

In the Fullness of Time: Gadamer on the Temporal Dimension of the Work of Art

Daniel L. Tate

St. Bonaventure University

Abstract

In Gadamer's later writings on art, his investigation into the being of the work exploits the temporal resonance of the concept of performative enactment (*Vollzug*), which displaces the priority of play (*Spiel*) in his earlier account. Drawing upon Heidegger, Gadamer deploys the concepts of tarrying (*Verweilen*) and the while (*die Weile*) to elucidate the temporality of the work of art as an event of being. On the one hand, tarrying describes the temporal structure of the performance that enables the work to come forth. On the other hand, the while characterizes the unique presence of the work that takes place in and through its enactment. Here Gadamer's understanding of art engages his thought about "empty" and "fulfilled" time. For, the temporal event of the artwork is such that it interrupts the ordinary experience of passing time and thereby opens up another, more authentic experience of the fullness of time.

Keywords

Gadamer, hermeneutics, art, time, event, aesthetics

Gadamer has never ceased to affirm the presence of art. It has remained for him decisive that we experience a certain "presentness" (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) in the genuine encounter with the work of art. Even the meaningful claims of works that engage us from past epochs are not restricted to their original historical horizon. Rather, it belongs to the experience of art that "the work of art has its own present."¹ In *Truth and Method* Gadamer discusses the temporal meaning of this "present" in terms of the contemporaneousness of the work of art

¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Ästhetik und Hermeneutik," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8: *Ästhetik und Poetik I—Kunst als Aussage* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1993), 1 (hereafter *GW*, followed by volume and page); translated by David E. Linge as "Aesthetics and Hermeneutics," in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. Richard E. Palmer (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 124 (hereafter *GR*).

that accomplishes the integration of past and present in the experience of art.² But in later writings—in his lectures on “The Relevance of the Beautiful” and especially in “The Artwork in Word and Image”—he returns to this issue in order to further elaborate the temporal dimension of the work of art.³ Drawing upon the Heideggerian concepts of “tarrying” (*Verweilen*) and the “while” (*die Weile*), Gadamer rethinks the temporality of the artwork as an event of being. As the German words suggest, the two are intimately correlated: on the one hand, tarrying describes the temporality of the spectator’s comportment that allows the work to disclosively unfold itself; on the other hand, the while describes the temporal expanse of the unique presence of the work. As we shall see, Gadamer believes that as we tarry with the work of art and are immersed in its presence, the while of the work suspends our ordinary experience of time and opens us to another, more original experience of time.

In these later writings it is also notable that the priority given to play in Part I of *Truth and Method* gives way to the centrality of performance or enactment. In fact, the concept of play makes no significant appearance in “The Artwork in Word and Image.” Instead he holds that art has its being in

² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1: *Hermeneutik I—Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990), 126–33; translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall as *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., revised (London, England: Continuum, 2004), 119–25. (Volume titles abbreviated as *GW* 1 and as *TM*.)

³ Gadamer, “Wort und Bild: ‘So Wahr, so Seiend,’” in *GW* 8: 373–99; translated by Richard E. Palmer as “The Artwork in Word and Image: ‘So True, so Full of Being,’” in *GR*, 195–224.

Gadamer, “Die Aktualität des Schönen,” in *GW* 8: 94–142; translated by Nicholas Walker as “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3–53. (The latter title is abbreviated as *RB*.)

He has also published several significant essays on the issue of time and temporality.

Gadamer, “Über leere und erfüllte Zeit,” in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4: *Neuere Philosophie II—Probleme. Gestalten* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1987), 137–153; translated by R. P. O’Hara as “Concerning Empty and Ful-filled Time,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 8 (1970): 341–53. (Former title abbreviated as *GW* 4.)

Gadamer, “Die Kontinuität der Geschichte und der Augenblick der Existenz,” in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2: *Hermeneutik II—Wahrheit und Methode: Ergänzungen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1986), 133–45; translated by Thomas Wren as “The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment,” *Philosophy Today*, 16 (1972): 230–40.

Gadamer, “Des Zeitanschauung des Abendlandes,” in *GW* 4: 119–36; translated as “The Western View of the Inner Experience of Time and the Limits of Thought,” in *Time and the Philosophers* (Paris: UNESCO, 1977), 33–48.

Vollzug—that is, “the vital, living event of its appearance, its performance.”⁴ Through the performative enactment of the work, Gadamer says, “‘it’ comes forth” such that the artwork is “truly there.”⁵ Elsewhere he remarks that *Vollzug* did not come to him by accident, describing it as a “wonderful word” replete with “dialectical tension.”⁶ In a passage that would barely survive translation, Gadamer elicits the dialectical tension of *Vollzug* and its temporal significance by deploying the semantic potential of the German word *Zug* (meaning “draw” or “pull”). There he claims that *Vollzug* exhibits a counter thrust to all *Zug* that inevitably runs its course in time. In the midst of the *vollen Zug* of life and its ceaseless passage, the *Vollzug* of art brings a temporal structure to stand that, in turn, brings the *Vorbeizug* of passing time itself to a standstill. In contrast to the formal emptiness of time that constantly runs from the future through the present into the past, the performance of the work of art enacts an abiding presence that offers an experience of the fullness of time. If Gadamer turns to *Vollzug* (instead of *Spiel*), it is because this word holds in reserve, so to speak, resources that enable him to better elicit the complex temporality of the experience of art.

Guided by this concept, then, I intend to show how Gadamer’s later writing provides a deeper excavation of the temporal dimension of the work of art than that offered in *Truth and Method*. I begin, in section 1, with the transition from play to performance in Gadamer’s phenomenological analysis of the artwork as an event of being in order to confirm that the ontological function of *Spiel* in his account is effectively assimilated to *Vollzug*. Next, in section 2, I take up the “contemporaneity” (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) of the artwork (which Gadamer never ceases to affirm) as the temporality that belongs to the work as a repeatable structure that nonetheless achieves “immediate presentness” every time it is enacted. I then turn, in section 3, to the temporal structure of performative enactment, which Gadamer articulates as a “tarrying” that belongs to the genuine experience of art in which the work comes to presence. Finally, in section 4, I address the temporal quality of the presence achieved through tarrying as the “while” that interrupts our ordinary experience of “empty” time and opens us to another, more authentic experience of “fulfilled” time. On the path marked by these topics we engage Gadamer’s later analyses as they move beyond the scope of *Truth and Method* by moving deeper into the temporal dimension of the work of art.

⁴ *GW* 8: 391; *GR*, 215.

⁵ *GW* 8: 391, 392; *GR* 216, 217.

⁶ *GW* 8: 364.

1. Performance: The Artwork as Ontological Event

In “The Artwork in Word and Image,” Gadamer divulges the key to his temporal interpretation of art with the assertion: “*Die Kunst ist im Vollzug.*”⁷ This says that the being of the work of art consists in its *performative enactment*. In this section I intend to show that the preeminence of performance (*Vollzug*) in this late text effectively displaces the priority of play (*Spiel*) in Gadamer’s analysis of the work of art in *Truth and Method*. However, I do not mean to imply that this signals an abrupt departure in his thinking about art. Quite to the contrary, the continuity in this transition is evident, above all, in his consistent emphasis on the being of the work of art as an event of self-presentation. Nevertheless, the shift of focus from *Spiel* to *Vollzug* signals a renewed concentration on—and deeper elaboration of—the temporality of this event. I begin not only by marking this shift from play to performance in Gadamer’s thought, but by showing that performance effectively appropriates from the earlier analyses of play the elements crucial to the ontological understanding of the artwork. This, in turn, sets the stage for my reconstruction of his temporal interpretation of *Vollzug*.

Gadamer has long held that the artwork is an ontological event. In *Truth and Method* he unfolds the movement proper to the artwork as an event of being through the phenomenon of play. As a constantly repeated movement, play exhibits a mode of “self-movement” (*Selbstbewegung*) that is not tethered to any external goal that would bring it to completion. In its back and forth movement, play fulfills no other end or purpose than that of presenting itself. This reveals the mode of being of play as “self-presentation” (*Selbstdarstellung*).⁸ In “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” he affirms this point: “play appears as a self-movement that does not pursue any particular end or purpose so much as movement *as* movement, exhibiting so to speak a phenomenon of excess, of living self-presentation.”⁹ What is decisive about play, then, is the phenomenological basis it provides for the correlation of self-movement and self-presentation in the being of the artwork. Human play, however, is distinctive in that we always play something; in this regard play is an intentional activity. Playing something, in turn, means letting our comportment be governed by the rules of the game. Gadamer calls this the “non-purposive rationality” of human play inasmuch as we submit our own goals

⁷ *GW* 8: 391; *GR*, 391.

⁸ *GW* 1: 113; *TM*, 108.

⁹ *GW* 8: 114; *RB*, 23.

and purposes to those of the game itself. In human play, he writes, “[t]he end pursued is certainly non-purposive, but this activity is itself intended.”¹⁰

However, the mode of being of play is such that playing has priority over the player. Playing is not an attitude adopted by the subjectivity of the player; instead the players are taken up into the self-movement of play and take part in its self-presentation. Playing the game, we fulfill our assigned tasks as players, thereby shaping the play-movement. By appropriating those who participate in it, play transcends the individual consciousness of the players. Gadamer therefore insists that the players are not the subjects of play; rather play merely reaches presentation through them.¹¹ In addition to those who, as performers, take over certain roles determined by the game, there are others who, as spectators, also participate in the play. Insofar as both are players who take part in the play-movement, the distinction between performer and spectator disappears. But when the self-presentation of play is intended for an audience, as it is with art, this introduces a decisive modification into human play. The field of play now becomes like a stage; it is a closed world that nonetheless remains open to the spectator in whom it achieves its full significance. Gadamer calls this modification “the transformation into structure” (*die Verwandlung ins Gebilde*). In the play of art a structure emerges that is in principle repeatable and permanent. “Only now does [the play] emerge as detached from the representing activity of the players and consist in the pure appearance (*Erscheinung*) of what they are playing.”¹² Under this modification, the play is presented to the spectator for whom it is essentially intended. Just as much as the performer, the spectator participates in the play movement in order for the play to present itself as it is “meant.” Of course, the spectator’s mode of participation differs from, say, that of the performer in a play. The closed world of the work holds the spectator at a distance, precluding any practical intervention in the events unfolding on stage. But this is an “aesthetic distance” that makes possible “a genuine and comprehensive participation in what is presented before us.”¹³ The spectator is therefore just as indispensable to the work’s performance as those who (as musicians, actors, dancers, etc.) seem to be its principal performers. If Gadamer nevertheless grants the spectator a “methodological privilege,” this is because it is ultimately up to the spectator to engage the work, performing it so that the work comes to presence.

¹⁰ *GW* 8: 114; *RB*, 23.

¹¹ *GW* 1: 108; *TM*, 103.

¹² *GW* 1: 116; *TM*, 110.

¹³ *GW* 1: 133; *TM*, 124.

The transition from play to performance is all but seamless in Gadamer's work. For example, in his lectures on "The Relevance of the Beautiful" (where the concept of play is still preeminent), he remarks that "the genuine reception and experience of the work of art can only exist for one who 'plays along,' that is, one who performs in an active way himself."¹⁴ The common element is the inclusion of the spectator in the being of the work of art. The spectator's participation is decisive because the being of the artwork is only encountered in its performative enactment. This has a crucial ontological consequence: just as the game only exists in being played, so too the artwork only exists in being performed. Because the presentation of the work only takes place through its enactment, Gadamer holds the "aesthetic differentiation" of the work from its performance to be an abstraction that reduces the being of the work. Hence, already in *Truth and Method* he asserts that "it is in the performance and only in it . . . that we encounter the work itself as the divine is encountered in the religious rite."¹⁵ Although the work can be performed in different ways, it does not properly exist apart from the performance that brings it forth. In fact, what comes to presence in the work only exists in the presentation enacted by its performance. So art is a presentation that "finds its genuine fulfillment simply in the fact that what it presents is emphatically there."¹⁶ It is this "non-differentiation" of the work and its performance that Gadamer highlights in the play of art. So, for example, the performance of a dramatic play cannot simply be detached from the play itself, as if it were something inessential. To the contrary, the successful performance is precisely one that enables the work to present itself. In the play of art, then, what is decisive is the performance that enacts the work.

To understand this claim aright it is crucial that we not confuse performance with production; the performative enactment by which the artwork comes to presence is distinct from the productive activity that achieves its proper completion in the finished product. This is why Gadamer argues that the artwork is properly conceived not as the completed "work" (*Werk*) that results from a process of human fabrication but, rather, as a "structure" (*Gebilde*) that remains essentially open to the spectator who experiences it. As such the work of art is completed by the performance that enacts it, for only in this way does the work come to presence at all. That is to say, the artwork is only truly "there" in its performance. What Gadamer calls interpretation is thus

¹⁴) *GW* 8: 116; *RB*, 25–26.

¹⁵) *GW* 1: 121; *TM*, 115.

¹⁶) *GW* 8: 83; *RB*, 119.

nothing other than the performance that enacts the work so that “it” comes out. “The event of emerging as experienced by the viewer, hearer, or reader, that is, the performance of the work—the *Vollzug*—is the interpretation.”¹⁷ So conceived the work of art is not a *Werk* in the sense of an artifact destined for some use but is, instead, a *Gebilde* that has no end other than the *Vollzug* in which it achieves self-presentation. In terms that Gadamer appropriates from ancient Greek thought, the work of art is a distinctive sort of *ergon* that finds its fulfillment as *energeia*.

Actually, the preeminence of performance over play receives further confirmation from his interpretation of *energeia*. Gadamer explicitly draws on Aristotle’s analysis of movement in order to elucidate the being of the work of art. This is already evident in *Truth and Method* where he asserts: “The being of all play is always self-realization, sheer fulfillment, *energeia* which has its *telos* within itself.”¹⁸ However, in “The Artwork in Word and Image,” he deploys *Vollzug* to interpret Aristotle’s concept of *energeia*, thereby displacing the earlier reference to *Spiel*. Here Gadamer reminds us that Aristotle coins this new concept to distinguish being as being-in-motion in contrast to being that has the character of a completed product. Like the related concepts of *dunamis* and *entelecheia*, the concept of *energeia* points to the activity of being performed. “The process of being carried out, the execution or performance, already has its goal and the fulfilling of its being in itself (*telos echei*).”¹⁹ In this respect, Gadamer contrasts *energeia* with *kinesis* inasmuch as the latter is without goal (*ateles*). In other words, the goal proper to *kinesis* is external to the motion itself. As long as it is in motion *kinesis* has not yet achieved its end. “What is being moved is still underway, has not yet arrived. It is still becoming.”²⁰ Unlike *kinesis*, however, the dynamism of *energeia* finds its proper completion in the very performance, the *Vollzug*, of the movement itself. So while Gadamer consistently claims of the artwork that “its way of being is pure *energeia*,” we find in this late essay the further claim that “[*Vollzug*] is what Aristotle called *energeia*.”²¹

¹⁷ *GW* 8: 392; *GR*, 218.

¹⁸ *GW* 1: 118; *TM*, 112.

¹⁹ *GW* 8: 387; *GR*, 210.

²⁰ *GW* 8: 387; *GR*, 210. Gadamer also finds in Aristotle’s concept of *energeia* an “immanent temporality” that is “not a one-after-another sequence but the at-the-same-timeness” that belongs to the temporal structure of tarrying.

²¹ *GW* 8: 395, 394; *GR*, 220, 219.

2. Contemporaneity: The Immediate Presentness of Art

Gadamer has long stressed the directness and immediacy with which art is capable of addressing us. In “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” for instance, he writes: “It possesses a mysterious intimacy that grips our entire being, as if there were no distance at all between us and the work and as if every encounter with it were an encounter with ourselves.”²² Despite the intensification of historical consciousness in our age, Gadamer maintains that an “absolute contemporaneousness” exists between the work and its beholder, even if it comes out of an unfamiliar life-world of a different culture or the historical past of our own artistic tradition. In this respect, Gadamer asserts that “the work of art is the absolute present for each particular present, and at the same time it holds its word in readiness for every future.”²³ Almost three decades later, in “The Artwork in Word and Image,” Gadamer takes up this issue again, bluntly asking what establishes “art’s superiority over time.”²⁴ His response invokes the paradoxical temporality of art that is “marked by an immediate presentness in time and at the same time by a rising above time.”²⁵ The immediacy in the experience of art is one in which we find ourselves addressed by the work and absorbed in its presence regardless of its historical origin. The fact that the presence of the work of art can take hold of us in this way, he believes, demonstrates “the absolute presentness” of art to all times and places. Deliberately referring to Hegel, he reminds us that art, like philosophy and religion, “claims absoluteness because it transcends all historical differences between eras.”²⁶ The *Vollzug* of art thus fulfills itself in an experience of presence that has often, if mistakenly, been described as art’s timelessness. Hence in Gadamer’s estimation, “it is the vivid presentness and contemporaneousness [*Gegenwärtigkeit und Gleichzeitigkeit*] of art that constitute and maintain its power.”²⁷

Gadamer already deploys the concept of contemporaneity (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) in *Truth and Method* precisely in order to elucidate the temporal being of the

²²) *GW* 8: 1; *GR*, 124.

²³) *GW* 8: 8; *GR*, 131.

²⁴) *GW* 8: 377; *GR*, 200.

²⁵) *GW* 8: 374; *GR*, 196.

²⁶) *GW* 8: 375; *GR*, 197. In one respect, this is just a re-affirmation of Gadamer’s long-standing resistance to the standpoint of aesthetic consciousness that reduces the experience of art to a mere object of aesthetic-historical enjoyment. However, he argues that aesthetic consciousness is transcended in every genuine encounter with art where the immediate presentness of the work overcomes the temporal distance that separates us from it, thereby allowing the work of art to be contemporaneous with any age. (Cf. *GW* 1: 94–106; *TM*, 77–87.)

²⁷) *GW* 8: 377; *GR*, 200.

artwork's absolute presentness. What he finds is that this distinctive temporality belongs to the work of art specifically as an ideal structure, a *Gebilde* that forms a meaningful whole. It is by reference to *Gebilde* that Gadamer establishes the autonomy of the work; as an ideal structure the work is independent of both the creative activity of the artist and the representative activity of the performer. However, its autonomy as a *Gebilde* entails that the work is essentially repeatable; as an ideal structure the artwork only comes to presence in and through the performance(s) that present it. Indeed, the identity of the work cannot be separated from its repeatability. So while it must be possible to recognize the identity of the artwork in and through its various presentations, that identity is thoroughly "hermeneutic" inasmuch as it is dependent on the different ways in which the work presents itself. According to this hermeneutic conception, then, the identity of the work of art "is constituted precisely by the fact that we do not distinguish between the particular way in which the work is realized and the identity of the work itself."²⁸ On the one hand, this means that the identity of the artwork does not exist apart from the realization in its performance; the work is only "there" in its (various) presentation(s). On the other hand, it also means that each performance of an artwork nonetheless intends the singular identity of that very work; it is the "same" work that presents itself differently through its different realizations. The unity of sameness and difference therefore belongs to the "hermeneutic identity" of the work. This is why "the work as such still speaks to us in an individual way as the same work, even in repeated and different encounters with it."²⁹

The question of the temporal being of the work of art thus arises from its ontological status as a *Gebilde*. More specifically, it arises from the ideality of the work as a repeatable structure that only achieves presentation through its performance. So despite its formal character as a finished piece, the work of art exhibits the open structure of an event that must be continually repeated. "Inescapably," Gadamer writes, "presentation has the character of a repetition of the same." But he continues: "Here 'repetition' does not mean that something is literally repeated—i.e., can be reduced to something original. Rather, every repetition is as original as the work itself."³⁰ This startling claim points to the paradoxical being of that which only exists in its presentations. Here repetition is not merely reproductive but productive; that is, it yields new

²⁸) *GW* 8: 120; *RB*, 29.

²⁹) *GW* 8: 120; *RB*, 29.

³⁰) *GW* 1: 127–28; *TM*, 120.

presentations that enable the work to present unseen aspects of itself. Insofar as it consists in repetition, the artwork reveals a distinctive temporal dimension. In order to understand this “highly puzzling temporal structure,” Gadamer appeals to festive celebration. Like the work of art, it is in the nature of festivals to be repeated. As an essentially recurrent phenomenon, “even a unique festival celebration bears the possibility of its return (*Wiederkehr*) within itself.”³¹ The “return of the festival” is therefore misconstrued if it is taken as a reproduction of the festival’s inaugural celebration. The first celebration of a festival is merely its initial appearance and not its original or authentic manifestation. It is not as if there was an “original” festival that later versions merely imitate. Instead every celebration of a festival is equally “original.” As Joel Weinsheimer acutely observes “[t]he differences do not come after the origin, . . . but belong to it originally.”³² Insofar as the festival bears the possibility of repetition within itself, the different celebrations are presentations of the same festival. As an event of being, the work of art exhibits this same ontological structure.

The temporality of the festival—and of the artwork—therefore consists in being one with every occasion of its celebration. “An entity that exists only in always being something different is temporal in a more radical sense than everything that belongs to history. It has its being only in becoming and return.”³³ What is mysterious about festivity, then, is the way it suspends time so that the divine or human acts being celebrated are contemporaneous with the historically distant present of the celebration itself. This is true of the experience of art as well. Since the artwork, like the festival, exists only in repetition, it too is radically temporal. However distant its historical origin, the artwork is wholly contemporaneous with each age in which it is understood. That the past becomes manifest in the present characterizes the distinctive temporality exhibited by both festivals and artworks. In this context, Gadamer explicitly draws on Kierkegaard’s use of the concept of “contemporaneousness” (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) to characterize the temporal dimension of the task confronting the believer who must bring together two historically distant moments: one’s own present and the redeeming act of Christ. Where this happens the believer is contemporaneous with Christ. Here “being-present”

³¹) *GW* 8: 297; *RB*, 58.

³²) Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: A Reading of “Truth and Method”* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 114.

³³) *GW* 1: 129; *TM*, 121.

means the genuine participation in the redemptive event itself.³⁴ More generally, contemporaneousness means that “in its presentation this particular thing that presents itself to us achieves full presence however remote its [historical] origin may be.”³⁵ The achievement of “full presence” is what marks the distinctive temporality of both festivity and art. For Gadamer, then, contemporaneousness “constitutes the essence of ‘being present.’”³⁶

However, this means that contemporaneousness is not something given but is, rather, an achievement that represents a task for consciousness. So, on the one hand, Gadamer is adamant that the proper and preeminent function of art is “to represent presence and nothing but presence.”³⁷ Yet, on the other hand, he is equally insistent that such presence requires the cooperative activity of the spectator as the one who “plays along” with the work and thereby participates in its coming-to-presence. In principle, the work of art always confronts us with the task of interpreting it, of performing the work so that “it” comes out. This means that the presentation through which the work achieves full presence only comes about by “holding on to the thing in such a way that it becomes ‘contemporaneous.’” When this happens—that is, when the contemporaneousness with the work is achieved—“all mediation is superseded in total presence.”³⁸ It is such “total presence” that Gadamer has in mind

³⁴ *GW* 1: 131; *TM*, 124. Although Gadamer does not make a point of it in this context, Kierkegaard’s concept of contemporaneousness refers to “the moment” in which time and eternity meet. Indeed, to be in the moment is to be in the presence of the eternal in time. Although Gadamer distances himself from the contrast between time and eternity, he nonetheless draws upon Kierkegaard’s concept of the moment as that which constitutes “a breach of continuity” within the linear time of historical development. Moreover, the meeting of time and eternity in the moment occurs as the juncture of past and future in what Kierkegaard himself calls “the fullness of time.” In addition, it should not be lost on us that Kierkegaard sees the moment as marking the transition from not-existing to existing—that is, as a movement of coming-into-existence. That Gadamer does not explicitly acknowledge the significance of the moment until his essay on “The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment” should not prevent us from noting its concealed import in the discussion of contemporaneousness in *Truth and Method*.

³⁵ *GW* 1: 132; *TM*, 123.

³⁶ *GW* 1: 132; *TM*, 123.

³⁷ *GW* 8: 301; *RB*, 62.

³⁸ *GW* 1: 132; *TM*, 124. Gadamer’s emphasis on the “absolute presentness” of art and its cognate expressions—“full presence,” “total presence,” “total mediation”—should not lead us to think that such presence is somehow final and complete or that it comes about apart from our intensive involvement in the work. Quite the opposite, Gadamer holds (following Heidegger) that there is an ineradicable concealment that is an element of all coming to presence. He also holds that it is only through our interpretive effort that the work presents itself at all. But when this happens—that is, when the work comes to presence—we are suddenly overcome by an

when referring to the “absolute presentness” of art; thus the immediacy of the work’s presence is just the realization of a “total mediation.” Of course, the achievement of such presence requires the participation of the spectator whose comportment enacts the work. This performative enactment exhibits its own distinctive temporality that Gadamer, following Heidegger, calls “tarrying.”

3. Tarrying: The Temporality of Performative Enactment

As a participant the spectator performs the work so that it comes to presence. Already in *Truth and Method* such enactment defines the spectator’s comportment toward the work. For Gadamer, this means that the being of the spectator is determined by one’s “being there present” (*Dabeisein*). To be present in this sense is not merely to be there alongside the work; it is to participate. As a mode of “true participation,” watching something means “being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees.”³⁹ Here Gadamer seems to adopt (albeit tacitly) Heidegger’s notion of “the moment” (*der Augenblick*) in *Being and Time* as the authentic present.⁴⁰ As the authentic present, the moment is, in the words of Daniel Dahlstrom, “the authentic encounter with things, a way of being present to them such that they can present themselves.”⁴¹ To be in the moment is to give one’s full attention to what is encountered there, of genuinely attending to it such that it comes to presence. Considered subjectively, then, being present in the moment has the character of being outside oneself. But this ecstatic mode of being outside oneself is not merely a negative condition; rather, it marks the positive possibility of being wholly with something else. Thus being present involves a self-forgetfulness that consists in surrendering oneself to what one is watching. “Here,” Gadamer says,

experience of truth in which we simply find ourselves affirming “That’s it!” Although such an occurrence is exemplified in our genuine encounter with the work, Gadamer does not think it is unique to the experience of art. More generally, he sees a dialectical relation in the experience of truth between an unrelenting effort toward understanding and the insight that can come upon us all of a sudden. In the experience of art it is the thoughtful attending-to the work that prepares the way for its suddenly coming forth. (Cf. Robert J. Dostal, “The Experience of Truth for Heidegger and Gadamer: Taking Time and Sudden Lightning,” in *Hermeneutics and Truth*, ed. Brice Wachterhauser [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994], 47–67.)

³⁹ *GW* 1: 129; *TM*, 121.

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 323.

⁴¹ Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger’s Concept of Truth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 331.

“self-forgetfulness is anything but a privative condition, for it arises from devoting one’s full attention to the matter at hand, and this is the spectator’s own positive accomplishment.”⁴² This is why being-present is a true participation by which the spectator fulfills the claim of the festival or the artwork. The being-present proper to the spectator is therefore the ecstatic condition of being entirely immersed in the work.⁴³ This genuine way of being in the moment is the disclosive comportment proper to the spectator as one who lets the work present itself.

It is only later, especially in “The Artwork in Word and Image,” that Gadamer develops a temporal interpretation of such participation, where he describes the spectator’s being-present as a “tarrying” (*Verweilen*) with the work. With this description he underscores the temporality of being-present as the comportment by which the spectator enables the coming-to-presence of the work. As a comportment, a *Haltung* (literally, a way of holding or carrying oneself), tarrying is the manner in which one holds oneself within the work. “The experience of art . . . fulfills itself in a preserving tarrying [*gewahrendes Verweilen*], in which the work of art comes forth.”⁴⁴ One thus genuinely participates in the work by tarrying with it. But tarrying is not merely lingering over something; it is rather an experience of being appropriated to the work so that we are completely engaged in it. As Sheila Ross points out, tarrying is “a function of the fullness and intensity of attention and engrossment.”⁴⁵ But fully attending to the work in this manner exhibits its own distinctive temporality. Holding fast to the work, one is so absorbed in the process of coming to presence that one not only forgets oneself, but one forgets passing time as well. In the ecstatic condition of being-present to the work, one is displaced from the usual relationship to time and transported into an ecstatic mode of temporality, a temporal mode of being-outside of time.⁴⁶ Indeed, for Gadamer,

⁴² *GW* 1: 131; *TM*, 122.

⁴³ Dahlstrom offers the following gloss on the ecstatic quality of the moment in Heidegger’s *Being and Time*: “Being ecstatic, one is on the verge of being unconscious, but precisely because one is so focused, so intently engaged and, in that *active* sense, given up to the moment” (*Heidegger’s Concept of Truth*, 333).

⁴⁴ *GW* 8: 387; *GR*, 211 (translation slightly altered).

⁴⁵ Sheila Ross, “The Temporality of Tarrying,” *Theory, Culture, & Society* 23 (2006): 109.

⁴⁶ Here Gadamer seems to engage Heidegger’s ecstatic analysis of authentic temporality as the original “outside itself” that clears the space of disclosure (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 348). See the discussion of Heidegger’s account of ecstatic temporality by John Sallis, “Time Out . . .,” in *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 44–75. Also see Gadamer, “Concerning Empty and Full-filled Time.”

tarrying with the work of art transports us into a mode of temporality distinct from our ordinary experience of time. Giorgio Agamben similarly underscores this aspect of the experience of art: “We are as though held, arrested before something, but this being arrested is also a being-outside [of time], an *ek-stasis* in a more original [temporal] dimension.”⁴⁷ The temporality of being-present that Gadamer describes as a “tarrying” with the work therefore constitutes an *ek-stasis* that, as we shall see, opens us to another, more original experience of time.

Tarrying also points to the temporal aspect of the work’s self-presentation. As a temporal process tarrying allows the work to unfold its various aspects as a meaningful whole so that it comes to presence. But enacting the work requires that the spectator determine how to attend to it—or rather the spectator must allow the work itself to determine how it is to be attended to. As Gadamer says, “we learn from the work how to tarry with it.”⁴⁸ Consequently, attending-to the work involves an active engagement that nevertheless involves a kind of waiting in which we let “it” come forth. Tarrying with the work, “we remain with the art structure [*Kunstgebilde*], which as a whole then becomes ever richer and more diverse.”⁴⁹ We tarry by being responsive to the temporality unique to that “art structure,” for each work of art has its own way of marking time. In fact, as an internally structured unity, the artwork displays an “autonomous temporality” (*Eigenzeit*).⁵⁰ This means that “the work of art is determined by its own temporal structure [*Zeitstruktur*] rather than the quantifiable duration of its existence through time.”⁵¹ The enactment therefore must be attuned to the time structure of the work itself. Of course, the “correct tempo” is not something calculable; rather, it must be drawn from the

⁴⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1994), 99.

⁴⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer and Carson Dutt, *Gadamer in Conversation*, trans. Richard E. Palmer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁵⁰ According to Gadamer, the festival possesses its own “autonomous temporality” that we associate with the “organic time” of living-being. The work of art too has an “organic unity” inasmuch as the aspects of the work are so united with the whole that it seems that nothing external has been added on. It is as if the work of art possesses a center that cannot be fundamentally altered without destroying the living unity of the work. “In this respect, the work of art does resemble a living organism with its internally structured unity. In other words, it too displays autonomous temporality (*Eigenzeit*)” (*GW* 8: 133–34; *RB*, 43.)

⁵¹ *GW* 8: 134; *RB*, 43.

rhythm of the piece as a whole.⁵² So it is only when we find the “right time” demanded by the work that something comes to stand in the midst of passing time. When this happens, the work comes to presence and we say: “That’s right! [*So ist es!*]” According to Gadamer, “[t]he essence of our temporal experience of art is learning to tarry in this way.”⁵³

Undoubtedly such notions as “tempo” and “rhythm” are most familiar to us from music. By comparison to other arts (such as painting or sculpture) that have a material existence, Gadamer observes that music consists merely in the tonal configuration by which the sequence of sounds that otherwise arise and pass away are transposed into a musical structure that introduces a stable but dynamic set of relations that possesses its own temporality. In his essay “*Musik und Zeit*” Gadamer characterizes the emergence of such a musical structure in our understanding as a “coming-to-stand” (*Zum-Stehen-Kommen*) in which the linear experience of time is transformed into a temporal construction that exhibits the unity and identity of a *Gebilde*. Where such a tonal configuration comes to stand, Gadamer says “music is there” (*Musik da ist*).⁵⁴ Peter de Bolla makes a similar point about the temporality of music in his reflection on Glenn Gould’s performance of J. S. Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*. “Music has its own temporality; it inhabits the interference between linearity, the sequence of sounds that is one prerequisite for music, and musical structure, the vertical architectonics constructed on the relationships among rhythm, harmony, interval, and so forth. In this interference a timeworld is fabricated that has its own sense of duration and speed, of elaboration, repetition, stasis, and movement.”⁵⁵ Gadamer’s notion of *Verweilen* conjoins the temporality of the comportment with its attunement to the time-structure of the musical piece. It is in tarrying that the musical structure comes to stand such that time itself is brought to a standstill for a while. De Bolla arrives at much the same conclusion, listening to the way Gould’s performance foregrounds the discrepancy between the clock time of the world and the time of the music. “This is why in ‘ecstatic’ experiences of listening to music we feel as if we have left the time of the world . . . and we enter into another way of experiencing time.”⁵⁶

⁵² Gadamer even speaks of rhythm as “a pure becoming of form of time” (*GW* 8: 51; *GR*, 149.)

⁵³ *GW* 8: 136; *RB*, 45.

⁵⁴ *GW* 8: 365.

⁵⁵ Peter de Bolla, *Art Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 83–84.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 82–83. Strikingly, de Bolla even speaks of Gould’s pushing “the temporal envelope” to the extreme in order to achieve a fuller realization that enables the listener to follow “art’s coming into being” (*ibid.*, 84).

This experience applies to other arts as well, including poetry, about which Gadamer has written a great deal more than about music. According to his description, the poem is a texture built up by repeated readings through which one discovers new relations that enrich the linguistic configuration of the poem. So reading is not just a matter of following the words in sequence; rather, it must be attentive to the multiple relationships of sound, rhyme, intonation, assonance, etc., by means of which the language of the poem acquires the stability of a *Gebilde*. In Gadamer's view, it is the complex rhythm constructed there that fundamentally articulates the relations between the movements of sound and meaning within the poem. Reading the poem one is drawn into the "temporal shape" (*Zeitgestalt*) of the work as it emerges from the dynamic tension of these two movements. Thus the task of reading is to elucidate the shifting balance of sound and sense whereby the poem itself comes to stand. The coherence and precision it thereby achieves Gadamer calls the "tone" of the poetic word that "holds throughout the whole of the linguistic construction."⁵⁷ Where this happens, the poem transforms into a whole resonant with meaning. Reading therefore requires a kind of patient listening, a tarrying with the poem, which listens toward the "completion of meaning" at which the poem aims. Indeed, Gadamer insists that "the significance of a word is determined only by the unity of a figure of meaning formed by the [poetic] speech."⁵⁸ He even holds this to be true for modern lyric, where the relative lack of syntactic determinacy creates fissures in the poetic configuration that result in a greater ambiguity of meaning. Nevertheless, even then "the polyvalence of the words is determined in completing the meaning of the [poetic] speech and permits one significance to resound and others to simply resonate."⁵⁹ To bring the poetic word forth, to allow the poem to speak is the task of reading that can only be achieved by tarrying with the work.

So it comes as no surprise when Gadamer claims that the "temporality of performative enactment" (*Zeitlichkeit des Vollzugs*) can be illuminated by reference to the temporal structure of reading.⁶⁰ Here reading (a text or work)

⁵⁷ *GW* 8: 52; *GR*, 150.

⁵⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wer bin ich und wer bist Du?*, in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 9: Ästhetik und Poetik II—Hermeneutik im Vollzug* (Tübingen, Germany: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993), 429; translated and edited by Richard Heinemann and Bruce Krajewski as *Gadamer on Celan: "Who Am I and Who Are You?" and Other Essays* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 129.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Bildkunst und Wortkunst," in *Was ist ein Bild?*, ed. Gottfried Boehm (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994), 100. There Gadamer makes the connection explicit: "Die Zeitlichkeit des Vollzugs präzisiert sich in der Zeitstruktur des Lesens."

means “performing a constant hermeneutic movement guided by the anticipation of the whole, and finally fulfilled by the individual in the realization of the total sense [*Sinnvollzug des Ganzen*].”⁶¹ While Gadamer concedes that the reading that constructs a poetic text, artistic image, or musical piece “takes time,” he insists that this description reverts to our ordinary understanding of time wherein such processes are measurable. But, as we have seen, the presentation of the work also exhibits its own temporality in which time neither lasts nor passes away and yet something happens. So while reading is a synthetic act that must be carried out in a temporal series, reading only succeeds when it discovers the unique time structure of the work and submits to it. Absorbed in the work and responsive to its autonomous temporality, a meaningful whole emerges for the reader. “The flux of reading, through which the text is articulated, in which the picture is shown, [and] the musical piece is phrased, is a performative enactment [*Vollzug*].”⁶² To read in this way is to tarry with the work. *Verweilen* is thus the way of being present to the artwork; it is the temporality proper to the *Vollzug* of the work through which it comes to presence.⁶³

4. Presence: The Experience of Fulfilled Time

In tarrying one performatively enacts the work so that “it” comes out; when this happens one experiences the compelling presence of the work. Gadamer highlights the experience of presence where he speaks of “the while” (*die Weile*) as the temporal dimension opened up by tarrying (*Verweilen*).⁶⁴ “The *Weile* has

⁶¹ *GW* 8: 119; *RB*, 28. By the “total sense” Gadamer means what, in *Truth and Method*, he describes as “total mediation.” The hermeneutic movement between the work of art and our understanding of it is the process of interpretation that arrives at a (relative) completion where the work suddenly comes forth such that we find ourselves saying, “That’s it!” I take Gadamer to be addressing the temporality of this process.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 394; *ibid.*, 219 (translation altered). The German text reads: “Der Fluss des Lesens, in dem sich der Text artickuliert, in dem sich das Bild zeigt, das Musikstück phrasiert wird, is ein Vollzug”).

⁶³ On this topic one should consult the important discussion of *Verweilen* as “poetic” dwelling in James Risser, *Hermeneutics and the Voice of the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 199–206.

⁶⁴ In *Truth and Method* Gadamer explicitly refers to Heidegger’s discussion of “the while” in “Anaximander’s Saying.” Here is the cited passage: “That which stands presently in unconcealment stays [*weilt*] in it as the open region. That which presently stays (whiles) [*Weilende (Weilige)*] in that region comes forth into it, into unconcealment, from out of unconcealment. . . . The presently present stays awhile. It lingers [*verweilt*] in coming forth and going away. The stay is

this very special temporal structure—a structure of being-moved, which one nevertheless cannot describe merely as duration, because duration means only movement in a single direction. This is not what is determinative in the experience of art.”⁶⁵ The temporality of tarrying is not a matter of duration, nor is the “while” a mode of time subject to measurement or calculation. In fact, it is not a matter of the passage of time at all, for tarrying brings time to a halt. Tarrying with the work of art, one experiences an interval in the midst of passing time, a kind of spacing within time. It is by performing the work, tarrying with it until it comes to stand, that the time-space of the work is opened and held open. What comes forth in the temporal expanse of the work stays a while. When this happens, the work of art is “there” (*Da*); it comes forth in its being (*sein*). Once again the phenomenon of festivity exhibits the temporal structure of this experience. As Josef Pieper notes, in festive celebration passing time stands still.⁶⁶ Gadamer concurs: “It is of the nature of the festival that it should proffer time, arresting it and allowing it to tarry. The calculating way in which we normally manage and dispose of time is, as it were, brought to a standstill.”⁶⁷ Agamben likewise characterizes the experience of art as a “stop” in time: “There is a stop, an interruption in the incessant flow of instants that coming from the future, sinks into the past, and this interruption, this stop, is precisely what gives and reveals . . . the mode of presence proper to the work of art. . . . [It is] as though we were thrown back into a more original time.”⁶⁸ For Gadamer too, it is precisely by suspending the flow of passing time that the artwork elicits another, more authentic experience of time.

However, this paradoxical description of a “stop” that arrests our ordinary experience of time only provides a negative characterization of that other experience of time offered by festivals and works of art. The “more original time” into which we are cast by such an interruption is positively characterized as the experience of being immersed in the time-structure of the work itself. By tarrying with the work we are drawn into the non-durational expanse of “the while” opened by the work. For Gadamer, “it is an intrinsic characteristic of every festival that it enjoys a specific rhythmical recurrence that elevates it

the transition from coming to going” (Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, translated and edited by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 263; see *GW* 1: 129n225; *TM*, 165n34).

⁶⁵ Gadamer and Dutt, *Gadamer in Conversation*, 76–77.

⁶⁶ Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 29.

⁶⁷ *GW* 8: 133; *RB*, 42.

⁶⁸ Agamben, *Man Without Content*, 99.

above the flow of time.” Festivals have their own rhythm, their own temporality, such that, “in the course of festive time, a heightened moment returns.”⁶⁹ The same is true of art where, tarrying with the work, we submit to its rhythm and are held within the while of the work in a “heightened moment” that has no measurable duration. In tarrying one has an experience of time where the present is not determined by a calculative orientation toward the future. Instead one is completely absorbed in the very presence of what comes forth. Gadamer sees here a parallel between the celebration of religious rites and the engagement of works of art. “Whoever participates in a cultic act in this way lets the ‘divine’ emerge, so that it is like a palpable bodily presence. This applies very well to an artwork. Standing before its appearance we also say: ‘That’s right!’ [*So ist es!*]”⁷⁰ Thus Gadamer holds that “the ontological mode of aesthetic being is marked by parousia, absolute presence.”⁷¹ But here parousia indicates not a permanent presence but, rather, the temporal modality of the work of art that, having been enacted, comes to stand. Through the performative enactment of art one enters into a more original dimension of time where, tarrying with the work, one becomes absorbed for a while. There one experiences the fullness of time that gathers past and future into the presence of the work.

For Gadamer, however, the experience of “absolute presence” does not mean that one is transported outside of time altogether. To the contrary, what he seeks to articulate is still an experience of time. Despite the occasional reference to the “timeless present” of art,⁷² Gadamer is usually more circumspect about identifying the presence of aesthetic being in this way. Above all, he warns against conceiving the while as a “nunc stans.” In tarrying it is not a now, but rather passing time itself that stands a while.⁷³ Moreover, he recognizes that any reference to the “timelessness” of art requires that it be thought together with the experience of time from which it arises and to which it remains dialectically related. For this reason Gadamer resists speaking of two kinds of temporality, one profane or historical and the other sacred or supra-historical. Inevitably, he warns, this approach results in a dialectical antithesis of the two. In the end, to speak of a “sacred time” obscures the real problem, which has to do not with removing the artwork from time but with under-

⁶⁹ *GW* 8: 298; *RB*, 60.

⁷⁰ *GW* 8: 389; *GR*, 213.

⁷¹ *GW* 1: 133; *TM*, 124–25.

⁷² *GW* 8: 2; *GR*, 125.

⁷³ *GW* 8: 365.

standing its distinctive way of being temporal.⁷⁴ The temporal experience of art that misunderstands itself as “sacred time” is one in which the “present” is not experienced as a fleeting moment but rather as a fulfilling presence, a *parousia*. This invokes an experience of time that contrasts with our ordinary experience of temporal succession. And it is in tarrying that we experience time in this way. Gadamer therefore introduces a new distinction between the time of tarrying and the time of succession by which he appropriates or, better, supplants the religious dichotomy between sacred and profane time.⁷⁵ Consequently, he would surely refuse Pieper’s claim that, in the festival (or the artwork), “the everyday realm of existence is thrown open to Eternity.”⁷⁶ So we should observe the caution with which Gadamer nevertheless suggests that “perhaps [tarrying] is the only way . . . granted to us as finite beings to relate to what we call eternity.”⁷⁷ So while this remark underscores the import of the experience, it should not be construed as reinstating the dichotomy of time and eternity.

Nonetheless, tarrying invokes another experience of time that is sharply distinguished from our ordinary experience of time. Gadamer therefore introduces a distinction that contrasts two fundamental modes of temporal experience—the experience of time as “empty” and that of time as “fulfilled.” By “empty time” he refers to the conception drawn from our experience of time as the constant succession of “nows” coming from the future and receding into the past. From this experience the temporal succession is abstracted from its contents so that time can be utilized as a measure. But to abstract time in this way is effectively to “empty” it. This conception is derived from the temporal experience distinctive to human beings for whom time is primarily a sense for the future, not the present. This is our ordinary, pragmatic experience of time as something with which we have to reckon in formulating and executing our plans. Here time is made a function of purposive action. By anticipating what is not yet we relate what is foreseen to the present. The present time that lies between the past and the anticipated future is experienced as “time for” and as “time until.” It belongs to the structure of this mode of temporality that such time is experienced as “empty” precisely because it is viewed in relation to that which would “fill” it. “Time is here encountered, therefore,

⁷⁴ *GW* 1: 127; *TM*, 119.

⁷⁵ Noting this displacement, Ross interestingly suggests that it may imply “an emphatically anti-metaphysical, or, perhaps, ultra-concrete account of the sacred” (Ross, “The Temporality of Tarrying,” 108).

⁷⁶ Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 31.

⁷⁷ *GW* 8: 136; *RB*, 45.

as that which is to be disposed of, as that which can be filled in one way or another.”⁷⁸ Between the extremes of boredom (where we have “too much” time) and bustle (where we have “too little” time) we experience time as something that has to be spent. To experience time as empty is therefore to experience time as being at our disposal.

There is, however, a distinct mode of temporal experience in which we do not reckon with time at all and where it is not viewed as something we have at our disposal. Both the festival and the artwork exhibit this distinctive experience of time. It is not that the festival fills an otherwise empty time in a particular way. “On the contrary,” Gadamer writes, “the time only becomes festive with the arrival of the festival.” The work of art is likewise truly there when it is enacted according to its own time structure. The autonomous temporality of the festival and the artwork emerges only by interrupting our ordinary experience of time as empty succession. In both cases there arrives a self-fulfilling moment in which time is no longer experienced as a “time for . . .” “The originally sacral character of all festivals obviously excludes the familiar distinction in our experience of time between present, memory, and expectation. The time experience of the festival is rather that of its *enactment* (*Begehung*), a present time (*Gegenwart*) sui generis.”⁷⁹ The same is true of art. The time of the artwork is the moment, the authentic present that is only there in its performance. As Agamben holds, “in the work of art the continuum of linear time is broken, and man recovers, between past and future, his present space.”⁸⁰ In tarrying with the work, an event of being, a coming-to-presence takes place that marks a break in the flow of time, a rupture that constitutes an opening within time itself. In the encounter with the artwork, one experiences an abiding presence that, we have seen, Gadamer does not hesitate to call a *parousia*. By arresting the sequential flow of our ordinary experience of time, both the festival and the artwork reveal “a more original temporality” that otherwise remains concealed in the experience of passing time. This is the authentic experience of time as “fulfilled.”⁸¹ Like the festival, the work of art

⁷⁸ *GW* 4: 140; “Concerning Empty and Ful-filled Time,” 344.

⁷⁹ *GW* 1: 128; *TM*, 121 (translation slightly modified.)

⁸⁰ Agamben, *Man Without Content*, 101–2.

⁸¹ At issue in the temporality of the festival and the artwork is the character of time itself as transition. In “empty” time transition is a matter of the passing of time where the present is experienced merely as the passage from the future to the past. But in “fulfilled” time transition is not a matter of succession but of a time in which the past is experienced in its departure and the future is released into its beginning. This is the experience of sudden change, the abrupt appearance of something new and the sinking away of what is old. It is the experience of becoming

“fulfills every moment of its duration.” However, this is a unique duration that cannot be measured, because, strictly speaking, it neither lasts nor passes away. “It is an enduring determinateness [*bleibende Bestimmtheit*] that bears us for a while [*eine Weile*], whether a short or a long time.”⁸²

Standing before the work of art, immersed in its radiant presence and held within its “present,” it is as if time has come to a halt. Whoever is absorbed in the artwork in this way forgets time. But what is “forgotten” is just the temporal course of experience that rises from the future only to sink immediately into the past. In the genuine encounter with art something comes to stand in the midst of passing time; the work of art is “there”—at least for those who engage it, performing the work so that it comes forth. The work thereby enacted joins past and future in a unique present that arrests our ordinary experience of time. Paradoxically, then, time is brought to a standstill within time by the distinctive temporality of the artwork. Coming-to-stand, the work thus marks an interval that interrupts the empty flow of time by opening a space for another, more original experience of time. Tarrying with the work of art and absorbed in its presence, one is thereby drawn into the while of the work wherein one experiences the “fullness of time.”⁸³

something else “in the very immediacy of having become something else.” Past and future are thus held together within the fullness of the present. In this experience of transition, where end and beginning are joined, we find “the true being of time.” Here transition means a “definite-indefinite being which in the experiences of departing and beginning brings the flow of time to a standstill” (Gadamer, *GW* 4: 146–47, 149–50; “Empty and Full-filled Time,” 348, 350.)

⁸²) Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Die Kunst als Feiern,” in *Was der Mensch Braucht: Anregungen für eine Neue Kunst zu Leben*, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz, 5th ed. (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1985), 68 (my translation).

⁸³) *GW* 1: 126; *TM*, 119.

