Painting Pointing Past Itself: Heterogeneity and Contingency in *The Fulbright Triptych*

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Looking at *The Fulbright Triptych*, one does not get the sense that one looks at a single, unified object. The overall size as well as the detail and density of its contents compels one to treat it like an installation or a mural, whose perusal prompts the viewer to assume an ambulatory relation to the work. Moving alongside its three panels, one steps up close to make out its details, and back again in an attempt to behold the entirety of the work's structure and composition, only to shift position again in order to be able to consider its elements in various combinations and from different angles. The numerous objects depicted in the *Triptych* not only include different kinds of paintings, but reference a broad array of image types and documents, such as photographs, Polaroids, drawings, postcards, small posters, magazine clippings, handwritten notes, envelopes, and an exit visa. This list merely refers to the objects and images hung on the walls. To it we must add the depiction of two windows in the middle panel with a view of a small town and the countryside behind it, the table with the printmaker's tools on it, positioned directly underneath the windows, the radiators half-covered by the table, and the family of three (father, mother, and daughter) who are placed in the two outer panels, with the father on the right and the mother and child on the left.

While *The Fulbright Triptych* is neither a collage nor an installation—it does not feature any items that were pasted onto or affixed to it, but consists solely of a painted-on panel—its different elements evoke the impression of great heterogeneity. This impression is caused not only by the diversity of the objects themselves, but by the uneven conceptual configuration of space and by the hybrid invocation of different representational conventions and periods: the triptych format and the flat, frontal presentation of the characters is reminiscent of medieval ecclasiastical art; the near-taxonomic array of utensils on the table and the unconventional placement of the figures in relation to it obliquely invokes primitive art's effort to document its own civiliza-

tion. This aspect is, in my opinion, confirmed by the inconsistencies in the construction of outdoor space, which suggests that mythology and symbolism attenuate the initial impression of an organically extending space. Due to these factors, the notion of the painting pointing past itself is not to be understood merely as a metaphor for the illusion of space that it creates. Referencing both symbol and reality, presentation and representation,[1] *The Fulbright Triptych* pictorially and conceptually wants to be more than a painting, more than either an object or a medium. It is not a work of multimedia art, but it bears the mark of intermediality. It evokes other mediums discursively, through its own discourse of painting.

While the objects on the wall are clearly identifiable as painted representations of drawings, photographs, clippings, or handwritten notes, their painterly qualities increase their generic attributes. In the encounter with the work, any appreciation of the material specificity of, say, a faded Polaroid or a wilted, dog-eared magazine clipping is replaced by a different semantic decoding process. This is the same process that also puts various pictorial segments in relation to one another, subjecting them to multiple readings and placing them into speculative narratives about the depicted family members and their relations to the objects on the wall and the space in which they are seated—which, in turn, gives rise to further speculation about their fates, histories, attributes, and so on. Of course, it may be argued that what is at issue is really the traditional hermeneutic process of reading figurative paintings. But this process is complicated by two aspects—the first is the plethora of pictorial elements that confront the viewer in their dialogic array and that define the act of reading the painting as an elaborate task. This self-reflexive acknowledgment of viewership is supported by the second complication of traditional hermeneutics—the strong inscription of specularity whose effect is compounded by the considerable gradations of realism, the uneven designation of artifice, and the combination of flatness and depth. While the inscription and refraction of viewing positions has been an inherent condition of painting since the fourteenth century, the establishment of perspectival coherence has also had the effect of suturing specular identity into illusory coherence. By contrast, *The Fulbright Triptych* fulfills these conventions only superficially and, in fact, subverts them through intimations of spatial incoherence. It has been argued that *The Fulbright*

Triptych does not yield an epistemologically coherent view. Instead, the viewer's gaze is thrown back onto itself,[2] an indication that the work is a product of the modern era, obliquely effusing, as it does, modern art's tendencies of distortion and abstraction, as well as postmodern art's synthesization and polemical hybridization of diverse logics, periods, and styles of representation.

Figurative paintings, due to a denotative dimension that is largely absent from abstract art, are often perceived as having a larger degree of "self-evident contents" that would seem to overdetermine their interpretation. But, as Roland Barthes concluded many years ago, denotation ultimately is subsumed by connotation.[3] In this sense, the horizon of interpretive possibilities of any figurative work is as wide as that of abstract or minimalist art. In addition, *The Fulbright Triptych*, through its palpable inscription of spectatorship and through what has been termed its "combination of epigrammatic precision and epic prolixity,"[4] suggests that the viewer's interpretive work may easily incur an additional layer of reflection. The fact that critics speak of their impression that the painting projects "contradictory attitudes"[5] can be read as an indication that we evaluate not only the work, but our own engagement with it, our labor that we invest in the reading process, and our feelings that get sparked and that may themselves become the subject of reflection, along with the memories that the viewing process may generate. None of this is to take away from *The Fulbright Triptych*'s denotative wealth. In contrast to nonfigurative art—particularly high modernist art and the minimalism of the neo-avant-garde, whose avoidance of denotation and legibility is emblematic of modern art's resistance to objectification and its striving for autonomy—*The Fulbright Triptych*'s surface detail identifies its objecthood as something inviting. It *wants* to be "used" by the viewer; it invites reading, decoding, and interpretation.

The painting offers an inexhaustible spectrum of possibilities of interpretation and narrativization. The array of various objects and segments that fill the painting does not produce a seamless complementarity, but a partial overlap that perpetually defers finite interpretation. There is the implication that many of the elements have a certain relevance to one another. Or, to put it differently, they are in dialogue with one another. They want to speak to one another and to the viewer. Any danger that meaning may become closed is undercut by the frisson that is generated by the diverse and

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All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him

contradictory implications which emerge in the comparison of its various segments. Dialogue thus always incurs a certain measure of misunderstanding, uncertainty, and ambiguity. All this makes the triptych fraught with meaning and possibilities. The reading process is additionally complicated through subtle irony and self-reflexive theatricality. For example, the painter's family is not depicted as a unit but is separated by the painting's structure. Allusions to holiness (the mother-and-child motif, the vaguely biblical look of the father) are undercut by the interjection of art-making into the scenario. Displacing the family to the outer panels, the large table in the central panel functions as an altar of sorts, but displays only the artist's utensils. Art is thus identified as a decidedly secularized form of religion.[6] At the same time, art's centrality to German idealism's quest for eternal truth is juxtaposed to the dullness of an average German village, which is expressed through the bland postwar architecture and the nondescript countryside behind it. Noteworthy as well is the association of the artist's tools and the art-making process with the painting of Hanseatic merchant Georg Gisze located just above the letter that hangs directly above the table in the center of the middle panel. *The Fulbright Triptych* here cites a classic example of Renaissance art that registers the historical rise of the middle class and locates art-making in proximity to mercantile interest.[7] Implicitly, Dinnerstein thus situates himself in relation to the marketplace, even if the production context for *The Fulbright Triptych* is, as the title of the painting points out, that of a state-sponsored fellowship.

This aspect, the Fulbright scholarship's mission of creating understanding and friendship between different cultures and people, is of importance if one considers the broader historical context of postwar German politics, arts sponsorship, and German-American relations. While postwar German history up until the mid-1960s was overdetermined by the geopolitical, economic, and ideological polarization into east and west, with West Germany, under a Christian conservative government, recruited into NATO and built up as a bullwark against communism, the period from the mid-to-late 1960s through the 1970s was determined by a succession of liberal socialist governments that effected political changes in several areas: West Germany initiated a politics of cooperation with Eastern Bloc countries, particularly with East Germany. From within, it sought to demonstrate its spirit of democracy by establishing a public

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sphere of open political and cultural debate, and by cultivating the ideology of consensus building. As part of this democratic ethos, but more specifically within a socialist spirit, government legislation substantially improved access to higher education, while also insisting on the independence of the educational sphere from the control of centralized government. The late sixties and early seventies also saw aggressively stepped-up state sponsorship of the arts. While the West German state had heavily funded the arts since its inception in 1949, during the sixties funding became extended to less well-established arts and to film and media. Significantly, monies were not restricted to artists from Germany—which is one of the reasons why West Germany became a global center for experimental art and for several international avant-gardes. As a response to the Nazi period's suppression of artistic freedom, artists in West Germany were highly encouraged to exercise unconditional critique of the system. Allowing artists to bite the hand that fed them was regarded as proof of the liberal democratic climate of the new republic. Art was also assigned a crucial role in helping West Germany demonstrate that it was willing to own up to its historical responsibility of coming to terms with the legacy of the Nazi period. The fine arts and performing arts came to complement a broad-based cultural initiative, which included historical education about the Third Reich for all citizens via school curricula, museum programs, and memorial events, a politics of reparation and reconciliation with the victims of the Holocaust, and a sponsoring of German-Jewish relations (which were regarded as overlapping if not synonymous with German-Israeli relations).

The Fulbright Triptych can be related to certain aspects of this period, particularly with regard to the representation of the Jewish resident artist in a land that had killed six million Jews. Dinnerstein depicts himself and his family through a series of ambiguities and dualities that point to the historical paradoxes of the relationship of Jews to Germany. On the one hand, the family in the painting alludes to Christ's family and thus stresses the origin of Judeo-Christian ties. This allusion is undercut by the female gender of the child, which secularizes the family. A similar internal contradiction is achieved through the tension between the secular, contemporary look of the mother and the slightly anachronistic look of the father, whose unconventional pants and full beard invoke vaguely biblical connotations that implicitly point to the role of Judaism

as spiritual and cultural sponsor. The altarlike table with utensils and the reshaped and repurposed mini triptych on it identifies the significance of Jewishness in the secularizing role of art (religious signifiers are converted into artistic ones). The painting particularly alludes to the crucial role of Jews as patrons, collectors, and connoisseurs who, in one way or another, have significantly furthered Western art since the Renaissance. The image's polysemy thus serves as a commentary on the complex history of Jewish identity and also on the complicated relation between being Jewish and being German. Situating the family of three within a German-identified environment, the triptych testifies to the fact that it was once again possible for Jews to live in Germany, whether as foreign visitors or as Germans. But it is also possible to regard the family that is depicted as not being Jewish at all. Their looks combine impressions of suburban plainness with elements of folklore in a manner that was not uncommon for educated Germans who were influenced by the semiotic codes and the lifestyle of the counterculture of the late sixties and early seventies.

These signifiers of ambiguity, heterogeneity, and eclecticism stand in what initially appears to be a contrasting relation to another element of the painting: the clear-cut division between inside and outside space. This separation references a division between Jewish private sphere and German public sphere, alluding to the punitive consequences of Jews' resistance to fully assimilate to German culture and the protective measures these consequences necessitated. But this binary, too, is undercut, particularly if one applies a historical perspective to German culture that considers the centrality of the private sphere to the construction of the public sphere in the early modern era. The official, idealist version of this model regards the private sphere as the space in which German burghers could educate themselves without being disturbed by the vitiating influences of advancing capitalism and bureaucracy.[8] Once their exposure to arts and letters had made them into fully human(ist) beings, they could, in turn, wield this education and moral maturity to make the outside world—signified as the public sphere of political and philosophical debate, but also as the sphere of commerce—a better place. However, not only does this model not consider Jewishness as a factor in the construction of enlightenment culture—it also conceives of the construction of this culture exclusively in dialectical terms. *The Fulbright Triptych* qualifies

this model by identifying the private sphere as a decidedly nonpure space that already contains signifiers of commerce, of politics, and of a broad array of artworks, not all of which would have been considered respectable pieces of education for burghers.[9] In this sense, the painting's commentary on the private/public split complicates rather than reinforces the cultural dynamic that subtends this divide. The relation between private and public, which is so central to German history and philosophy, is here implicitly identified as always already hybridized.

The painted view through the windows onto the outside reflects the painter's choice to consider Germany in relation to a broad historical framework. While the rendition of village architecture does not ignore the consequences of World War II (bland 1950s building style is stressed over medieval village architecture that might have been destroyed by air raids), this reference is implicit at best. Its muteness suggests a certain resistance to reducing the depiction of Germany to signifiers of the Nazi period and its aftermath. Instead, the painting rhetorically conjures an image of the village as a place outside of history by evoking the impression of the ordinariness and calmness of village life and the gentle beauty of the surrounding nature. This depiction is not incompatible with the rendition of the inside of the house, if one chooses to reread what I have characterized as Jewish eclectisism in a decidedly more apolitical manner as a love of "the arts" as conveying a transcendental, seemingly objective kind of beauty. It is important to understand this rhetorically broadened view about Germany as a reflection of the painting's production context, which saw a dual strategy of legitimizing Germany vis-à-vis the world: on the one hand, efforts were made to explicitly thematize the legacy of the Nazi period and to enlist the arts into this process; on the other hand, Germany and, perhaps more accurately, "Germanness" became once again promoted in terms of a Kantian understanding of ahistorical and apolitical values: the cherishing of beauty, truth, and virtue, and a promotion of art for art's sake. The goal of this dual rhetoric of legitimation was to seize on aspects of German heritage that were deemed uncontroversial and regarded as German culture's contribution to Western epistemology and philosophy. The ultimate goal was to recuperate Germany within a climate of reconciliation and understanding between cultures—a politics that was practiced by the United States, West Germany, and Israel alike.

While *The Fulbright Triptych* references this political agenda, it also safeguards against some of its stultifying implications. The painting's numerous instabilities produce a sense of constructedness about its aesthetics. Its address to the viewer is self-conscious and the painter's self-portrait is performative. He is aware of his own role as articulator of these ideologies of cultural understanding and reconciliation, because these are closely connected to the purpose of the Fulbright fellowship. And while the fellowship is a way of enlisting the artist in the service of cultural ambassador, the category of the visiting fellow or artist-in-residence also implicitly undercuts ideologies about the national specificity of art production and a nation's "cultural goods" with discourses of transnationalism. In this regard, it is particularly notable how the triptych seizes on the tension between Germanness and Jewishness by thematizing migration and diaspora. While Jewishness is nearly synonymous with diaspora, the painted detail of a 1918 exit visa from Russia is fraught with associations and implications. The visa codifies diaspora as westward and not exclusively based on refugee status, and it draws attention away from the forced exile of many German Jews, which might have been a more obvious choice for Dinnerstein to comment on. The artist's own sojourn in Germany for the Fulbright fellowship constitutes another aspect of this transnationalism. Unfolding in a very different historical period, Dinnerstein's trip to Germany is nonetheless indirectly a result of the history that has passed. As a Jew visiting a country whose own Jewish community has been radically reduced, his visit must be seen as a continuation of the diaspora, whose reverse direction lends it demonstrative force and political charge. The implications of his visit—which took place at a time when many non-German Jews still refused to visit West Germany—also make him an eyewitness whose stay in the country enables him to "inspect" it firsthand and use his art as a form of testimonial.

Needless to say, Dinnerstein's Jewishness makes his role as eyewitness/evaluator more charged. Bearing witness has, of course, been a central element in the uncovering and bringing to trial of the crimes of the Holocaust. Yet, to understand the particular implications of the witness model that pertains to Dinnerstein's mission, it may be useful to point out that the deployment of witness testimonials did not remain uncontested during the postwar period that saw efforts to confront the Holocaust. What

compounded the confrontation of the ineffable personal and historical trauma was the emergence, during some of the trials, of an infamous, defeatist logic of Holocaust denial, that, as French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has explained, has necessitated the rethinking of nothing less than the very foundations of language, on which arguments and counterarguments, debate and discourse, and, indeed, the social as such are built.[10] At issue was a "bad faith" question that attempts to play out the status of the eyewitness against the existence of gas chambers. As Lyotard paraphrases it:

> In order for a place to be identified as a gas chamber, the only eyewitness I will accept would be a victim of this gas chamber; now, according to my opponent, there is no victim that is not dead; otherwise, this gas chamber would not be what he or she claims it to be. There is, therefore, no gas chamber.[11]

In addition to the general crisis that befell epistemology and representation in the aftermath of the Holocaust, this logic of cynicism triggered a particular philosophical response, which, like numerous other responses to the Shoah, was influenced by Jewish skepticism. It argued for a new understanding of language itself, and implicitly, a new understanding of the social. It claimed that speech acts are deeply incommensurate, as though two speakers barely inhabit one and the same reality. Consensus becomes impossible not because of the quality of the argument but because the foundation for consensus-building is no longer given, as one participant in an argument is unable to assume the perspective of his/her opponent. Lyotard's theoretical investigation, which was triggered by the Holocaust trials but applied its insights to general linguistic structures, concluded that the social is so radically fragmented that reality can no longer be consensually verified. Quite influential from the 1970s to the end of the millennium, Lyotard's thinking uncovered the irreducible residue of relativism that inheres in linguistic structures, whereby notions such as objective reality and the categorical imperative lost much credence in the age of postmodernism. This epistemological shift also partially caused the redesignation of the function of the witness, who is no longer regarded as the purveyor of objective proof, but whose testimonial is contingent on the ability to clearly define an argument's discursive parameters (implying that speech is always political). The witness's main task is no longer to rectify injustice but

to keep testifying to its existence and to exercise "damage control" by keeping injustice from getting bigger. To retheorize language and the social this way has also had profound consequences for our understanding of aesthetics. Heterogeneity is redefined as the incommensurability of signs and speech acts, no matter whether the term is applied to the formal structure of a particular artwork or to its medium and specific contents.

The primary purpose of this admittedly long excursion is to contrast it with Dinnerstein's exemplification of eyewitness. Notwithstanding its formal and textual instabilities and its pronounced relation to witnessing, *The Fulbright Triptych* is not anchored in issues of incommensurability, but in the mode of dialogue and communication—just as Dinnerstein's visit to Germany took place under the aegis of fostering understanding and reconciliation, not radical dissent. The painting's discourse of intermediality, as well as its tropes of hybridity and "impurity," do not operate on the "black hole" principle of interminable ellipsis that determines abstract art's resistance to legibility and appropriation. While the triptych's textual ambiguities and frissons are apt to trigger debate, their dialogic relationship suggests a constructivist concept of consensus-building.

As such, the painting's mode of address seems close to the basic views and values that informed the communicative ethics discourse that was being advanced by Jürgen Habermas and other continental philosophers in the seventies and eighties.[12] This line of thinking rejected skepticist notions of incommensurability and, instead, set out to theorize the concept of conflict from a pragmatist and constructivist perspective that assumed that it should be possible to draw on language to define ethical principles.[13] The result was the claim that the irreducible ethics criterion for any debate is the ensurance of a standard of equality. The criteria for equality are established not with regard to identities or traditions of its participants, but primarily with reference to the debate scenario itself. According to Habermas, one of the main proponents of discourse ethics, ethical standards are supposed to be guaranteed by the two major criteria that shape the public sphere as the sphere of debate: the quality of the discourse, which is supposed to constitute a rational critical argument judged on its own merits and not by the identities of the arguers, and the quantity of participants, which ideally includes

everyone who is a participant in the public sphere.[14] Most importantly, discourse ethics stipulates that all participants share a minimum of common ground that enables them to entertain all other participants' perspective for the purpose of constructive debate, which implies the consensual establishment of basic rules of engagement.[15] Any other differences between the speakers (such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, or specific and irreversible details of their respective histories) are regarded as secondary at best, because they can ideally be compensated for by the educational and emancipatory effect of the public argument itself and of participating in it.
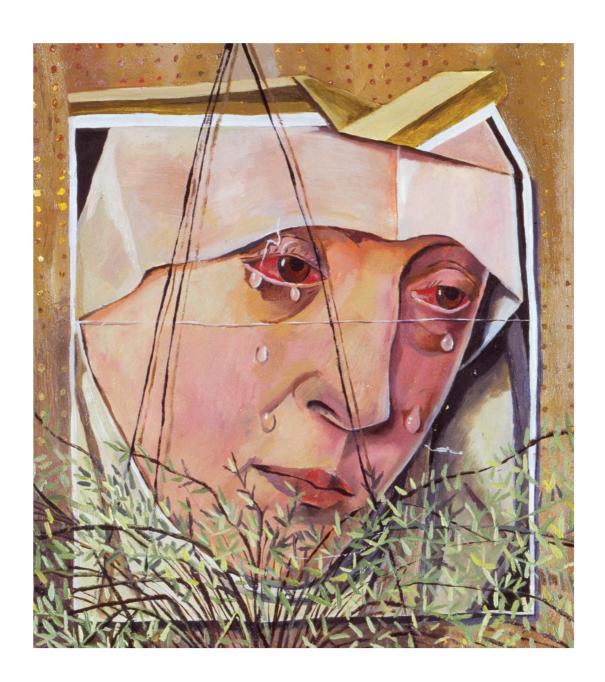
As the principles of communicative ethics had emerged from within the context of postwar liberal democracy, it's assumed that Western liberal democratic tradition is capable of being an impartial sponsor of scenarios of public argument and debate. While the notion of the radical fragmentation of the social has drawn its share of criticism, the theory of equality advanced by discourse ethics is not unproblematic either. It reduces the concept of equality to the parameters of the communication scenario, whereby it seeks to legitimize its explicit dismissal of structurally and historically deeper and more complex inequalities between the speakers. In other words, the sponsoring agent perceives itself as neutral and even perceives the universalization of definitions of ethics and equality as a necessity.[16] While Lyotard's radical skepticism has been criticized for giving free reign to relativism, discourse ethics (and Habermas's version of it in particular) has been criticized for its idealist notions of a public sphere and a communication community that dismiss the actual gravity of participants' differences, which, rather than being attenuated by public debates, get reproduced in them. Habermas's explicit universalism proposes a model for a language community that pays no heed to the concept of otherness and disregards the fact that the other possibly has no stake or a very different stake in this community and its norms.
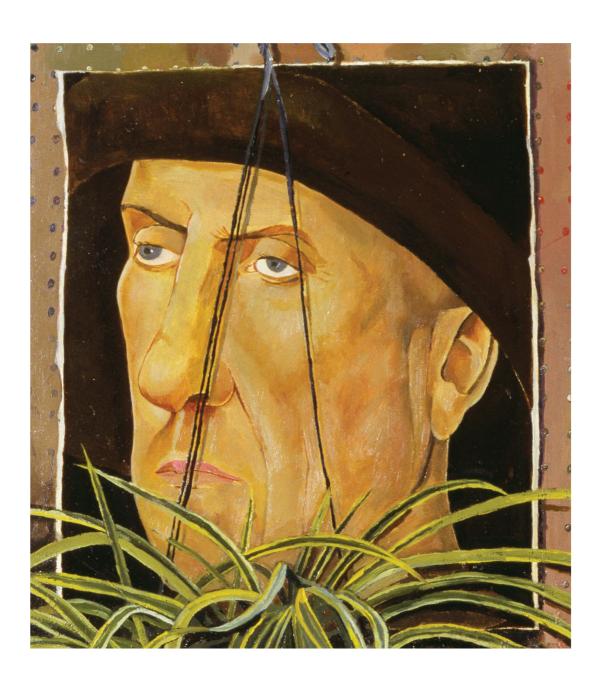
It is here that the question of a potential parallel between the centrism of communicative ethics discourse and the putatively retrograde status of figurative painting in relation to modern art needs to be addressed—a parallel that would, as it were, pivot on the issue of universalism. One might argue that this problematic is encountered in *The Fulbright Triptych*'s designation of painting as a foundation that produces the pictorial elements as ontologically equal. Representing not only specific works, but

other art forms such as photography and drawing, painting becomes the master sponsor of styles and motifs and the initiator of the dialogues and debates that become part of the viewing process.[17] This ontologization posits a clear limit to the concept of heterogeneity in that the very mode of thinking heterogeneity is made contingent on the foundational parameters and regulatory logic of a master discourse. This master discourse becomes the objective correlative to the implicit universalism of 1970s notions of discourse ethics.

The analogy between *The Fulbright Triptych* and the notion of discourse ethics prevalent in 1970s Germany is apposite and problematic at the same time. It is apposite to the extent that the painting, like any work of art, can be read as an allegory of its mode of production. It reflects the various contexts that intersected at the time of its making—international cultural exchange, German-Jewish reconciliation, the considerable influence of Habermasian thought in 1970s West Germany (which included concepts of the public sphere as well as the germinal concepts of what would evolve into discourse ethics),[18] and the (self-)legitimation efforts of West Germany as a liberal nation-state whose sponsorship of the arts is a direct extension of its notion of democratic pluralism and its emphasis on dialogue and consensus-building.[19] But the analogy is also problematic, and this is for two reasons: first, because it pivots on outdated notions of what defines a work of art, its medium, and its historical materialist context; and, second, because the question remains to what extent a work of art can be compared to a country's political and discursive structure in anything but the elastic terms of allegory.

I began my discussion of *The Fulbright Triptych* by pointing out its dialogic nature. The dialogue between its various textual elements—the details it offers, the individual artworks it cites, the mediums it references or invokes—translates into a dialogue between the painting and the viewer. I also pointed out that, while this dialogue is occasioned by a master discourse, it may evolve or, as one might call it, "spiral out" to a point where it is no longer determined by the structure of the work itself. Recent art theory has argued that this spiraling process should lead us to redefine the concept of medium. It should no longer be determined by the work; its hermeneutic engagement by the viewer no longer exhausts itself in the retracing of the work's formal and

thematic elements. As this hermeneutic engagement is influenced by a number of factors—which include the work itself, the historical context of its production, the specific historical moment of its reception, and the various contexts that can be brought to the reading—it is the combination of all these factors that make up the medium of a work. Medium is now defined as what Juliane Rebentisch has characterized as the potentially infinite horizon of context constructions.[20]

While *The Fulbright Triptych* arguably constitutes a privileged instance of this phenomenon due to its self-reflexive tableau style and its stress on presentation, theatricality, and the act of viewing, the principle of potentially infinite context construction basically applies to all works of art. In this respect, any claim about the putatively retrograde status of figurative painting in the modern world and in relation to modern art is ultimately untenable. But what about the status of the specific analogy between the triptych and the notion of communicative ethics that formed part of the painting's historical context of production? I have already indicated that the structural comparison between painting sponsoring the dialogue of pictorial signifiers in *The Fulbright Triptych* and liberal democracy sponsoring a communicative ethics in West Germany, while compelling, may have certain limits. I have argued that the horizon of context constructions occasioned in art reception is potentially infinite, but can the same be said of the order of dialogue generated by the particular mode of discourse ethics that assumed a sponsoring role in West Germany's political structure and public sphere? As discourse ethics is founded on consensus building, it adheres to a fundamentally different universe than art and aesthetics, and while it wishes to sponsor infinite debate, the mode in which this debate is cast has been shaped by the pragmatics and exigencies of fostering communication, not by the radical freedom of aesthetics. On the other hand, when one takes a look at the high degree of liberalism that was, in fact, achieved in West Germany's public exchange of ideas, one has to acknowledge that the concept of consensus-building, regardless of its intentionalist undercurrents that make it an ill-fitting comparison to aesthetics, significantly underwrote the ethical mandate that public debate must remain unconditionally free and unstifled. The discourses and debates that emerged during this period—be it with regard to the legacy of the Third Reich and the war, with regard to the urban guerrilla movement, or with

regard to the emergence of the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO)—were often less predictable, more open and fearless, and, in this sense, perhaps also more radical, than in other European countries. Not unlike the discourses that spiral out from a viewing of *The Fulbright Triptych*, these debates often retained but a tenuous relation to their point of origin. To offer a tentative conclusion on this question, one might say that while aesthetic discourse and political discourse may not adhere to the same order of operation, they should not be considered to be completely separate either, as their respective contexts and the manner in which they are constructed do intersect. If anything, this obliges us to be more precise in our own determination of the relevant contexts when we discuss either subject. Viewing *The Fulbright Triptych* encourages us to do just this, for what makes this work compelling is its explicit refutation of the notion that art exists apart from politics and only for art's sake.