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AN ART FOR ART'S SAKE OR A CRITICAL CONCEPT OF ART'S AUTONOMY? AUTONOMY, ARM'S LENGTH DISTANCE AND ART'S FREEDOM

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ABSTRACT

What is the relationship between the philosophical concept of the "autonomy of art" and the cultural policy-notion of "artistic freedom"? This article seeks to answer this question by taking the Swedish governmental report This Is How Free Art Is (*Så fri är konsten* 2021) and its reception in the Swedish main stream media as an emblematic example and by reading it symptomatically. Firstly, it traces the critical history of "artistic freedom" and the interrelated term "arm's length distance", primarily in the context of Great Britain. Secondly, it critically reconstructs the concept of the "autonomy of art" in the history of Western philosophy by making a critique of a fetishized notion of art's autonomy in the name of *l'art pour l'art*. The main argument is that the idea about art's autonomy, on which the Swedish report leans, resembles such philosophical and art historical idea of art's autonomy. The claim is also that such an understanding of art does not tie up, either philosophically or historically, with the arm's length principle, since they ultimately rely on different conceptions of art's freedom.

KEYWORDS

Art's Autonomy, Arm's Length Distance, Keynes, Cultural Policy, L'Art Pour L'Art, Adorno, Benjamin

FROM CULTURAL DEBATE TO CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Debates in Scandinavia and internationally have, during the past decade, been taken up by questions about freedom within contemporary art and culture. With increasing regularity, liberal opinionmakers' critique, of what they term the "identarian left", on the one hand, and far right extremists, on the other, have featured in the mainstream press. It is argued that both left and right threaten art's freedom and ultimately put at risk freedom of speech.[1] These debates, whose topics have a longer history, going back to terms such as 'cultural war', coined in the early 1990s by the far-right politician Lyndon LaRouche, also coincide with the development of the notion of 'cultural Marxism' (an updated version of the Nazis's 'Kulturbolshewismus').[2] From the standpoint of the present these debates are also connected to the general intensification of the legacies surrounding the events of 1968, which in the last couple of years have been invoked on the left and the right.

Sweden has not been immune to these debates. Thus, when the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis[3] published their report This Is How Free Art Is: The Effects of Cultural Policy Governance on the Freedom of Art *(Så fri är konsten: Den kulturpolitiska styrningens påverkan på den konstnärliga friheten)* in the summer of 2021 it gained much publicity since it wedged itself into a larger discourse about, on the one hand, questions surrounding the freedom of art and culture, and, on the other, the extension of the broader "war on culture" to areas such as education, cultural policy and other contexts. The findings of the report struck a serious tone. It argued that today in Sweden there "is taking place cultural political governance that is affecting, or risks affecting, artistic freedom in a negative sense."[4] This negative influence on artistic freedom, the report claimed, was taking place on three levels. Firstly, at the state level, in the way in which certain state funders—for example The Swedish Arts Council—design their application forms. Secondly, at the municipal level, owing to how ideological ideas about art and culture—for example in the municipalities of Sölvesborg and Nacka (governed by the Sweden Democrats and the Conservative Party *Moderaterna*)—have interfered with art by breaking with the principle of arm's length distance (a term I will explore further in this article). Finally, at the regional level, due to the ways in which regional goals such as "growth" and "income to the region's business life"[5]—for example in the Region of Skåne—have been premiered at the cost of artistic freedom. Put differently, the report discussed examples of politicians at the municipal and regional levels breaking with the arm's

length distance principle for ideological reasons as well as cases in which the interest of the municipality has been promoted, sacrificing the ideal of art's freedom and thereby turning art into an instrument for the growth of the municipality or the region. Greatest emphasis, though, both in the report and in the preceding media debate, has been placed on the state level, primarily focusing on specific information for which the Swedish Arts Council and the Swedish Film Institute, for example, ask their applicants. This information can be about, inter alia, getting a picture of the applicants' gender and ethnicity. More concretely, a particular formulation used in research applications, namely if, and if so how, the project might "integrate an equality, LGBTQ, diversity and intercultural perspective",[6] has been the target for much debate. This question, though, is neither obligatory nor is it evaluated. From interviews with members of the assessment groups at, for example, the Swedish Arts Council and The Swedish Arts Grants Committee—another of the investigated state funders—as well as from their general steering documents, artistic quality is the sole criterion for judgement. Despite this, the official debate came to focus on how left-wing identity politics has now become hegemonic in Swedish Cultural Policy.[7] Two central concepts in the report—and in Swedish cultural policy more generally—are 'artistic freedom' and the 'arm's length principle'. These are concepts that, in the history of Western philosophy and the histories of ideas, can be traced back to the somewhat more complex concepts of 'autonomy' and 'the autonomy of art', which in their turn are interrelated with historical and political traditions of ideas such as liberalism and the bourgeois public sphere. Despite the close proximity between the newer notions 'artistic freedom' and 'arm's length principle', on the one hand, and 'autonomy' and 'the autonomy of art', on the other, they are rarely or never discussed together. Neither in the report *This Is How Free Art Is*, nor in cultural policy documents generally, nor for that matter in the public debate.[8] So, in what way does the philosophico-historical concepts of 'autonomy' and the 'autonomy of art' connect with the more recent concepts of 'artistic freedom' and the 'arm's length principle', drawn from the domain of cultural policy? What idea of art's autonomy is being investigated and sought after in the report? And what does it say about how a continuing investigation about, and construction of, a critical concept of art's autonomy could be formulated?

In an attempt to answer these questions, I will firstly clarify what the report is aiming at when it speaks in terms of 'artistic

freedom' and 'the arm's length principle', by giving a historical background to them. Thereafter I briefly sketch the history of the concept of 'autonomy' in Western philosophy, then relating it to what can be described as 'the autonomy of art' and closely related ideas about bourgeois art, as it came to be formulated by the end of the 18th century and the beginning of 19th century, principally in Germany, England and France. Here I focus on two ways in which the autonomy of art has been theorised, the first of which is tied to what regularly is understood as 'l'art pour l'art', while the second can be termed a critical concept of art's autonomy. I conclude this investigation by discussing how the two different conceptualisations of the autonomy of art relate to one another, and argue as to which of these different understandings of art's autonomy looms inside of the report, even if it is never spelled out. One of the main arguments I am seeking to make here is that the idea about art's autonomy, on which the report leans, resembles the philosophical and art historical idea of 'l'art pour l'art.' A further argument is that such an understanding of art does not tie up, either philosophically or historically, with the arm's length principle, since they ultimately rely on different conceptions of art's freedom. The more general aim with the article is to begin to unravel the oft-cited, yet so rarely critically discussed, concept of 'artistic freedom' by relating it to an idea of 'art's autonomy', as formulated in the Western history of philosophy. By doing this I hope to add some philosophico-historical weight to a cultural debate which rarely traces the long historical lines of ideas and their possible traces in contemporary discussions. This, looking further ahead, could help to construct a critical concept of the autonomy of art and culture that is relevant for the democratic present.

ARTISTIC FREEDOM AND THE ARM'S LENGTH PRINCIPLE

In the report it is established that artistic freedom and the arm's length principle are central to both its analysis and the recommendations it advances. Yet, at the same time, we are told they are concepts "without fixed definitions" and that "researchers as well as different countries' cultural policy approach the concepts in different ways."[9] The authors of the report therefore offer their own definitions of these concepts. Artistic freedom is "*an ideal* that is based on the notion that the art and culture that is produced in society should to the extent possible reflect *free creative processes* and be *evaluated based on its artistic qualities*." This is an ideal which is itself expressed in Swedish cultural policy's national goal,

namely that "culture should be a dynamic, challenging and unbound force with the freedom of speech as its ground."[10]

Concerning the arm's length principle, the authors of the report write that it is built on two conditions in Swedish cultural policy. Firstly, that politicians and political assemblies should "refrain from steering that affects or risks affecting the phenomenon that artists and cultural creators choose to depict, but also how phenomena are depicted."[11] Secondly, that there should be an organisational distance between political decision making and artistic practice." To a large extent, the arm's length principle thus aims to create conditions for artistic freedom by advocating an organisational protection from political decisions about artistic freedom."[12]

Dependent on geographical and historical contexts as these concepts are, it is impossible to make thoroughgoing positivistic definitions of "artistic freedom" and "the arm's length principle", just as the report says it cannot do. For example, countries as different as France, Denmark and Great Britain all applied the principle of arm's length distance in their cultural policy after the Second World War. The precise procedure of this differed, however, depending on each country's specific context.[13] In this way, it is difficult, and indeed far from desirable, to make an ahistorical and positivistic definition of concepts.[14] On the contrary, what is important is to trace these ideas critically and historically to understand their contemporary meanings. This must be our first task.

The arm's length principle is, as it sounds, a metaphor to keep something at a distance. The idea can be traced at least to the beginning of the 20th century, for instance to 1918 in Great Britain and the British advisory committee University Grants Committee, which intended to formulate the relation between the state and universities.[15] Yet it was not until 1946 that the idea, if not yet the term, was being used for the first time in relation to art and culture by the chairman of the then recently established independent government authority, The British Arts Council. This was an organization that developed out of The Council for Encouragement of the Music and the Arts (CEMA) and which had been instituted at the beginning of the Second World War as a state fund for the arts and culture. The chairman of both of these state governmental cultural institutions was the influential British social liberal economist John Maynard Keynes who argued that the state, on the one hand, and art and culture, on the other, should exist at a relative distance from one another. Similar to how universities should be free from

political interference, Keynes argued that experts, rather than politicians, should judge and distribute funds to artists and organisations. "The deal, so as to speak, is that government provides grant-in-aid to legally independent organisations (an arts council being one such) for generalised purposes, such as: 'to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practise of the arts; [and] to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public'."[16] Instead of ministers steering state authorities they should act independently with their own professionals, which, in the case of cultural and arts institutions, include artists, intellectuals and other cultural workers. As Keynes himself expressed it in his opening speech to the British Arts Council:

> Henceforward we are to be a permanent body, independent in constitution, free from red tape, but financed by the Treasury and ultimately responsible to Parliament, which will have to be satisfied with what we are doing when from time to time it votes us money. If we behave foolishly any Member of Parliament will be able to question the Chancellor of the Exchequer and ask why. Our name is to be the Arts Council of Great Britain. I hope you will call us the Arts Council for short, and not try to turn our initials into a false, invented word. We have carefully selected initials which we hope are unpronounceable.[17]

This idea about arm's length distance shelters a tension that is worth bringing up. The principle can, on the one hand, be traced to an idea of laissez-faire, an expression which for instance has been used within the liberal, political and economic philosophy of thinkers such as John Locke and Adam Smith. It is also an expression central in upholding the distance between the individual and civil society, from out of which was made what the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas, at the beginning of the 1960s, termed "the bourgeois public sphere."[18] Despite its heritage in liberal political philosophy the expression of 'laissez-faire' has however primarily been associated with neoliberal economists like Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises. This is slightly misleading since their economic writings, as Quinn Slobodian has shown, demonstrate that they are not in favour of a withdrawal of the state, in favour of the market—as the expression of laissez-fair is sometimes used. Instead, Hayek and von Mises aimed to construct supranational (often non-democratic) global juridical frameworks that would ensure the flow of capital globally.[19]

In his article "The End of Laissez-Faire" Keynes describes the philosophico-political heritage of the notion of laissez-faire, and how it was established and evolved during the 18th century as a resistance and answer to what had earlier been the church, God or the king as the governing authority over the human being.[20] In the same article, as the title shows, Keynes also carries out a strong critique of the same principle. Partly because it contains ideas that lean on Charles Darwin in naturalising property rights and human being's freedom.[21] "It is *not* true that individuals possess a prescriptive 'natural liberty' in their economic activities."[22] Furthermore Keynes argues that it "is *not* a correct deduction from the principles of economics that enlightened self-interest always operates in the public interest."[23] On the contrary, there are examples when a person only acts in their own self interest. Therefore, Keynes suggests "that progress lies in the growth and the recognition of *semi-autonomous bodies* within the State—bodies whose criterion of action within their own field is solely the public good as they understand it."[24] It is these semi-autonomous institutions which the arm's length principle symbolises.

Thus, even though, as some commentators argue, the arm's length principle can be traced to the neoliberal notion of laissez-faire, in fact the way in which Keynes constructs the relationship between state and the individual, and how this difference is transposed by him onto the state and arts and culture, serves as another example, one that is also mirrored in his economical politics.[25] For Keynes, the arm's length principle in no way meant that the state should adopt an 'anything goes' attitude to the arts, leaving it all to a "free market." On the contrary, he advocated that the state save the arts from the market. He wrote about this already in 1936, in an introduction to an article series entitled *"Art and the State"*, where he criticises the then prevailing politics of state laissez-faire towards the arts.

> The exploitation and incidental destruction of the divine gift of the public entertainer by prostituting it to the purposes of financial gain is one of the worser crimes of present-day capitalism. How the state could best play its proper part it is hard to say. We must learn by trial and error. But anything would be better than the present system. The position today of artists of all sorts is disastrous. The attitude of an artist to his work renders him exceptionally unsuited for financial contacts. His state of mind is just the opposite of that of a man the main purpose of whose work is his livelihood. The artist alternates

> between economic imprudence, when any association between his work and money is repugnant, and an excessive greediness, when no reward seems adequate to what is without price. He needs economic security and enough income, and then to be left to himself, at the same time the servant of the public and his own master. He is not easy to help. For he needs a responsive spirit of the age, which we cannot deliberately invoke. We can help him best, perhaps, by promoting an atmosphere of openhandedness, of liberality, of candour, of toleration, of experiment, of optimism, which expects to find some things good. It is our sitting tight-buttoned in the present, with no hope or belief in the future, which weighs him down.[26]

Here, as in other texts by Keynes, we see how, following his economic principles, he proposes state control of the arts and culture, but with the purpose of leaving them alone. This liberal yet regulating disposition towards the arts, and culture's relation to the state, connects with Keynes' economic policy, according to which the state, as Keynes regarded it after having lived through the 1930s depression, should act as regulator and in that way hinder mass unemployment and poverty. According to Keynes, the state should after the Second World War regulate and steer the market and, in that way, build a strong welfare society. Similarly, the arts and culture should be made free and independent—not free within a free market, but free in a political sense. As Dave Beech puts it:

> What the Keynesian architecture of the Arts Council deliberately set out to do was not only secure funding for art but to establish an institutional framework for that funding that coincided neither with the state nor with the market. The state would supply the funds but would otherwise have no direct say in how the money was to be disbursed.[27]

After the arm's length principle had been introduced in 1946 in Great Britain it was directly imported to several European countries, and informed the cultural policies of, for example, France and Denmark, as well as the first official cultural policy program established in Sweden in 1974. That Sweden took an interest in what was happening internationally was obvious. Already in 1949 Tage Erlander, the then chairman of the Social Democratic Party as well as prime minister, announced at a conference on cultural policy that "no specific demands should be imposed on authors and artists. Their requirements for total freedom must be respected."[28]

By the end of the 1960s the pace of policy reform in Sweden was accelerated as a direct consequence of what was happening in other European countries. In 1968 Olof Palme, then Minister of Education, issued the following directive to the Arts Council Inquiry [*Kulturrådsutredningen*]: "The council should make their judgements against the background of other countries." And in the proposition, "National Cultural Policy", the government writes that when it comes to the tasks of The Arts Council: "It should be a natural feature in the work to take part of and use the material that has been worked out by the international organisations and cultural ministries in other countries, in particular the Scandinavian ones."[29]

That Keynes advocated a stronger role for government in the arts—in order to set them free—was also expressed in the fact that this form of governmental steering, coupled with the welfare state, emerged during a period often referred to as the "golden years" of economic and societal development. In Sweden this was characterised by, for example, the expansion and democratisation of university systems, an increase in real wages for everyone in a way that had not been seen previously, and the establishment of a universal welfare system.[30] In Great Britain the British Arts Council was established as a result of the British Labour Party's strong ideas of a welfare politics in the Keynesian spirit. The British Arts Council, as well as other European cultural political authorities, were in other words consequences of the social democratic states' strong economies and distinct ideas that equality should encompass the spheres of art and culture too.[31] And the political tool for the organisation of such a concept of artistic freedom within a welfare state was the 'principle of an arm's length distance', which both can be seen as a celebration and a critique of the liberal notion of laissez-faire and the distance between state and the individual implied therein. However, in order to grasp what the arm's length principle means from the standpoint of today's heated discussion, it is important to contextualise Keynes' understanding of a democratic intervention within a political tradition that is ultimately advocating for a free art and culture. It is a form of intervention that ultimately does not see the capitalist market as synonymous with freedom, but, on the contrary, argues that politics and the state must construct such freedom.

From the 1970s onwards the democratic welfare state changed at its very core, as a consequence of, among other things, the denationalisation of the legal framework of the finance market, with

the consequence that value increasingly moves from work to capital and property, alongside the systematic privatisation of the commons.[32] An unavoidable question, therefore, is what happens to free and autonomous art in an increasingly globalised and deregulated economy governed at a supranational level via large organisations such as the WTO and the IMF. This question is not to be pursued here, though one answer can be found in the Swedish election campaign during the autumn of 2022. When the Swedish newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, posed the question: 'what is the most important cultural policy issue today?', Dick Erixon, the main editor of the journal *Samtiden*, financed by the Sweden Democrats, replied that it was that contemporary provocative art should not be financed by the state. He was above all critical of the so called 1% rule which, since the 1930s in Sweden, has aimed to redirect one per cent of its budget for public buildings to art.[33] Contemporary art, Erixon declared, should instead be financed by the private sector while public funding should go to art and culture that creates "belonging" and "community". The most striking aspect of this position is that it would, unrepentantly, result in the abolition of the arm's length principle and therefore an independent art.[34] Just as problematic, yet rarely commented upon, is that Erixson's declaration testifies to the idea that a 'free' art only belongs to the 'free' market—in other words, an idea of freedom that overlaps with the most extreme liberal, libertarian and neoliberal traditions. This is also an idea of art and cultural freedom that is often uncritically advanced in the Swedish debate as an answer to any branch of culture in crisis, and as a solution for cultural policy in general.[35] A self-proclaimed laissez-faire libertarian, such as Hayek, had affirmed such a position while Keynes had understood the devastation such an attitude had caused within the free arts, which could not survive on a so called "free market." As we will see, when we look at the movement art-for-art's sake, not even some of the most prominent artists and ardent proponents of the free arts, could survive on a free market. This was something that Keynes, who himself was an advocate of advanced art, fully understood.

The concept of artistic freedom is not as simple to trace historically, and seems also to be a specifically Swedish term. What makes its usage harder to pin down is the vagueness in the word "artistic" which does not clarify whether it is the arts, the artist's or someone else's freedom. In order to make some headway in understanding the idea, as a first attempt we can place it in proximity to traditions such as aestheticism and art for art's sake,

emerging at the beginning of the 19th century in England and France. But as we will see, the focus there is on art's freedom, rather than 'artistic' freedom. It is also clear from the report—even if it is not expressed explicitly—that while 'the arm's length principle' is a political tool for the purpose of 'governing' art, 'artistic freedom' is the goal to be achieved. But what is art's freedom?

The report states that artistic activity should be judged on its own merits, in the absence of external standards and without external influence from political decisions. Artistic freedom here is thus to a large extent a freedom in which art—its 'free creative processes'—should govern itself and be judged based on this self-determination. It is an idea of negative freedom, in that it is a freedom from political control at both the organisational level and at the level of content. At the same time, freedom is here a result of a specific constitution of cultural policy, itself a form of political steering. Furthermore, this is an understanding of art's freedom which has similarities with the concept of autonomy as it has been formulated within the Western history of philosophy, from antiquity onwards. For a more multifaceted and philosophico-critical view of the concepts 'artistic freedom' and the 'arm's length principle', as they are presented specifically in the report—and in cultural policy more generally—we should turn to their closest relatives within Western philosophical and art philosophical history: 'autonomy' and 'art's autonomy'.

AUTONOMY AS SELF-DETERMINATION

The concept of autonomy is generally traced back to the classical Greek term, 'autonomia', which refers to a city state's autonomy to govern and administer itself. Here, 'auto' denotes self/I while 'nomos' stands for law. In Aristotle we find the term autarkia—autarchy—which in classical Greek stands for self-sufficiency and independence from external influences. Even if Aristotle wrote about autonomy in relation to subjects, such as friendship and the noble man, it was above all with respect to the independence of the state he was referring to.[36] For example, in *Politics* he writes that the purpose of political society is self-sufficiency, meaning that a state is independent "from outside powers."[37] After Aristotle, the concept of autonomy developed, mainly by the Cynics and the Stoics who put emphasis on the human being's capacity to act without external influence.[38] Moving further along in modern Western philosophy, it is Immanuel Kant's understanding of autonomy that since the late 18th century has had the greatest influence on philosophy, aesthetics and on the modern concept of

art.[39] This despite, as we will get to, the fact that it is debatable whether it really was Kant who philosophically ascribed art the autonomy it has gained in modernity.

But what then is Kant's concept of autonomy? Essential to Kant is the will's autonomy as a condition for acting morally. Furthermore, and while Kantian autonomy might be seen as a version of what the Stoics term 'self-sufficiency', Kant's understanding of autonomy differs in two basic ways. Firstly, in that it is human reason itself that posits the conditions for thinking, and secondly that these conditions are not based on anything external, for example an idea about "the good", but only on itself.[40] Autonomy is thus the potential to govern oneself according to laws that are posited by the human being itself. Kant developed this understanding of autonomy from a critique of several, at his time, already existing positions. For example, he believed that the Wolffian conception of morality was wrong in that it was based on heteronomous principles. Instead, he wanted to develop a moral philosophy based on the principle of autonomy and self-determination.[41] While before the 1800s, morality was mainly seen as subordinate to something else, Kant changed the terrain entirely by ascribing self-determination—that is, autonomy—to morality. "He alone was proposing a truly revolutionary rethinking of morality. He held that we are self-governing because we are autonomous."[42]

Central to Kant then is that freedom is not about specific goals but rather refers to the capacity to act morally from universal and objective rules instituted by human reason. This appears with much clarity in *The Metaphysics of Morals* from 1797 where he writes that an autonomous will is a will that ascribes to itself its own law, in contradistinction to a heteronomous will that is determined by a law governed by the object. An autonomous will must, so to speak, choose its own autonomy. This is why, parenthetically, for Kant autonomy is also closely related with universalism: "The principle of autonomy is this: Always choose in such a way that in the same volition the maxims of the choice are at the same time present as universal law."[43] Kant developed this understanding of the autonomy of the will as the basis for the moral law in his second critique, *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). There he writes: "Autonomy of the will is the sole principle of all moral laws and of the duties conforming to them; any *heteronomy* of the power of choice, on the other hand, not only is no basis for any obligation at all but is, rather, opposed to the principle of obligation and to the morality of the will."[44]

Kant's understanding of the autonomy of the will as fundamental for a universal morality has been questioned by many, for example by Hegel and Nietzsche, mainly for being an unattainable ideal.[45] What is indisputable however, is that it has had a central role in the development of modern liberal democracies. It is also incontestable that the modern thought of art as self-determining resonates strongly with Kant's understanding of autonomy. But how, within the Western philosophical and art philosophical history, is Kant's idea of autonomy as a moral law transferred onto art? Or, put otherwise, how does the autonomy of art relate to the idea of autonomy in political and ethical philosophy?

THE AUTONOMY OF ART AND AESTHETICS: TWO LINES OF APPROACH

1. FROM A FLAWED KANT TO A FETISHIZED ART-FOR-ART'S-SAKE

A standard way of looking at the development of a modern autonomous concept of art is to make it synonymous with the idea of aesthetic autonomy, as formulated in the 18th century in the discipline of aesthetics. Based on Baumgarten's *epistêmê aisthetikê*—a sensory type of knowledge—and in dialogue with the British theory of taste in Shaftesbury, Hume and Burke, among others, such a notion of the autonomy of the fine arts is linked to a specific aesthetic sphere. Kant also has an important place within this tradition, as the specific aesthetic experience in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (1790) develops into an aesthetic judgement of taste. A judgement, which, unlike the practical or moral, is without interest and use. Peter Osborne has criticised how Kant's disinterested judgement of taste has become the model for thinking about the autonomy of art. He writes:

> Even writers as sophisticated in their reading of German idealism as Andrew Bowie and Jay Bernstein for example have contributed to the perpetuation of this myth to the level of a philosophical commonplace through their use of the phrase 'aesthetic autonomy' to refer to the autonomy of art.[46]

Osborne argues that this misreading does not take into account that Kant's judgement of taste and the autonomous aesthetic sphere it opens up is, in Kant, not limited to the arts, but is rather applied to the expansive domain of aesthetics more generally.[47] This is also noted in an anthology on the philosophical history of the concept of autonomy in which the authors write that Kant's

idea of aesthetics and the beautiful has been wrongly attributed as the basis for the modern notion of the autonomy of art, and that this is due to the fact that Kant actually focused on natural rather than artistic beauty. Kant's "focus on natural beauty, and his tendency to privilege it above artistic beauty, makes him a somewhat imperfect fit for accounts that depict *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as the high tide of the development of the autonomy of art."[48] A further problem with tracing Kant's aesthetic judgment to an idea of autonomous art is that, unlike the practical will (as discussed above), aesthetic judgements are not autonomous in the sense of determining their own laws. Casey Haskins commented on this already more than thirty years ago. Kant, he writes, "… never speaks of art—as opposed to the faculties of judgment and taste—as autonomous in the third *Critique*."[49] The reason for this is that Kant's judgement of taste is also determined by the faculty of understanding rather than the faculty of reason, and can therefore not be ascribed the same autonomy as other forms of judgement in Kant's thought, something we will return to shortly. In other words, in Kant, autonomy and aesthetics are separate; art is never attributed an autonomous role and most of his examples revolve around natural beauty.

Despite this, aesthetics as a broad tradition of ideas, and not least Kant's understanding of aesthetic experience and judgement, has been portrayed as the basis for the modern idea of disinterested art. The clearest evidence of this—what John Wilcox at the beginning of the 1950s describes as "the misreading of Kantian aesthetic theory"[50]—and above all the judgement of taste's disinterestedness, is in the French tradition most often named "l'art pour l'art". The latter is a term first used by the French journalist and critic Benjamin Constant in 1804 as a synonym for all sorts of concepts, from Kant's aesthetics, freedom and pure art to disinterested art.[51] The concept was later seamlessly passed on to the eccentric French philosopher Victor Cousin in his lectures at the Sorbonne in the late 1820s, in which l'art pour l'art came to signify what he understood to be Kant's ideas on the judgement of taste: with no use, as pure art and as disinterested. Cousin's lectures were incredibly popular and "it is no exaggeration to say, all young Parisians interested in the arts were getting some of the new aesthetic doctrine, whether they heard it directly or indirectly."[52] The Francisation of Kant's idea of the aesthetic disinterested judgement of taste also had a major impact on closely related movements such as aestheticism (art for art's sake) in England, with leading figures such as

Oscar Wilde, who famously proclaimed that art has no moral responsibility. The idea of art as something free from function, morality, religion, and academic rules, which was promoted in all these 19th century movements, were later on taken up in North American formalism—in both literary and art criticism—from Vladimir Nabokov, Paul de Man and New Criticism to Clement Greenberg's medium specificity, from 1945 onwards.[53]

In these traditions autonomous art is understood as absolutely autonomous in the sense of being fully separated from society, an "aesthetic separatism."[54] Gene H. Bell Villada argues that art for art's sake has been conceptualised as an ahistorical phenomenon, as if disconnected from the world, when in actual fact it should be understood critically within the context from which it emerged, i.e. the Enlightenment, the development of modern France and the 19th century stronghold of industrial capitalism in England. Theodor Adorno too made a philosophico-historical critique of theorisations of art for art's sake in the late 1950s in an article in which he rejected both art for art's sake and committed art:

> Each of the two alternatives negates itself along with the other: committed art, which as art is necessarily detached from reality, because it negates its difference from reality; *l'art pour l'art* because through its absolutization it denies even the indissoluble connection to reality that is contained in art's autonomy as its polemical a priori. The tension in which art has had its life up to the most recent period vanishes between these two poles.[55]

As Adorno notes here, art for art's sake is based on the idea that the self-determining function of art (its autonomy) depends on its total separation from society. However, such art exists only in metaphysics and does not reflect modern art, which is based precisely on a relation to, and at the same time—through its artistic form—a separation from life. Art arises for Adorno in the dialectical tension between the two. The self-understanding of 'l'art pour l'art' is that it takes Kant's idea of the disinterested spectator and turns it into a dogma, an aesthetic separatism. But this understanding is not only wrong in a philosophical sense through its sloppy readings of Kant. It is also a historically inaccurate understanding of how this idea could have emerged. As an idea, one can think of art as separate from morality, religion and labour. But as a historico-philosophical critical argument it does not hold. For example, and this is rarely emphasised, l'art pour l'art poets and

writers like Gautier and Baudelaire could not make a living by producing only for the free market. Their poetry, unlike their news and entertainment journalism, which many of them worked on in parallel, did not sell in the same way as other literature. In other words, they were dependent on other productive work and/or funding from family or other sources. L'art pour l'art worked with a concept of freedom that was idealistic in one sense since this artistic freedom could only be produced and consumed by a certain class of society, and not by everyone. What is needed is a concept of art's autonomy where self-determination becomes a universal principle, just as Kant formulated it. This condition, however, is not to be found in any of the above traditions.

A CRITICAL CONCEPT OF ART'S AUTONOMY

A better and more accurate way of thinking the autonomy of modern and contemporary art can be found in another part of the history of Western philosophy and art theory. This approach can be described as philosophical-problem-historical.[56] This perspective too is based on Kant's aesthetic judgement of the beautiful, but recognises that it must be wholly transformed to become truly autonomous. In his so called *Kallias Letters*, written to his friend Gottfried Körner in 1793, Friedrich Schiller reinterprets Kant, replacing "the role of the understanding with reason in aesthetic judgments".[57] In this way he constructs an analogy between beauty—as represented in art—and the autonomy of the free will as formulated in Kant's moral writings, as we saw earlier. "Beauty is thus nothing less than freedom in appearance."[58] Central to Schiller's idea of the autonomy of art—in which freedom is reflected—is that it is the form of art that creates it. The difference between the appearance of autonomy in an art object and other objects is form. The consequence of this is that, for Schiller, only artistic beauty, as opposed to beautiful buildings or natural beauty such as trees, is truly free.[59] As Bernstein puts it in his introduction to Schiller's letters: "The specifically aesthetic appearing of an object, the experience of an object as beautiful, is the experience of it as possessing an excess of form, and in virtue of this excess soliciting an aesthetic rather than an explanatory response."[60] It is thus through this explicit connection between art and the autonomous will in Schiller's letters that it is in Schiller, rather than in Kant's third *Critique*, that autonomous art as art "gets its first philosophical definition".[61] As we will see, Schiller's emphasis on the form of the artwork, as central to art's autonomy and the way it reflects its freedom, plays a crucial role in how

thinkers subsequently develop this notion of art's autonomy. This is particularly evident in the texts of the early so-called Jena Romantics such as Novalis, Fichte and Schlegel.[62] But here, an emphasis on the autonomy of art through its form occurs not primarily through the concept of form but rather through the idea of 'self-reflection'. Walter Benjamin is one of those who has written about the importance of self-reflection in the Jena Romantics' understanding of art and their critique of art. With Fichte, for example, Benjamin writes, "reflection" is "the reflection of a form."[63]

More than a hundred years after the Jena Romantics' elevation of the self-reflexive artwork, a couple of decades after the corrupting Kantianism of l'art pour l'art, and amid the capitals (Paris and Berlin) of industrial modernity, Benjamin formulates his idea of the autonomy of art. He does so by taking the insight into form and self-reflection from the Jena Romantics while developing it with ideas partly taken from Baudelaire's writings on modern life and from Marx's understanding of the capitalist mode of production. Like Baudelaire, Benjamin saw art and culture as part of the development of modern capitalist society. Thus it is here, in Benjamin's writings, that an idea of art's autonomy as self-determination (via Schiller) and through its form and self-reflection (via the Jena Romantics) emerges for the first time. But not only this. The idea is actualised through the specific social function it assumes in Western capitalist culture. As art has moved out of the church and into the new sacred buildings—museums and theatres—a new kind of deity has begun to appear in the shop windows of big cities. It is the analogue between the futility of art in modern society and the transience of the commodity that Benjamin emphasises when he understands the autonomy of the artwork in relation to the independence of the commodity-form.

Yet what distinguishes the Benjaminian understanding from the autonomy of art from l'art pour l'art is that just as, through its form, art for Benjamin is seen as autonomous (as is the case also for art-for-art's sake), at the same time this freedom is understood by Benjamin in relation to the transformation brought about by capitalist modernity, which has also to some extent given art this freedom. This is perhaps most evident in Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, written between 1927 and 1940, in which he moves through the capitalist metropolis of Paris, where usable objects become dazzling goods in shop windows. Paris is also a city in which the literary salon becomes the "*dialectical reversal* / Last refuge of the commodity."[64] Art becomes art then for Benjamin through its dialectical turning point in relation to the commodity form in that it

is determined by commodity production yet is not identical with it. Similar to how the advocates of l'art pour l'art argued that art must be separated from fraudulent industrial capitalism, Benjamin also saw art as separate from capitalist production. However, unlike the defenders of l'art-pour-l'art, he did not see it as essentially separate, but rather argued that art stood in a historico-philosophical dialectical relationship to the capitalist production of goods.

But if Benjamin, following in the footsteps of Schiller and the Jena Romantics, placed the self-reflective autonomous work at the heart of Europe's modern capitalist centre, it was Benjamin's colleague from the Frankfurt Institute, Adorno, who primarily developed this idea of the specific status of autonomous art as a commodity in modern capitalist society. In the late 1960s, he stated in his *Aesthetic Theory* that art is a social fact, a so-called 'fait social'. "Art's double character—its autonomy and fait social—is expressed over and again in the palpable dependencies and conflicts between the two spheres."[65] Art in modernity for Adorno is autonomous in the sense of being independent by its form (it does not operate under academic or other formal rules). Yet this independence is based on the social function that art takes in a modern capitalist society, where magic and cult no longer enchant man. "It is by virtue of this relation to the empirical that artworks recuperate, neutralized, what once was literally and directly experienced in life and what was expulsed by spirit."[66] While Adorno's concept of form is taken from Schiller, his idea of modernity and art as a social fact is Benjaminian through and through. Like everything else in a capitalist society, art is a commodity. But unlike everyday commodities like food and clothing, which have both an exchange- and use-value, art has no specific use-value (other than being art). The only function it fulfils is that it has no function. Coupled with the understanding that the form of the autonomous artwork is different from other cultural forms with which humans engage, for Adorno "[t]he absolute artwork converges with the absolute commodity."[67] The problem with l'art pour l'art for Adorno, as noted earlier, was that in such a tradition the work of art was seen as completely autonomous rather than in a dialectical relation to the historical processes that enabled this autonomy. And although Adorno argues that a work of art, through its artistic form, maintains a semblance of autonomy, this is precisely an illusion, albeit a necessary one.[68] It is above all, the inherent self-reflection—the critical reason of art, we might say—that the advocates of l'art pour l'art, in their blind naivety, failed to understand.

Marshall Berman and Pierre Bourdieu have shown, in different but equally illuminating ways, how the idea of an autonomous and free art enters modernity as a direct consequence of capitalist society, where art is decoupled from morality, the church and the academy and begins to operate under its own rules with modern intuitions such as literary salons, publishing houses and art markets.[69] In other words, as Stewart Martin puts it, it is with Benjamin and Adorno that we get, for the first time in the history of Western philosophy, a modern concept of the autonomy of art in relation to a capitalist culture.[70]

Let me now briefly summarise the two lines of our analysis here. The l'art pour l'art tradition's understanding of the autonomy of art bypasses a real autonomy grounded in modernity and its social forms in favour of an almost metaphysical idea of beauty as disinterested. Kant's philosophical thoughts, especially on natural beauty as disinterested and without purpose, are vulgarised and turned into philosophical dogma. Thus, in this tradition we lack a historico-philosophical understanding of how this kind of idea of art could develop, which also makes it naive and uncritical. In the second critical lineage on the autonomy of art, we see instead: first, how Kant's idea of the autonomous will is conceptualised as an image of freedom in the work of art; second, that it emerges via the form of the work and third that in capitalist modernity such autonomy is reflected in the social and cultural forms of capitalism, most notably the commodity form. Rather than the end, this last genealogical line on the autonomy of art is the starting point for how a critical concept of the autonomy of art and culture should be developed further for our own present.

FROM ART-FOR-ART'S-SAKE, TO A DIALECTICAL CONCEPT OF ART'S AUTONOMY TO A DEMOCRATIC UNDERSTANDING OF ART'S AUTONOMY AND THEN WHAT?

After this excursion into the conceptual world of the history of philosophy, let us now return to our initial questions. In what ways are the concepts of artistic freedom and the arm's length principle related to the concepts of 'autonomy' and the 'autonomy of art' as I have outlined them above? What idea of the autonomy of art is at work in the report from the Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis and, by extension, in Swedish cultural policy more generally? We have seen how artistic freedom is described in the report *This Is How Free Art Is* as an ideal in which art's own creative processes

should be self-determining, both in terms of content and organisation. This is in line with Kant's idea of the autonomy of the will, which follows its own laws. While an unattainable ideal it should nevertheless always be strived towards. This is also how we should understand the role of the artwork's form as Schiller and Adorno or Wilde, for that matter, account for it. The report also reveals that this ideal of autonomy is politically constituted by the 'arm's length principle'. This principle, as we have discussed, is used to prevent political attempts to control art, to make it useful for specific purposes or allow it to carry a message—as, for example, several municipalities in Sweden have tried to do and as authoritarian regimes have done historically and still do. The report thus testifies firstly that the arm's length principle implies an understanding of art and the market as social-historical rather than natural. Secondly, with examples from the municipalities of Sölvesborg (governed by the Sweden Democrats) and Nacka (governed by the conservative party Moderaterna), the report shows how vital it is for art that the principle of 'arm's length' should be upheld. Without it, there is no free—or let's say, autonomous—art. In short, the report seeks more autonomy for art and culture, both in terms of organisation and content. And this idea of the autonomy of art, which we find in the report, is very similar to Keynes' idea of art in the sense that art is perceived as free and for its own sake in the spirit of l'art pour l'art, but which nevertheless becomes free through political control rather than by being placed on a market.

Despite this essentially sober view of the relative autonomy of art, which seems to lie at the heart of the report, one of the major problems with it, and even more so with the subsequent media discussions, is that it nevertheless tends to view art and culture as somewhat disconnected from the society from which it emerged, including the structural changes that the economy, for example, has undergone over the last thirty years. This is not unlike l'art pour l'art's transcendental way of looking at itself, which Adorno despised, as much as he disliked committed art. Both, he argued, failed to understand their double character in society. "Literature that ex ists for the human being, like committed literature but also like the kind of literature the moral philistine wants, betrays the human being by betraying what could help him only if it did not act as though it were doing so." It is the literature and plays of Sartre and Brecht that he mainly targets, thereby rejecting all art that sees itself as socially and politically committed. "But", he continues, "anything that made itself absolute in response, existing only for its own sake, would degenerate into ideology. …"[71] Here Adorno instead

criticises l'art pour l'art-art for being equally blind and naive to its own historical existence. An art that does not understand that its autonomy is illusory and must constantly be constituted is therefore, for Adorno, just as unsuccessful as politically committed art.

Adorno's critique of art-for-art's-sake as ideological, as well as his critique of political and engaged art, is mainly evident in the report in what is emphasised as problematic governance incentives and what, in contrast, is naturalised and taken for granted. While much emphasis is placed in the report on cultural policy's attempts to map and promote equality (between genders and between ethnicities) and how this would make art unfree, and on what Adorno would have described as 'engaged' or 'committed art', almost no attention is paid, especially in the media debates that followed, to the parts of the report showing how economic incentives such as growth and business have negatively affected the freedom of art and culture in recent years. Nor is any connection sought between the erosion of municipal finances over the past thirty years, which has had an enormous impact on such things as public libraries and the infrastructure of municipal art centres. The report thus testifies to a naturalisation of the economic and structural changes that have taken place over the past three decades and that have largely impoverished the welfare state that was built up during the same period as cultural policy was developed. Here we see an idea of artistic freedom that ignores the economic and social frameworks that made art free and democratic. It chooses to see the freedom of art as something absolute, as if it was not dependent on the Keynesian welfare state's public libraries and contributions to theatres and independent journals, and so on. In this way, we see an ahistorical idea of artistic freedom, and what is ignored is how it was established in Sweden in the first place. As a defence, the report—and its reception in the subsequent debates—turns to the only known philosophical idea of artistic freedom, namely that of artistic freedom as an absolute in a 19th century allusion to art for art's sake. Benjamin and Adorno were liberals in the sense that they realised that the autonomy of art was an illusion, but a necessary one, in that it did not arise by itself but was the result of historical processes in which art emancipated itself from the Church and the nobility, thereby gaining a market of patrons. Similarly, a cultural policy report must realise that the freedom of culture and art in a welfare state like Sweden has been based on political control, where not only wealthy people have been able to make or take part of art, but anyone can. And that this is part of the ideological and historical material reality on which, in Sweden, the freedom

of art has rested since the 1970s. It is in keeping with the specific genre of a report that it does not seek larger and more complex explanations further than the nose can reach. But the questions that the report unwittingly asks are how the freedom of art and culture should be constituted in a state where cultural centres are sold out to private companies and where welfare has been outsourced for thirty years.[72] Should autonomous art and culture be relegated to the market with its patrons in a libertarian or anarcho-capitalist spirit?[73] Or is it the people who should produce and partake in the autonomy of art? Freedom and autonomy by and for a few or by and for all? These are the questions that the report and cultural policy in general are facing today.

SOME CONCLUDING WORDS....

I have shown how Keynes' idea of an arm's length principle is both based on and constitutes a critique of the liberal idea of laissez-faire. I have also shown how within aesthetics and art theory it is possible to distinguish two understandings of the autonomy of art. On the one hand, one that follows Kant's third *Critique* and attributes to the work of art what Kant attributed to natural beauty; this tradition was mainly expressed in the French tradition l'art-pour-l'art and the British tradition 'art-for-art's- sake', and which then migrated to American post-formalism, New Criticism and further into contemporary ideas about the freedom of art. Indeed, this finds expression in the report itself, as well as in contemporary debates about how the so called 'identitarian left' and the alt-right are corrupting the free arts. The big problem with this way of looking at the autonomy of art is that it is ahistorical and also lacks self-awareness about it.

The second line that I have shown appears in the history of the philosophy of art, and originates in Schiller's thought about the work of art as a reflection of freedom. This freedom is reflected in the artwork's form. Taken further by Benjamin and Adorno, this conception of art's freedom is situated in capitalist modernity where art is understood not only as a commodity, but as a specific commodity, one that is both determined by and independent from capitalist production. Artistic production, Adorno says, is different from capitalist production, and this is reflected in its form. It is thus something that also gives it the appearance it needs to be art.[74] Keynes takes this further when he sees that, in an economic and political sense, for art to continue with slow production, where the artist must be left to himself, it cannot be left to the 'free market'.

My conclusions are therefore the following. Firstly, it is only on the basis of the second concept of the freedom and relative autonomy of art that we can construct a critical concept of the autonomy of art today and for a future, democratic cultural policy. Secondly, while the philosophico-historical problem has been that Kantian aesthetics as such has been ascribed as the basis for the autonomy of art, the political problem appears in the elusive fact that autonomy can never be absolute but is always relative. The philosophico-historical challenge is to examine how an idea of the autonomy of art appears in a neoliberal world where the so-called 'free market' increasingly takes over more of what in Keynes' footsteps was seen as part of the social democratic welfare state, an outcome that Keynes believed would create a terrible situation for the free arts. In this sense, the great threat to the free arts does not seem primarily to be the desire for equality to be achieved among those who practice and consume the free arts, but in the fact that art's autonomy and freedom is threatened by the so called "free market".

1 An example of an international debate was when the artist, writer, and critic Hannah Black wrote an open letter to the Whitney Biennial in New York in the spring of 2017 about removing a painting by the artist Dana Shutz from the exhibition. The painting portrayed the dead body of the 14-year-old African-American boy Emmett Till who was tortured and lynched in 1955 in Money, Mississippi. In her text Black argued that the painting turned "black suffering into profit and pleasure." See: Alex Greenberger, "'The Painting Must Go': Hannah Black Pen's Open Letter to the Whitney About Controversial Biennial Work", *Art News*, 2017/03/21, last accessed 2022-08-10, https://www.artnews.com/artnews/news/the-painting-must-go-hannah-black-pens-open-letter-to-the-whitney-about-controversial-biennial-work-7992/. In a Swedish context, the discussion about the exhibition room Vita Havet at Konstfack in Stockholm has occupied much of the cultural- and editorial pages since professor of design history Sara Kristofferson wrote a debate article about it. Sara Kristofferson, "Nej, Vita Havet på konstfack har inget med rasism att göra" in *Dagens Nyheter*, 2021-02-01, last accessed 2022/08/10, https://www.dn.se/kultur/sara-kristoffersson-nej-vita-havet-pa-konstfack-har-inget-med-rasism-att-gora/. For a critique of Black's letter from a conservative-liberal perspective and other similar examples, see: Hanno Reuterberg. *Wie Frei ist die Kunst: der neue Kulturkampf und die Krise des Liberalismus* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018). For a more nuanced view of similar debates in a Swedish context, see: Mikael Löfgren, *Kulturstrider och statskonst: historiska perspektiv och kulturpolitiska utmaningar* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2021). For a useful dialectical and critical take on liberalism and illiberalism see the exhibition catalogue: *Illiberal Art*s, eds. Anselm Franke & Kerstin Stakemeier (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2021).

2 Sven Lütticken, "Performing Culture Otherwise", in *Deserting from the Cultural War*s, eds. Maria Hlavajova & Sven Lütticken (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2021), pp. 22-76.

3 The Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis (ACPA) is "a state authority whose aim is to evaluate, analyse and report on the effects of proposals and measures implemented in the cultural field. This is to be done on the basis of cultural policy objectives. The agency is also tasked with assisting government by providing underlying documentation and recommendations for developing national cultural policy. The aim of the agency is, therefore, to create better prerequisites for those people active in the cultural field." https://kulturanalys.se/en/about-us/. Last accessed: 2023-03-16.

4 Myndigheten för kulturanalys, *Så fri är konsten: Den kulturpolitiska styrningens påverkan på den konstnärliga friheten* (Göteborg, 2021), p. 10.

5 Ibid., p. 187.

6 This is a standard formulation that appears in all application forms of the Swedish Arts Council and which is quoted in the report. Ibid., p. 86.

7 See for example: P.J. Anders Linder, "Vem bryr sig om konstnärlig frihet?", in *Access*, No 6, 2021, last accessed 2022-08-10: https://www.axess.se/artiklar/vem-bryr-sig-om-konstnarlig-frihet/. The formulations in some of these forms were also used as arguments in the election debate during the autumn of 2022 by the Sweden Democrats' cultural political spokesperson Bo Broman who, on the question on what the main threat to culture is, answered: "The current left leaning cultural politics. The Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy analysis last year released the report *Så fri är konsten* and it is a sad reading that demonstrates that the government's cultural policy has gotten rid of the arm's length distance between politics and culture." "Så vill partierna förändra kulturpolitiken", in *Dagens Nyheter*, 2022-09-08, last accessed: 2022-09-18: https://www.dn.se/kultur/sa-vill-partierna-forandra-kulturpolitiken/.

8 Autonomy is not mentioned in the national cultural policy objectives and is not discussed in detail in any of the governmental cultural inquiries, nor has it appeared as a topic in any of the important and well-articulated research reviews on the subject. See ,for example: My Klockar Linder, *Kulturpolitik: Formeringen av en modern kategori* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2014); Anders Frenander, *Kulturen som kulturpolitikens stora problem: diskussionen om svensk kulturpolitik fram till 2010* (Örlinge: Gidlunds förlag, 2014). While the concept of autonomy has been mentioned in relation to cultural policy it has never been given any lengthy discussion in relation to its longer aesthetic-philosophical history. See, for example: Roger Blomgren "Autonomy or democratic cultural policy: that is the question", in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 5, Nov 2012, pp. 519-529. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2012.708861.

9 Myndigheten för kulturanalys, *Så fri är konsten*, p. 8. This is also a conclusion that Susanna Dahlberg reaches in her MA-thesis: *What is the Length of an Arm? How 'arm's length distance' is used in art and cultural politics in Sweden today* (Gothenburg: Gothenburg University, 2019), p. 44.

10 Myndigheten för kulturanalys*, Så fri är konsten*, p. 8. (My italics.).

11 Ibid., p. 8.

12 Ibid., p. 9.

13 France's Ministry of Culture was established in 1959 while Denmark's came into force in 1961. Anders Frenander, "Kulturpolitikens långa våg", in *Kultursverige 2009: problemanalys och kulturstatistik*, eds. Svante Beckman & Sten Månsson (Linköping: Sörlins förlag, 2008), p. 47.

14 Max Horkheimer criticizes such positivistic definitions in: "Traditional and Critical Theory", in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. M. J O'Connell et. al. (New York: Continuum, 2002).

15 But as Stephen Hetherington writes, the metaphor is older than that: "In fact, the metaphor is very much older than any notion of state funding for cultural activities; much older even than the modern common meanings of 'art' and 'culture' and the organisations now formed for their support." Stephen Hetherington, "Arm's length funding of the arts as an expression of laissez-faire", in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, No. 23:4, 2017, pp. 483-484. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2015.1068766.

16 Ibid., pp. 483–484.

17 John Maynard Keynes, "The Arts Council: Its Policy and Hopes", in *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Volume XXVIII: Social and Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 367–368.

18 Jürgen Habermas, Sara Lennox & Frank Lennox, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article", in *New German Critique*, Autumn, 1974, No. 3, pp. 49-55. https://doi.org/10.2307/487737.

19 Slobodian writes: "Geneva School neoliberals offered a blueprint for globalism based on institutions of multitiered governance that are insulated from democratic decision making and charged with maintaining the balance between the political world of imperium and the economic world of dominium. Dominium is not a space of laissez-faire or non-interventionism but is instead an object of constant maintenance, litigation, design and care. At the core of the Geneva School imaginary was a vision for what Hayek first saw in the Habsburg Empire – a model of what he called 'a double government, a cultural and an economic government. Geneva School neoliberals prescribed neither an obliteration of politics by economics nor the dissolution of states into a global marketplace but a carefully structured and regulated settlement between the two." Quinn Slobodian, *The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 12.

20 John Maynard Keynes, "The End of Laissez-Faire", in *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Volume IX, Essays in Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 272-294.

21 Ibid., p. 276.

22 Ibid., p. 287.

23 Ibid., p. 288..

24 Ibid. (My italics.)

25 For example, Oliver Bennet has argued that laissez-faire is the basis for the arm's length principle, which is partly correct since the tradition of ideas from out of which Keynes worked was the liberal one. Bennet writes: "The 'arm's length' principle, as it came to be known, persists as a potent symbol of *laissez-faire* traditions." Oliver Bennet, "Cultural Policy in the United Kingdom: Collapsing rationales and the end of a tradition", in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, No. 1:2, 1995, p. 204. https://doi.org/10.1080/10286639509357982 At the same time, and as I try to show, Keynes' economic and cultural critique of laissez-faire was clear. His understanding of the relation between the state and the individual, as well as his promotion of semi-autonomous institutions, show that he did not subscribe to a laissez-faire attitude to the market.

26 John Maynard Keynes, "Art and the State", in *The Collected Writings of John Maynard Keynes, Volume XXVIII: Social and Political Writings*, pp. 344-45.

27 Dave Beech, *Art and Value: Art's Economic Exceptionalism in Classical, Neo-classical and Marxist Economics* (Leiden: Brill Books, 2015), p. 132.

28 Carl-Johan Kleberg & Torbjörn Forsell, *Har kulturpolitiken lyckats?* (Stockholm: Kulturkontoret Stockholm, 2019), p. 24.]

29 Ibid., p. 191.

30 Anders Frenander, *Kulturen som kulturpolitikens stora problem* (Örlinge: Gidlund, 2005), p. 62. For an international perspective, see: Robert Brenner, *Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005* (London: Verso, 2006); Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

31 As Oliver Bennet has argued: "[...] the British system of cultural funding is an essentially post-war phenomenon. It has its origins in the nineteenth century, and its development parallels the development of the Welfare State. The Welfare State itself is undergoing a massive transformation, in a process which began in the 1980s." See: Oliver Bennet, "Cultural Policy in the United Kingdom", p. 203.

32 In a Swedish context, Andreas Cervenka describes this well in: *Girig-Sverige: Så blev folkhemmet ett paradis för de superrika* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 2002). For an international perspective on the capitalist economy from the 1970s and onwards, see: Robert Brenner, *Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005*; Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System* (London: Verso, 2016); Immanuel Wallerstein, et. al., *Does Capitalism Have a Future?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

33 The Social Democratic Minister for Ecclesiastical Affairs, Arthur Engberg, established this in 1937. See: Carl-Johan Kleberg & Torbjörn Forsell, *Har kulturpolitiken lyckats?,* p. 22.

34 SVT Kulturnyheter, 13/6/2022, "Vilken är den viktigaste kulturfrågan i valet? Skolbibliotek eller provocerande konst?". Last accessed: 2022-08-10, https://www.svt.se/kultur/viktigaste-kulturfragan-just-nu.

35 Sofia Nyblom, "Pandemin visar att det är dags att ta frågan om kultursponsring på allvar", in *Dagens Nyheter* 2020-12-07, last accessed 2022-08-10, https://www.dn.se/kultur/sofia-nyblom-pandemin-visar-att-det-ar-dags-att-ta-fragan-om-kultursponsring-pa-allvar/. See also the newly published report: *Kreativa Sverige: Nationell strategi för främjande av hållbar utveckling för företag i kulturella och kreativa branscher*, SO 2022:44.

36 Thomas May, "The Concept of Autonomy", in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1994, p. 135.

37 Ibid., p. 135.

38 Stephen Engstrom & Jennifer Whiting (eds.), Aristotle, *Kant and the Stoics: Re-thinking Happiness and Duty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

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52 Ibid., p. 368.
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54 Ibid., p. 3.
55 Theodor Adorno, "Chapter 24: Commitment", in *Notes to Literature*, trans. & ed. Rolf Riedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), p. 349.
56 This is a category that Walter Benjamin uses frequently in his philosophy and that he introduced in his PhD thesis. The exact terminology he uses is: "philosophic-problem-historical [*philosophieproblemgeschichtlich*]" Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Art in German Romanticism", in *Selected Writings, Vol 1, 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock & Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 185.
57 Jay Bernstein, "Introduction", in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. xx.
58 Friedrich Schiller,"Kallias or Concerning Beauty: Letters to Gottfried Körner", in *Classic and Romantic Aesthetics*, p. 152.
59 Ibid., p. 170.
60 Jay Bernstein, "Introduction", p. xx.
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62 See for example: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in Early German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard & Cheryl Lester (New York: State University of New York Press: 1988); Jochen Schulte-Sasse (ed.), *Theory as Practice: A Critical Anthology of Early German Romantic Writings* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press: 1997); Carlos Gasperi Labbee, *Novalis and the Autonomy of Art,* p. 26.
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65 Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 229.
66 Ibid., p. 5.
67 Ibid., p. 21.
68 Literary scholar Andrew Goldstone also argues for the necessity of the fictional aspect in the autonomy of art. He does so through readings of Adorno as well as of Wilde and Paul de Man. Andrew Goldstone, *Fictions of Autonomy: Modernism from Wilde to de Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). One of the problems with using Adorno's understanding of autonomy today is that it does not quite match the way in which the Western capitalist economy and the commodity form has developed from the 1970s onwards, i.e. after Adorno's death. For more on this, see: Johannes Björk och Josefine Wikström, "Upploppet som det absoluta konstverket", in *Kultur och Klasse*, No. 133, 2023, pp. 239-262.
69 Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Penguin Books, 1988).
70 Stewart Martin, "The Absolute Artwork Meets the Absolute Commodity", in *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 146, Nov/Dec 2007, pp. 15-25.
71 Theodor Adorno, "Chapter 24: Commitment", p. 362.
72 For an overview of the situation in Sweden's municipalities with regard to real estate, see: Björn af Kleen,, "Ilija Batjalan: Alla är ens kompisar när det går bra – börjar man blöda blir man uppäten", *Dagens Nyheter*, 2022-08-05, Last accessed: 2022-08-11.
73 Anarcho-capitalism is a concept coined by the American economist Murray Newton Ruthbard, who was strongly influenced by libertarian political philosophy. In an anarcho-capitalist society, there is no state and the market provides all institutions, including legal and police institutions. The attitude of relegating culture and art to a free market can therefore be linked to this libertarian movement.
74 This is also a conception of art a number of thinkers have built on and developed with regards to contemporary art. See, for example: John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Art after the Ready-Made* (London: Verso, 2008).