself has created, but something given to her at the same time. In this sense, the artist “regards” her work “as though it were a freely bestowed gift of a higher nature [*freiwillige Gunst einer höhern Natur*]” (I, 9, 315).

Thus, whereas in ordinary production the concept of the whole determines the parts in advance, here, in artistic creation, there is a circle between the whole and its parts: The creative activity, while presupposing the whole, completes the whole step by step by creating its parts. Referring to the classical theory of production, the process by which the inner form of the mind is realized in the material is not a one-way process from inside to outside, as is the case with the classical theory of

⁹ All references to Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* appear in parentheses in the text. Page references are to the *Akademie-Ausgabe*. For quotations from Schelling, I consulted *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), translated by Peter Heath, Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978, and “Conclusion to *System of Transcendental Idealism*,” translated by Albert Hofstadter (in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel*, ed. by David Simpson, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 119–132).

production, but rather a reciprocal or two-way process. Thus, artistic creation is not solely based on the “conscious activity,” but rather on an “unexpected concurrence of the unconscious and the conscious activity” (I, 9, 324). This circle, as formulated by Schelling, is hereafter referred to as a poietic circle. Production becomes an artistic creation when incorporated into a poietic circle. Thus, the poietic circle is the differentia that distinguishes artistic creation from production in general.¹⁰

3. The Hermeneutic Circle

The term “poietic circle” may remind us of the so-called “hermeneutic circle”¹¹ formulated by Friedrich Ast in his 1808 book, *Outline of Grammar, Hermeneutics, and Criticism*. Let us consider his hermeneutic theory.¹²

Ast argues that “the fundamental law of understanding and recognition is to find the spirit of the whole through the individuals [that is, the parts], and [also] to grasp the individuals [parts] through the whole.”¹³ By the whole and its parts, Ast primarily understands “the whole of classical antiquity” and “the works of the classical authors,”¹⁴ but he also takes into consideration “the whole of a work” and its parts,¹⁵ so that the whole and its parts are of nested or embedded structure.

Ast points out “a circle” of reasoning in which one’s understanding of the whole is established by reference to the individual parts and one’s understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole.¹⁶ This circle excludes the position that the whole is the sum of its parts, as is the case in Schelling’s argument. Ast himself advocates the position that the whole “precedes [*vorausgehen*]” and “penetrates” the parts,¹⁷ so that “the spirit of the whole already lies in each individual element” in potentiality.¹⁸ Ast understands the relationship between the whole and its parts according to the then-burgeoning theory of organism.¹⁹

Ast’s theory of understanding or interpreting a certain product presupposes a theory of how the product is formed. It follows that the understanding or interpretation has a circular structure because the product is formed in a circular process. Ast, therefore, characterizes the understanding or interpretation of a given product as “a true reproduction or replication [*ein wahrhaftes Reproduzieren oder Nachbilden*] of what has already been formed.”²⁰ The hermeneutic circle presupposes the poietic

¹⁰ The “circle” forms the basis of Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*, whose task is to explain the circular logic by which that the foundation of science must itself be science: “The question is how we are to account for this circle, since it obviously cannot be resolved” (I, 9, 49).

¹¹ For the hermeneutic circle, see Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 302–04.

¹² As regards Ast, see Richter, *A History of Poetics: German Scholarly Aesthetics and Poetics in International Context, 1770–1960*, 89–91.

¹³ Ast, *Grundlinien der Grammatik, Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 178.

¹⁴ Ast, *op. cit.*, 179.

¹⁵ Ast, *op. cit.*, 188.

¹⁶ Ast, *op. cit.*, 180.

¹⁷ Ast, *op. cit.*, 180.

¹⁸ Ast, *op. cit.*, 186.

¹⁹ Kant, for example, argues that in an organism “each part is conceived” not only “as if existing *for the sake of the others* and *on account of* the whole,” but also “as an organ that *produces* the other parts” (KU, § 65, 5: 373–74).

²⁰ Ast, *op. cit.*, 187.

circle, and the process of interpretation corresponds precisely to the process of creation.

As regards a Horatian ode, for example, the explanatory account will start from the first point [*der erste Punkt*] from which the poet's production began. Insofar as the starting point of poetic production arose without doubt from the inspired idea of the whole, the whole idea is suggested at the same time in the starting point.²¹

In artistic creation, the "starting point" as a part contains the "idea of the whole," and therefore, for Ast, the interpretation of the work must begin from this very "starting point."

However, we need to pause here and ask if there can be a "starting point" that includes the "idea of the whole." To return to Schelling's argument, the production of parts is a process of trial and error to search for a whole that has not yet been clearly grasped; and therefore, there exists a circle between the parts and the whole. For Schelling, there is no starting point in artistic creation that includes the idea of the whole; therefore, the starting point for artistic creation cannot serve as a starting point for product interpretation. In contrast, Ast assumes that such a starting point exists; this is probably because he assumes that the whole "precedes" the parts,²² thus regarding the relationship between the whole and the parts as being closed in principle. In this respect, Ast's argument differs essentially from Schelling's, which recognizes a reciprocal movement between parts and the whole, and the circle in Ast's sense thus does not deserve the name of a circle in the true sense. The hermeneutic circle between the parts and the whole needs to be reformulated from Schelling's perspective.

4. Intention and Beyond Intention, or Infinite Interpretation

Schelling's theory not only accurately characterizes artistic creation but also provides an insightful perspective on the aesthetic question of what role the artist's intention plays in the interpretation of an artwork. The word "intention" is polysemous, and the issue here is not what Jerrold Levinson calls categorical intention—the intention that a text "be classified, taken, approved in some specific or general way," for example, "as literature (or art) at all"—but rather what he calls semantic intention, that is, "an author's intention to mean something in or by a text T."²³ More precisely, Schelling's theory addresses if/how the artist's intention is relevant to the meaning (or its interpretation) of the work as a whole, rather than to that of its individual parts.

Schelling argues that artistic production "begins with consciousness (subjectively) and ends in the unconscious, or objectively" (I, 9, 313). It follows that we cannot fully understand the meaning of the artwork by referring to the intention that an artist had at the beginning of the creative process. An artist certainly had a presentiment of the meaning of the artwork as a whole, even if she was not aware of it in a determinate way. This is why she was driven to create an artwork. Schelling states:

The artist seems to have presented in her work, as if instinctively, apart from what she had put

²¹ Ast, *op. cit.*, 189.

²² Ast, *op. cit.*, 180.

²³ Levinson, "Intention and Interpretation in Literature," 188.

into it with obvious intention, an infinity which no finite understanding can fully develop [*entwickeln*]. (I,9, 320).²⁴

A finite understanding is a faculty that poses or grasps a certain aim and intention. In artistic creation, which is intrinsically involved in the poietic circle, finite understanding is concerned only with the intention located at the starting point of artistic creation, and does not extend to the entire creative process. Therefore, the meaning of an artwork cannot be reduced to the artist's intention. In this respect, Lessing's view that "I am suspicious of first thoughts [*erste Gedanken*]" in *The Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767–69, Nos. 101–104)²⁵ applies to Schelling as well.

However, what exactly is the "infinity" an artist presents in her artwork? Schelling points out the following: "Every work of art is susceptible of infinite interpretation, as though there were an infinity of intentions within it" (I,3, 320). This does not necessarily mean that there can be countless interpretations for a single artwork depending on the number of interpreters. Schelling, who claims that "we cannot at all tell whether this infinity lay in the artist herself or whether it resides solely in the artwork" (I,9, 320), does not take into consideration the diversity of interpreters at all. Furthermore, Schelling does not have in mind an infinite number of finite intentions, an endless sequence of the finite. The issue here is that artistic creation is based on the poietic circle; therefore, the meaning of an artwork cannot be definitely determined by finite understanding.

Thus, the goal of interpretation is not to reduce the meaning of the artwork to the finite intention of the author. Certainly, the recipient who comes into contact with an artwork has, unlike the artist, no presentiment of the artwork as a whole; yet, in common with the artist, the recipient tries to construct the whole through its parts via a process of trial and error. Certainly, in the case of plastic art, a "total overwhelming impression" may "come first" to the recipient; as John Dewey (1859–1952) put it in *Art as Experience*, it remains yet "one indistinguishable whole" that escapes the recipient's clear understanding.²⁶ This is the reason why the hermeneutic circle inheres in the interpretive process. When, through this process, the individual parts take an "unexpected" shape as a whole (Schelling, I,9, 324), the interpreter will also "feel surprised and *blessed*" by it, as the artist does (I,9, 315). Interpretation should lead us to encounter artwork as a whole.

5. A Complete/Incomplete Whole, or a Changing Whole

One reason for Ast's prioritization of the whole over the parts may be that his hermeneutics was premised on classical philology. Classical antiquity does indeed exist—or at least seems to exist—before us as a closed whole; however, the object of interpretation can also be "a poet whose career

²⁴ See further: "The true artist involuntarily puts into her work the inexhaustible depth [*die uergründliche Tiefe*] which neither she nor anyone else is able to penetrate completely" (I,9, 319). As for the terminus technicus "develop," see the following passage from Kant: "In an aesthetic respect, the imagination is free, so that, beyond that concord with the concept, it may supply, in an unsought way, extensive undeveloped [*unentwickelt*] material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept" (KU, § 49, 5: 316–317).

²⁵ Lessing, *Selected Prose Works*, 487.

²⁶ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 145.

has not ended,”²⁷ or it can be the (unfinished) whole of art history, from antiquity via the present to the future. How do the whole and parts relate to each other in the face of an unfinished whole?

Schlegel (1772–1829), a representative of early Romanticism, addressed this question. On the one hand, he praises “Winkelmann, who read all the ancients as if they were a single author.”²⁸ For Winkelmann, who wrote the *History of Art in Antiquity* (1764), classical antiquity formed a closed whole. On the other hand, Schlegel does not limit his criticism to ancient works; in the “Dialogue on Poetry” (1800), he has his fictional character Marcus point out the following:

In the history of art, only one mass better explains and elucidates the others. It is not possible to understand one part by itself; that is, it is foolish to wish to consider it only in isolation. The whole, however, is not yet complete, and, therefore, all knowledge of this kind remains only approximation and piecework. Yet we must not and cannot completely give up striving for it, since this approximation, this piecework is an essential component in the development of the artist.²⁹

To understand a part (specifically here, an individual poet), it is necessary to relate that part to other parts (i.e., other poets) and place the poet within the whole history of poetry. However, for Schlegel, this whole is not yet complete; therefore, any attempt to understand the poet as part of history is also incomplete. Nevertheless, Schlegel continues that such attempts must not, and cannot, be abandoned; rather, the activity of producing a correlation between the whole and the parts—that is, criticism in the Schlegelian sense—has its own significance. First, based on an existing incomplete whole, criticism imagines an ideal and perfect whole; the criticism is “divinatory.”³⁰ Second, anticipating this ideal whole, criticism contributes to conceiving suitable parts for it. In this sense, the circle between the whole and its parts pertains not merely to understanding or interpreting the parts but also has the practical significance of creating a new part.³¹

Schlegel, thus, historically renders the hermeneutic circle between the whole and the parts dynamic and underlines the practical import of criticism.³²

²⁷ Schlegel, *KFSA* 2: 340. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorism*, translated, introduced, and annotated by Ernst Behler and Roman Struc, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 107.

²⁸ Schlegel, Athenaeum Fragment 149, *KFSA* 2: 188. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Peter Firchow, Foreword by Rodolphe Gasché, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 37.

²⁹ Schlegel, *KFSA* 2: 340. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorism*, translated, introduced, and annotated by Ernst Behler and Roman Struc, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 107.

³⁰ Schlegel, “Athenaeum Fragment 116,” *KFSA* 2: 183. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Peter Firchow, Foreword by Rodolphe Gasché, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 175.

³¹ Otabe, “Friedrich Schlegel and the Idea of Fragment: A Contribution to Romantic Aesthetics,” 62–64.

³² While Ast means by criticism philological revision of texts, Schlegel understands criticism as an activity that clarifies the significance of an artist or a work of art in the (past) history of art, anticipates the (future) history of art, and guides artistic creation. Eliot, whom I will address next, relates criticism to an evaluation of an artwork. Certainly, the terms “interpretation” and “criticism” are often used synonymously, but I propose to distinguish them as follows: interpretation clarifies the meaning of an artwork, while criticism evaluates an

In 1919, more than a century after Schlegel's essay, Eliot published an essay entitled "Tradition and Individual Talent," to advocate for the significance of tradition and to refute Romanticism, which he claims tends to overemphasize the originality of the artist. Eliot formulated the "principle of aesthetic criticism" as follows.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism.³³

Thus far, Eliot's position is equivalent to that of Schlegel. Schlegel drew his theory of the circle between an incomplete whole and its parts. What argument does Eliot draw from this?

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted.³⁴

Eliot not only argues that the significance of individual artists and artworks is revealed in the context of the history of art but also that their significance changes constantly as art develops historically. The order of art history, that is, the order formed by existing works, makes a complete whole each time, and art history consists of the very works that are to be. However, because of this, when a "really new" work is created, this ordered whole is subject to change and must be remade anew. Thus, the whole of art history is complete toward the past, but open toward the future, and thus variable as a whole. "The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past."³⁵ History, therefore, is not a unidirectional flow from the past to the future in which the past determines the present (otherwise a "really new" work could not arise), much less a teleological flow in which the future defines the present and the past. Instead, the past and present are bi-directionally interrelated, since what is new in the present simultaneously reorganizes the past; simultaneously, the present and the future are also bi-directionally related, since the ordered whole of art history in the present gives occasion for the emergence of new works in the future and will be rewritten by such works. In this process of art history, artists and critics interact in the following way: artists create new artworks in response to the past whole of art history, and critics grasp a new whole that includes these new artworks.

The main points are summarized below. Schelling insists that the creative process of an artist is incorporated in a poietic circle between the whole and its parts, and argues further that an interpre-

artwork.

³³ Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 15.

³⁴ Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 15.

³⁵ Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 15.

tation of an artwork presupposes a hermeneutic circle between the whole and its parts. Schlegel and Eliot apply the relationship between the poietic and the hermeneutic circle to the history of art, clarifying a circular process of art history that is constructed through creation and interpretation (or criticism).

Appendix. Danto's Borges and Menard's Novalis

Both Schlegel and Eliot argue that the significance of an individual artist or a work of art is revealed in the context of the history of art, which reminds us of what Arthur C. Danto (1924–2013) later wrote in his 1981 book, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*: “the works [of art] are in part constituted by their location in the history of literature as well as their relationships to their authors,”³⁶ as he addressed a short story by Borges (1899–1986), “Pierre Menard, Author of *Quixote*” (1939, slightly revised: 1941).

Borges's story is written in the style of a critical essay or article, discussing the differences between *Don Quixote* by Cervantes and *Don Quixote* by Pierre Menard, a fictional twentieth-century French writer who tried to produce a novel that was verbatim identical to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. This is indeed a story Danto would have liked. Menard's *Don Quixote* is as radical enough as Warhol's *Brillo Box* to trigger philosophical reflection on art. Borges persistently shows that, even if a work is word for word the same as another, if it was written at a different time and under different circumstances, it can have a completely different meaning. I argue that what Borges describes in the story—or what Danto claims based on Borges's story—is one of the consequences of Schlegel's and Eliot's views of criticism.

It is not arbitrary to associate Borges with Romanticism. In his story, Borges writes that “two texts of unequal value inspired” Menard to this undertaking, one of which was a “philological fragment of Novalis—No. 2005 of the Dresden edition.”³⁷ The fragment “No. 2005 of the Dresden edition” is not fictional.³⁸ Borges only mentions the fragment number and does not quote it, but it is the Athenaeum fragment no. 287: “Only then do I show that I've understood an author: when I can act in his sense, when I can translate him and transform him in diverse ways, without diminishing his individuality.”³⁹ According to Borges, Novalis' fragment addresses “the theme of total identification with a specific author.”⁴⁰ This means that Menard shares with Novalis the ideal of total identification with a particular author, but in a different way from Novalis, that is, by copying the letter rather than entering into the author's spirit—of course, the pair of spirit and letter, derived from Paul's letters (Romans 2:29, 7:6, and 2. Corinthians 3:6), is at the heart of Romanticism. Borges's story, “Pierre Menard, Author of *Quixote*, is a variation of Romanticism.

³⁶ Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*, 35–36.

³⁷ Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of *Don Quixote*,” 45.

³⁸ Novalis, *Fragmente*, ed. by Ernst Kamnitzer, Dresden: Wolfgang Jess, 1929, p. 644.

³⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, “Athenaeum Fragment 149,” *KFSA* 2: 188 = Novalis, *Schriften*, 2: 424. See Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Peter Firchow, Foreword by Rodolphe Gasché, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 58.

⁴⁰ Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of *Don Quixote*,” 45.

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