The Ectoplasm in the Museum

Objects of experience are by default innerworldly beings, integrated and already belonging to our world once they are understood as that something which they are. Blonde Youth, a statue oddly wedged in between Archaic and Classical Greece, does not conform to this universal necessity, since a closer examination rules out all our assumptions of what this object has been held to be. Not a representation, nor an idealization, a historical or climatological accident, not a god himself, this is not a being amongst others where subjects can hold on to predicates of their own. And yet it is, standing there in plain view at the museum. This long past due elucidation suggests that our nonchalant attitude towards the unaccountable entity is even more scandalous than the epistemological issues it raises.

**Keywords**: Blonde Youth, Greek Art, Statuary Art, God, Phenomenology

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I want to draw attention to an entity that has slipped into our world without belonging to it. Schopenhauer once said that this world of ours is so inherently condemned that the removal of even a speck of dust from it would have it collapse. It makes one wonder what consequence we may already be suffering, unaware that
the inverse has actually happened with this unaccountable entity that has forced itself into our world and done so entirely undetected.

By belonging to the world I mean the meeting of at least some of the conditions that determine the appearance of world objects. By conditions I do not mean only the living exigencies by which any object registers in the manifold of perception (Hume), and not only the applicable categories of the understanding without which sensible intuitions are blind (Kant), but also the background, prereflective human conventions through which something appears as it is for whom it is (Husserl). The entity in question did not enter our world as the sheer violation of the laws of perception that it really is, for even a violation is cognizant as such and can be appropriated accordingly at least as an aberration. This alien entity has formally introduced itself and has casually found a place amongst us, in disguise. This is something we realize only after we have exhausted all the possibilities of understanding of what this entity could be in terms of the conditions, the determinations and the conventions that have allowed its appearance. It is not that it tries to hide. Quite the contrary; it is enjoying a stage of limelight only very few world objects can afford, currently no less than a pedestal of its own at the museum. We may call it only an entity and not yet an object of perception, because objects are determined in the contingency of perceptual biases, while this one, whatever it “is,” defies each and every perceptual bias by disqualifying them all as unwarranted presumptions. It is an entity because it gathers and sets itself apart from all that it could be, without being anything. And yet, it is. Museum visitors unwittingly pay a fee to experience in it their own deception. At best and at closer examination it persists and solidifies even as a mere aporia, an illegitimate object of perception sharply outlined only by all that which it is not.

The persisting distinguishability from the legitimate world objects that surround it has proven sufficient enough for people to have given this otherwise exocosmic entity a name of its own; these days they call it “Blonde Youth.” They have unsuspectingly let it ease in within the world categories of beings understood as “statues” and as “art.” This is a category mistake. Blonde Youth belongs to an archaeological museum only if we really understood what “archaeology” means, and evidently we do not. Blonde Youth should be rather displayed in something like a museum of oryctology, perhaps placed next to a meteorite.

No museum visitor seems to have realized that the understanding of this entity as art does not really grant it a valid innerworldly appearance obeying the laws of perception, since art in itself is neither an object nor even an entity. World objects either have parts or are themselves parts of other world objects, while world entities must be eidetically distinguishable in their concrete suchness; art in itself and apart from the artwork is neither of these. Art in itself and apart from the artwork has no parts, nor is art a part of a world object. And whether we are in the
presence of art or not, this is always determined in reference to some artwork, in this case the statue. But then again, it is demonstrable that *Blonde Youth* is not even a statue.

**Blonde Youth Is Not a Representation**

Statues are artworks understood by many as either verisimilitudinal or generic representations of the figure of living human beings. There are objects in the world which justly bear the name of a statue by means of their representing either someone or something through someone: *Augustus of Prima Porta* in Rome, Admiral Nelson at Trafalgar Square, and the figures of Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln at Mount Rushmore, said to represent the birth, the growth, the development, and the preservation of the United States. To realize the difference between such legitimate world objects and the otherworldliness of entity in question is to ask who is it exactly that *Blonde Youth* copies or represents.

If we pursue the verisimilitude explanation, the particular entity in question cannot be a representation because, for one thing, and to our astonishment, there stands in the museum yet another “statue” whose head componentry is summoned into face by an eerily identical facial expression, one which likewise unsuspecting people have named “Euthydikos Kore.”¹ For some reason pertaining to the uniqueness of the human face in comparison to every other animal face, a reason we cannot examine here, two human faces cannot be verisimilitudinally represented in one and the same stroke. Art historians have tried to solve the puzzle of the striking duplicity of these two Greek statues by attributing them to the same artist, but even if this was true it would not explain our unaccountable entity in terms of a representation by verisimilitude.

Equally untenable is the alternative standing hypothesis, that *Blonde Youth* may be a generic representation of the human form. In *The Esthetic Basis of Greek Art* (1921), Rhys Carpenter paradigmatically distinguished between noticed and unnoticed qualities of the human body, and qualified as a generic representation those qualities which belong to all human bodies but lie dormant until they are noticed. “The human body in sculptural representation differs from its prototype, the living body, by calling attention to certain qualities which otherwise tend to pass unnoticed,” he wrote.² Carpenter’s discernment subscribes into what art historians typically understand as “Greek naturalism,” where ancient artists supposedly noticed details in a historical progress of adaptations in what is assumed to be an epigenetic “final” understanding of the human body by the Greeks. This is what Gisela M.A. Richter, another representationalist, asserts about the period where *Blonde Youth* is thought to have been chiseled, circa 485 B.C., when she notes in her *Archaic Greek Youths* (1960) that, “such details …
which in the preceding period [the artist] had only tentatively indicated – he now regularly featured.”

But whence the said dormant qualities that always went by undetected in this rolling epigenesis of natural forms, in the first place? It is one thing to hinge the viability of a generic representation of the human form on whether these qualities are successfully represented, meaning that in this success something previously neglected is now first brought into presence, and yet another to have successfully warranted the assumption that these prototypical qualities were already present, they were, somewhere prior to their re-presentation. As that maverick of empiricism, Berkeley would have asked from paying more attention on the concept of presence: if not yet available even to the circumspective artist who routinely seeks them out by training and profession, then to whom where these prototypical qualities previously present to, so that they were already not merely possible, but actually real?

The problem overlooked here is that the generic representational theory of statuary art understands itself as world-descriptive, while in truth the claims it lays can only be premised as world-disclosive. This is a form of realism in disguise, because the principle of the descriptive eventuality from which it operates can never include in the description the dormancy of the object from which the object is thought to have drawn its ontological status. In other words, the representational theory of statuary art falters where realism fails to produce the proof of the world’s origin independently of human perception. Phenomenology has shown how all the aspiring sprouts of realism, either in the natural or the human sciences, wither in the raging severity of this logical imperative, although in remaining unfazed before the implications of the case we will build here, phenomenology has itself also failed to meet with what it demands from realism. But that is another, larger plot. For now we may draw the conclusion of our first major premise, that if neither the verisimilitudinal nor the generic representation theories can explain the entity in question as a statue, and if art in itself and without the statue cannot bring anything into the realm of appearances, it follows that under these terms alone Blonde Youth is not of this world even if it appears so.

**Blonde Youth Is Not an Idealization**

Others have tried to explain the Greek statue as an idealization. The cream of German neoclassicism convened on the assumption that art is about beauty; from this epiphenomenon it sought to mollify the stirring that the West has undertaken in the presence of the Greek statue by trying to explain it away as an ideality. That the entity in question is only an epiphenomenon of something infinitely real yet
not belonging to this world was hinted by the dying Schiller, who in his last breath reportedly whispered these words:

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\begin{align*}
\text{That which on earth appeared to me as beauty} \\
\text{Will meet me on the other side as truth.}^4
\end{align*}
\]

If these works do not represent anything, thought Winckelmann staring at the Greek statue, then the artist must have brought into a deliberate composition those perfect parts that would synthesize the ideal human body. We hear this in the following passage from his *History of Ancient Art* (1764), where Winckelmann held the Greek statue above all world art: “The shape of beauty is either *individual*, that is confined to an imitation of one individual, or it is a selection of beautiful parts from many individuals, and their union into one, which we call *ideal.*”^5

The realism underlying this idealism surfaces when we realize that, just like the representationalists, the German romantics, save perhaps Hegel, had effectively accepted that nature precedes culture. Their belief that perfect beauty does not appear in nature but can only be produced with the selection and combination of different beautiful elements by the artist is based in this indefensible premise. It is only from the dismissal of other, more ancient civilizations in a cultural evolution *within* nature, that Winckelmann and his European contemporaries could surmise that the patent model of this ultimate idealization was exclusively the work of the Greeks. The romantics may have correctly discerned that what is more ancient is not necessarily more valuable or “ideal;” this would also be argued by phenomenology. But they still came short of giving due primordiality to what they epiphenomenally saw as the beautiful. This would eventually happen along with the dismissal of idealism and realism in the same stroke, only inconclusively with Nietzsche and full-heartedly with Heidegger.

The problem with the belief that Greek statuary in general is an idealization surfaced first as a cultural and only then as a conceptual transgression, in the critique of European nationalism and colonialism. As Athena Leoussi reports in her *Nationalism and Classicism* (1998), the core values of the nineteenth century European ethnocentrism would venture far beyond the dismissal of the statuary art of other cultures when arriving before the question of the lineage of a body that is exclusively human. They would rather identify with the cold Greek marble statue than with the living bloodline of the ape as proposed by Darwin’s theory. Cultural wars inflated the conceptual problems. Why is the Greek statue the *ideal* human form, and to whom? The very same ecstatic disposition which took the Europeans out of their cultural cocoon would then turn its weary eyes from what it saw in the colonies back to the motherland and ask: Can something be ideal as a universal
constancy addressing all humanity if it is only provincially ideal? In view of the cultural relativism involved, the question of whether Blonde Youth is a statue because of its ontological status as an ideality just begs the question, since its conclusion is also one of its premises: it is a statue as an ideal, now not copying but assembling the ideal, because it is beautiful and perfectly good in the perceptual contingency of just one given ethnic culture amongst the world’s many.

The lesser claim that the Greek work may still be ideal by convention only for the culture which thought it to be ideal, now an intracultural instead of an intercultural valorization, did not enjoy any better luck. Even this claim could be shown to be based on an arbitrary, potentially racist motive; Martin Bernal made in his Black Athena (1987) perhaps the most known case against it, having asked the Westerners to “acknowledge that [they] have been racists and liars, the perpetrators of a vast intellectual and cultural cover-up.” Bernal could be appeased if a certain objective correspondence could be isolated in nature to privilege things Greek and be shown to support the ideality of the Greek work intraculturally. “Greek naturalism” would be the theory to look into for such a principle that shows an ideality by means of true correspondence to nature, but as we saw this line of thought is based on the indefensibility of the representational theory. Naturalism is unable to justify the given Greek art as an ideal derived from nature, and the same untenability holds if the work was attributed to the Egyptians Bernal was trying to vindicate. The ontological nativity of the entity in question is not derivable from nature, although the inverse has been claimed, namely that nature is derivable if not also derived, from the entity in question.

Idealism was buried even deeper by Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. Heidegger claimed that art is not about beauty but about truth, and that the Greek statue does not merely describe nature, but outright discloses it for the very first time. In this phenomenological insurgence, which Heidegger loosely premised mainly in between two of his works, Being and Time (1927) and The Origin of the Work of Art (1935), the possibility first dawned that (some) culture may have preceded nature. Heidegger asked an only seemingly shallow question, one which Western metaphysics has been unequivocally unable to answer: “On the usual view, the work arises out of and by means of the activity of the artist. But by what and whence is the artist what he is?”

It is perhaps easier at least to begin fathoming the exocosmic provenance of Blonde Youth from Heidegger’s paradoxical understanding of art. This is because here the world which realism in both its representational and the idealistic prongs assume to have preceded Greek culture is seen to be possible only with and because of the Greeks. But this is such an exorbitant claim, turning on its head all that we thought of the world, that rendered Origin incomprehensible. Be that as it may, and we will return to that, if the idealist explanation of art in general cannot survive ontologically in the no-man’s land of ethnic culture wars, nor can it,
indeed, escape Heidegger’s fundamental ontological onslaught of Western metaphysics, then *Blonde Youth* in particular remains unaccountable as an idealization. In Heidegger’s understanding, the Greek statue is declared as the origin of world, but this appropriation does not derive the origin of the statue, nor does it make it an innerworldly object – quite the contrary – it only explains or at least attempts to explain the origin of world. Momentarily we may have drawn some reassurance from having gotten a glimpse of the statue in its being seen as the world’s external “cause” – for then we would at last know what this entity *is* – but even this possibility withdraws as soon as we are told that Heidegger becomes incomprehensible if *Origin* is read literally. In what follows we will find more reasons to reject the possibility that the entity in question is an ideality that discloses world.

*Blonde Youth Is Not a Historical Accident*

In yet another desperate attempt to explain the innerworldly appearance of this shifty entity, historians have tried to wrangle and nail it down within history. History is seen here as an empirical science, a plenum where nothing can escape its explanation thanks to the possibility of an ever-expanding paratactic concatenation of cause and effect, enacted as it were by default. In the unquestioned possibility of historicity and of humanity as a historical consciousness, this appropriation at first sounds quite viable, – just ask any museum tour guide. Yet the whole attempt is *desperate* because even the leading historian himself, weary of the mystery of the essence of humanity as a historical being, does not really believe even his own postulations. Patent case in point is John Boardman and his *Greek Sculpture – The Archaic Period*, and *The Classical Period* (1985), the two canonical volumes that have educated the generations of Oxfordians. For Boardman the “awe-inspiring” Greek naturalism “came almost accidentally [in a] period of anxiety and excitement.”

The physical turmoil of Greek history in the early decades of the fifth century was answered in Greek art by what appears to be a sure and steady progress, and the gradual changes in style encouraged effortlessly, it seems, a revolution in the sculptor’s approach to his craft. This marks a turning point in Western art. … The Attic temple programme was inspired by the historical fact of the city’s recent leadership and military successes against Persia.

Boardman’s historical interpretation tacitly implies no less than that war somehow *causes* (“was answered”) a sharpening of the observational capacities of the artist, so that the representational model is reenacted, now not in history as reflection, but because of history as accident. Yet the causality implied here cannot
hold its own water; the argument is a *non sequitur*. Exactly how does war amongst
soldiers *cause* the sharpening of observational skills of the artists towards what we
read next as “more accurate” renditions of the human body, this we are not told.
Neither is the other question addressed, of how come war, so prevalent also in
peoples other than the Greeks, has not necessarily had the same causal effect in the
art of those other world cultures. Nonetheless, Boardman will bring this highly
problematic historical interpretation to its full fruition by tacitly employing the
defunct representational theory:

The parts of the body become more accurately rendered. Ears are no longer patterns
but begin to look like ears. … Patterns of muscle and sinew which had been rendered
by groove and ridge are carved in subtler realistic planes and the patterns themselves
take forms to life – a double division between ribcage and navel, not triple or more,
and over the knee-cups a proper symmetry of muscles. All this accompanies a
growing skill at integrating these pattern elements into a more plausible whole.\(^{11}\)

These sound like quite reasonable accounts, and so they have become the
standard exegetical narrative for *Blonde Youth* and its kin for the average educated
person in the developed world. Yet it is only a few pages down from the above
passages, where now in the *authentic moment* of his own interpretation a
dumbfounded Boardman essentially gives up the representational model
underlying the historical explanation and undercuts his own understanding of the
entity he has encountered: “Staring at these works, in picture, cast or original, does
not explain them; indeed their familiarity to some degree deadens perception.”\(^{12}\)

A historical event is always an accident: either an accident of circumstance or
happenstance, or an accident as a mishap or misunderstanding. The first version is
the canonical one we get from Boardman. Ernst Buschor, another towering figure
in the exegetical chronicles of Western art, tried to explain the inexplicable now
from the second derivation of the historical event, the Greek statue as a
misunderstanding.

What the Greek artist who supposedly chiseled *Blonde Youth* is supposed to
have misunderstood, is the so-called Saitic Canon, an influence by this seventh and
sixth century Egyptian style. Historical and archaeological accounts show that in
the seventh century the Greeks founded the city of Naucratis in the delta of the
Nile, where they came in contact with the zeitgeist of the 26\(^{th}\) Pharaonic dynasty of
664-525 B.C. From this canon and the quadrant measuring techniques of Egyptian
stone cutting evidently did derive the rigid standing of the typically smiling Greek
Archaic *kouroi*, to which nevertheless *Blonde Youth* relates only as an odd
*aftermath*. The strange uncanniness of this particular “statue” has led art historians
to think that it does not exactly belong either to the Archaic, which arguably
culminates with the statue of the *Ptoan Apollo* of 525, or to the Classical rhythm
which followed, inaugurated by the *Zeus of Artemision* of 480 B.C.E.
In *The Meaning of Greek Statues* (1942), Buschor struggled to squeeze the entity in question into our world. Buschor’s interpretation is paradigmatic of the phenomenon which phenomenology has described, namely that the only way objects can appear in perception is for them to mean something for someone within the greater totality of things we understand as “world.” We may have observed that one of the ways art connoisseurs and proclaimed experts on the matters of taste deal with when confronted with entities the uniqueness and importance of which they may somehow fathom but cannot really explain from what they already know, is the resorting to cliché phrases and vacuous ideas such as “energy,” “substantiality,” and “vicarious power.” Such symptoms are quite obvious in Buschor, as he writes that: “the particular sculptural energy which breaks forth from the edges and from the pores of these statues is closely connected with their vicarious power, with their concentrated substantiality.”

Buschor figured that *Blonde Youth* along with his broader family of Greek marbles are an “ingenious misunderstanding of Oriental-Egyptian prototypes.” The “misunderstanding” seen by Buschor to have set apart the Greek copy from the Egyptian prototype was the accidental bestowing on the Greek statue of a certain destabilizing kinaesthesis absent in the visible eternal stillness of the original, a certain “displacement of equilibrium,” where: “... the center of gravity has ... shifted toward a more dynamic disunity,” and where “... forms quietly ‘blossom’ forth toward their futures, while the Egyptian and Eastern statues simply ‘are.’”

To realize that Buschor has not really explained the presence of *Blonde Youth* in our world, we may split his conclusion in two claims: first that the entity in question is a copy, and second that the entity is a misunderstanding of the original. *Blonde Youth* is not a copy of anything, and especially not of things Egyptian, because *what defines this entity for what it is*, is admitted by Buschor himself as nothing except the said “displacement of equilibrium,” which in itself and to various lesser degrees nevertheless does, indeed, define and distinguish from all other world art all the sub-genres of Greek statuary, from the Archaic all the way to the Hellenistic period. Common attributes and evidence of convergence such as that the Greeks came in contact with Egyptian culture, that both works are “statues,” and that they both represent something that we as generically as uncritically understand as a universal “human form” do not partake or affect in any possible way the ontological identity of the entity in question. The viscosity of the visible displacement of equilibrium that appears as a certain mood in the facial expression of *Blonde Youth* is that and that alone which delineates its phenomenal suchness. It is what differentiates it from any other world art, including not only art from Egypt but also the art from Archaic and Classical Greece. And it is that and that alone which constitutes its ectoplasmic essence. We will return to this point with Heidegger.
But neither can *Blonde Youth* be a misunderstanding of Egyptian originals. In any misunderstanding of something into something else there must remain a residue of what is misunderstood into the misunderstanding, since it is through this residue and that alone that some relation may be established between the two parts. If *Blonde Youth* is not a copy of anything, then it cannot be a misunderstanding of an original, unless we can trace the residual presence of the original in its being misunderstood. But this is not possible either. The certain *homeostatic stagnancy* that Buschor himself admits to be the essence of Egyptian statuary art, is essentially and thoroughly alien to the *dynamic heterostasis* which Buschor, amongst virtually all other art historians, intuits as that which defines and distinguishes Greek statuary art. There may be objective aspects which remain germane to both sides, such as that these objects are both made out of stone, maybe the involved stone-cutting technique, or that they both assemble a generic constituency of the human form. But such relationships are established in consciousness by default between these and any world objects the germinal properties of which are unified in consciousness by an underlying necessity that overlooks discrepancies.

To trace any one thing newly emerging in consciousness into something else by sanctioning its contingency through the steadfast actuality of the precedent is the easy way out of our ongoing existential responsibility to find a place of our own as subjects in a world held together by mechanical causal relations. This exigency belongs to the inescapable bargain of the hermeneutic circle (the fragmental and the biased predicaments of interpretation), and is perhaps the main reason out of our own weakness, that the ectoplasm in question has been given a chance to enter our world without actually belonging to it. Buschor’s, as well as Boardman’s historical liability is part of what epistemologists call the Agrippan Trilemma, and especially that part of it called infinitism (the other two are foundationalism and coherentism). Infinitism maintains the compulsory yet never conclusive necessity that every world being must somehow be traced back into some other being. Tracing *Blonde Youth* back to the Saitic Canon typifies this otherwise indefensible compulsion.

*Blonde Youth Is Not a Climatological Accident*

The same considerations apply more or less to that other pseudo-explanation we inherited from neoclassicism and romantic historicism, namely the justification of the entity in question now from a climatological derivation. Polybius may have begun this line of argument in late antiquity, but the Germans seem to have swarmed around the seemingly apparent expediency of this exegesis, presided by Winckelmann and strongly followed by Kant, Herder, and Hölderlin; it was even
supported by Montesquieu in France. From England there came nothing of this sort but a moot dissent voiced by James Barry, who in his Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England (1775) protested that “the climate for those living on the banks of the Thames should not be detrimental to the growth of a great art in Britain.”¹⁵ There is but small variation of this argument, the difference lying on whether and how the conclusion is exemplified by deductive analogy or inductively by natural law. In all cases the climatic explanation of the unaccountable entity in question is nested in a beehive of logical fallacies.

Winckelmann’s initial postulation that “[t]o the Greek climate we owe the production of taste, and from thence it spread at length over the politer world,” contradicts his other, overall conviction of the universal ideality of Greek art. As David Irwin notes, “Winckelmann did not see a fundamental contradiction in his own theory. The conviction that climate and local geographic characteristics determined a nation’s development, and therefore its art, undermined the universal applicability of one, supreme concept of beauty.”¹⁶ A second fundamental contradiction emerges when Winckelmann feels obliged to abandon the realm of nature in order to explain Greek art. Whereas in his Imitation of Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks he describes how the Greek sculptors methodically modelled their subject to “form their gods” by “observing nature,”¹⁷ in Book X of his History he cannot restrain himself from talking about a “lofty ideal of a body elevated above nature,” of renditions “exalted to the degree of divine sufficiency,” of “incorporeal beauties,” and of a “heavenly essence.”¹⁸

Winckelmann prompted Montesquieu to connect the Greek phenomenon to his meteorological observation that the human body is capable of increased physical sensibilities in warmer countries. Herder, on the other hand, held that art is affected by the climate in the same way mineral water takes its flavor from the soil it flows.¹⁹

Montesquieu contextualized the evidence that human physical sensibility increases as ambient temperature rises, whereas cold causes numbness. Accepting that the warmer the weather the higher the aesthetic sensibility, besides the non sequitur involved in leaving unbridged the chasm between sensibility as aesthesis understood as “sensation” and aesthetics as art appreciation, leads to a reductio ad absurdum. Further, the relation between temperature, pleasure, and art exemplifies the informal fallacy of extended analogy. Montesquieu’s meteorological analogy falsely assumes that because two things, here warmth and beauty, are both relatable to a third thing, here pleasure, they must be relatable to each other.

Herder’s chemical argument compiles on its own the fallacies of bad analogy, of confusing correlation and causation, and yet another non sequitur. The actual molecular bonding between H₂O and the typical flavoring elements of Ca or Mg in the soil may be analogous and relating temperate climate to ideal art if and only if
a *causal* relation of the entities in the second pair is demonstrable, as it is in the first pair. Yet none of the aforementioned philosophers has produced such demonstration, if this is possible at all.

In fact a comprehensive tracing of causal relations is at least currently untenable even within climate systems alone, thus far less viable in between the objective and quantifiable thermodynamic phenomenon which is the weather, on the one hand, and subjective, unquantifiable renditions such as the artwork on the other. It is common knowledge that our most powerful computers fail to produce reliable forecasts by causal relations beyond five days. And the fable of the butterfly’s flapping wings that may cause a typhoon on the other side of the globe expresses rather the chaotic than the accountable state of the network of entropic energies that sustain climate.

The climatic derivation theory collapses by the same counterargument that fell Boardman’s historical accident theory: Suppose that the climatic argument of the derivation of *Blonde Youth* within the general explanation of Greek art was valid and sound. If Greece’s average temperate weather could explain the presence in our world of the entity in question, then why hasn’t Italy, California, or Tahiti, global loci with climate comparable to Greece’s, procured the very same effect by the causal necessity assumed in this theory?

Because of its footing in the physical elements of nature, the climatic theory provided more so than the historical accident theory the platform for romantic historicism to integrate the space and time of art under the false pretense of “style.” Winckelmann is reportedly the inventor of the term, understood by him as an expression of the Greek way of life. Thus what was initially nothing more than a favorable weather report, within a century gradually grew through the works of Kugler, Burckhardt, Vasari, Gombrich, Wölfflin, Bell, Fry, Riegl, and Dvorak to an ideology of an establishment with its own exclusive club, an elite worthy of the severe criticism it received from Karl Marx and Max Weber.²⁰ The whole meteorological edifice which grounds this art in space and time within the succession of regional styles all dependent on the weather, is nothing but a house of cards. That the entity in question is not the ornamental product of a spatiotemporally determined ideology, and that “style” is an epiphenomenal pseudo-exegesis, is shown once the logical fallacies that prop the climatic theory are exposed.

Just like the impossibility of its historical derivation, the impossibility of the climatic derivation of the entity in question hints that its *origin*, to borrow Heidegger’s definition of “origin” as “that from which and by which something is what it is and as it is,”²¹ must lie outside of our spatial and temporal coordinates. The more of our own unwarranted assumptions we shed, the more we will realize that the ectoplasm in the museum must have entered our world from beyond space and time.
Blonde Youth Is Not What It Is

So far I have argued that the entity in question is not anything of what it has been thought to be. Simply put, the entity observed is not what it is. To observe that something is not what it is, or to describe it residually only from whatever it is not, may defy logic’s law of non-contradiction, but there is no other more direct conceptualization to speak of this entity. Blonde Youth makes it quite obvious that Aristotle’s essentially empiricist axiomatization of the basic rules of logic does not anticipate perceptual accidents of this genus, which so far in our case are not even considered as abstract phenomenological events of appropriation, for they are quite pragmatic. Of course one may counter-propose that if the entity in question is not what it is because it is not what it has been thought of as being, it still remains an open question; the entity may very well be something else. But then all we need to do is to try to exhaust all possibilities.

Let us recapitulate: the entity in question is not a representation, neither an idealization, nor is it a historical or a climatological accident; because of these untenabilities, it cannot be what constitutes a “statue.” And if it is not a statue, neither it is art. At least not “art” as the term is understood prior to Heidegger’s aforementioned definition. And yet Blonde Youth still is, without being what it is thought to be. Which is another way to say that it can only be what it is not. When this “statue” as object of perception is stripped of all of its predicates, it loses its ontological status. What we are then left with from this, still perfectly visible and palpable entity, “is” nothing other than the very impossibility of its appearance.

It may take a while for us to pause, double-check the arguments we have postulated so far, and comprehend that we have all along been taken for a ride, so to speak, by this impossibility that has somehow evaded our attention, an entity whose very essence seems to be its concealment and its appearance as that which it is not. The entity’s impossibility is itself a viable quasi-predicate on merit of its appearance defying definition. This observation alone, predicates. That the entity in question persists in perception as an aporia even after it has been denuded from its predicates is a most remarkable perceptual event in itself, although it has been treated casually by both layman and the expert.

The sum total of the minutes of the impossibility of the entity’s appearance is what assembles its ontological essence. Other than this cognitive intimacy that we may afford dealing with the unknown, it is the copula alone illicitly predicating the appearance of the entity in question amongst other world beings, themselves ontologically legitimate because as objects they can hold on to their predicates regardless of the copula. This palpable ontological illegitimacy of the entity in question has not gone by undetected for what it is, if not by the layman, at least in
the summits of Western thought. And although the detection therein has always begged the question it seeks to answer, it is still an achievement on its own merit, because it has acknowledged an encounter with the impossible as if it was already familiar.

We saw earlier with Boardman how the “deadening of perception” in the encounter is attributed to a certain uncanny “familiarity” with things Greek like the entity in question. This perceptual breathlessness is triggered despite and at the same time *because* of the familiarity between the perceiver and what is perceived in the presence of this entity. Arguably there is something as utterly as exclusively human in the facial expression that consummately includes and exhausts what has been discerned as *Blonde Youth*. But then why would this essential humanity of the entity in question “deaden perception”? Should not be that this essential and familiar humanity serve and establish the contrary, that is, enliven, verify, and solidify the perception of it, given that the perceiver is herself or himself a human being? Boardman was into something here, and he is just one of the great figures in the aboriginal self-reflection of Western culture, those who ventured into the dark regions between metaphysics and art and who inadvertently resorted into describing what they found in terms of a *familiar mystery*.

In his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel probed the relationship between man and nature by introducing God as an inaccessible intermediary. Hegel’s attempt to explain Greek statuary art like the entity in question relies partially on the defunct Aristotelian substance ontology, on the distinction between matter and form. His exegesis is thus quasi-representational, because Hegel held simultaneously that “the content of art is the Idea” and that “its form lies in the plastic use of images accessible to sense.” Hegel found in Greek statuary the exclusive capacity to *represent* the divine, because in this art “the natural shape of the human body is such a sensuous concrete as is capable of representing spirit.” Unlike in the case made by “Greek naturalism,” here the artist does not represent nature, but God. Hegel attempted to solve the problem of the interface between God and the world that He has created by trying to link the divine Idea with earthly sensibility, where God’s mediation between man and nature appears in the ideality of the human body; he thus observed that “[t]he Greek god is not abstract but individual, and is closely akin to the natural human shape …”

Accurate as this observation may be, it is still a mere observation and not an explanation of what is observed, far less an explanation of what is observed through the claimed affinity between the familiarity of Greek art and the inaccessibility of the divine. Exactly how does the invisible ideality of Hegel’s Absolute Spirit release itself into the visible and tangible structures of the Greek body? The *how* of this release could only appear in terms of a transparent structural accordance between the two for the understanding. But no such correspondence is demonstrated. Ultimately the otherwise crystalline Hegel had to
resort to secrecy in order to “explain” the dumfounding transparency of Greek art. So he writes: “… particular sensuous materials have a close affinity and secret accord with the spiritual distinctions and types of art presentation.”

The infamous “tyranny of Greece over Germany” is essentially not about the inescapable preoccupation with Greek art, as one may initially think, but about the inability of the Germans to explain the that and the why this art has become too apparent. As Elisa M. Butler, the inventor of the “tyranny” idea notes, it is not what the Germans made of the Greeks, but what the Greeks made of those unfortunate Germans who tried to interpret them. Winckelmann thought he had explained something of what he was seeing by attributing to the Greek statue a certain “preternaturalness;” von Humboldt wrote that “from the Greeks we take something more earthly – almost godlike;” and Heidegger thought that the Greek statue is a god.

This “deadening of perception” did not only affect the Oxfordians and the Germans, amongst other Europeans, but since antiquity also the Greeks themselves. In her book Images in Mind – Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought (2001), Deborah Tarn Steiner observes that “[L]ate archaic and classical sculptors seem to have responded by depicting their gods with bodies that simultaneously declared their proximity to men and reminded the viewer of the breach between a familiar surface appearance and an ineffable, invisible reality that could be neither directly ‘imaged’ nor reproduced.” It seems that where the “ineffable” has not been serviced by the discussions of representation, of idealization, of historical or meteorological accident, people throughout history simply pushed the critter aside by calling it “god” and went about their earthly business as if either the presence of this entity in the world had no effect in their lives, or if in some way it did, there was nothing people could do about it. This is a remarkable behavior in itself. How has this credulity been possible?

For one thing, God and the ectoplasm in question share one foundational attribute, that they both violate the copula in their syntactic appropriation for the understanding. Just like it is with Blonde Youth, which cannot hold on to its world predicates, “God’s” essential attributes (omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, the summum bonum, etc.) are not met with in nature. As Kant showed, the thatness and the whatness of God in the elementary proposition “God is,” do not derive from the copula. Nor do any other attributes people have given to God derive from nature. This was enough for Kant to reject the possibility of “God.” And yet God is an entity encountered all over the world independently of culture, although still dependent on the way that we in the West understand the notion embedded in discrete cultures. If the idea of “God” persists despite the lack of objective proof, this is another way to say that, just like in the case of Blonde Youth, God can only be what it is not. In view of this foundational convergence, could it be then that the unpredicate entity in question is God or at least a god?
Blonde Youth Is Not God

We can coarsely distinguish at least three historical phases in Western thought where Greek statues have been experienced, addressed, or understood as “gods” of some sort. The first phase was prereflective and thus agnostic, the second was reflective but conceptually vacuous, and the third reflective and conceptually potent, but premised poorly enough to be deemed incomprehensible. The prereflective stage refers to Archaic Greece. The conceptually vacuous phase culminated with eighteenth and nineteenth century European romanticism, some of the tenets with which we already familiarized ourselves while reviewing the Germans, although as Leoussi reports, a contemporaneous and concomitant treatment also came from the British and the French. The third hermeneutical phase was prompted but never established with the currently defensible philosophical exegesis of the world from Heidegger’s radical metaphysics based in his theory of art.

Homeric Greece is said to have experienced culturally indigenous entities the kind of Blonde Youth, as “gods.” Steiner notices a paradigmatic section in Iliad, where the statue of Athena stands in the temple as the Trojan suppliant women arrive to ask for help, and “Pallas Athena turns her head away” from them. “At no point in the episode does the poet distinguish between the deity and the statue standing in the temple,” writes Steiner, adding that theophanies and agalmatophanies are hard to tell apart, not only because the term theos and his “representation” are interchangeable, but also because the behavior of the Olympians “spills over” into the world.28

We note here that in the realm of reason where Steiner belongs and addresses the issue, the statue she discusses is already assumed to be a “representation.” The tacit transference of value imposed here destabilizes the Homeric experience of the entity in question in favor of justifying it exclusively from our own, rational standpoint, although as we saw earlier the currently predominant notions of representation and idealization are only irrational pseudo-explanations. This transference of value from the realm of mythos to the realm of logos is not new. It clearly appears first in Plato and is sustained throughout romanticism and neoclassicism. We see it reintroduced for modernity by Winckelmann and Lessing, where the idea of the statue as representation is imbedded in the title of the latter’s work How the Ancients Represented Death, of 1769.

The realm of mythos ended axiomatically with the inauguration of the realm of reason by the Socratic elenchus. Landmark critiques by Xenophanes, Plato, and Minucius Felix sharply distinguished between statue and god, at the expense of either or both. At the threshold between Archaic and Classical Greece, Xenophanes of Colophon brought the Olympian deities crumbling down to earth with his irreverent remark that mortals of different nations deem their gods in their own image and so would animals if they had gods, so that evidently it is not the gods that create mortals and animals, but the other way around.29
various mythological cosmologies, including that of Christianity, which understand “God” as the unilateral and at the same time universal provenance of world, are thus shunned with Xenophanes relativistic observation. The statue cannot be god as a metaphysical, exocosmic being, because there isn’t such a thing as “god” to begin with. God is a human invention, and the statue is a simulacrum of man’s idea.

In Plato’s metaphysics the statue was further demoted to an *eidolon* of an *eidolon* (the copy of a copy), since no mortal chiseling can perfectly duplicate the essential, eternal reality of the human figure. The fleeting human reality only faintly mirrors perfect eternal truths. Here the statue cannot be an immortal god because at the very best it could only be a copy of mortal man. At this point it is also clear that the statue was already seen as the work of the artist. In Archaic Greece the artists had remained unknown and the statues were believed to have fallen from the sky.\(^{30}\) Given this newfangled admission, Plato had nothing better to offer as an answer to Heidegger’s question of the whence of the artist, other than his concept in *Timaeus* of God the *demiourgos* as poet and father.\(^{31}\)

Be that as it may, the then new but still persisting conventional assumption that the statue is made by the artist, opened up the possibility to doubt now the installation of the divine in the manmade object. “When does the god come into being?” asked the early apologist of Christianity Marcus Minucius Felix in the third century. “The image is cast, hammered, or sculpted; it is not yet a god. It is soldered, put together, and erected; it is still not a god. It is adorned, consecrated, prayed to – and now, finally it is a god once man has willed it so and dedicated it. When does the god come into being?”\(^{32}\)

The Germans, all of whom had either tacitly or explicitly accepted that the statue is the work of the artist, did not address Minucius Felix’ concerns. They remained spellbound to Winckelmann’s trance, basking under his epiphenomenal presumption that art is about beauty and unable to see or escape his aforementioned contradictions. God is merely *represented*, that is, installed onto the stone, and done so by means of the genius of the sculptor who, as Lessing observed, makes sure that the essence of the god is universalized by being made abstract: “The gods … represented by the artist are not precisely the same as those introduced by the poet. To the artist they are personified abstractions which must always be characterized in the same way, or we fail to recognize them.”\(^ {33}\)

Minucius Felix’s incredulity was thusly sidestepped by romantic historicism through the abstractification of the statue through universal concepts. The more recondite and adjective the German *description* of the essence of divinity in the statue, the more Greek paganism would be compatible to monotheism and thus less exposed to Christian critique. This self-imposed impossible merger would ultimately drive the Germans crazy – Hölderlin, Heine, and Nietzsche lost their mind in the end – but that was their problem, not a problem of Greek art. In her *Tyranny of Greece over Germany* (1936), Butler wondered of something only too obvious to be true: “In what other country would the discovery of serenity, simplicity and nobility in art have brought about such dire results?”\(^ {34}\)

Winckelmann, whom Butler describes as “in trance … uttering truths which
did not apply to the object before him, but were associated with it in his mind,”35 trailblazed this abstractification by employing theoretical concepts such as clarity, nobility, simplicity, serenity, greatness, depth, and composure, in order to explain to his compatriots the “divine attributes of the human form” in the Greek statue.36 We see this in the often-quoted passage from his History:

The universal, dominant characteristic of Greek masterpieces, finally, is noble simplicity and serene greatness in the pose as well as in the expression. The depths of the sea are always calm, however wild and stormy the surface; and in the same way the expression in Greek figures reveals greatness and composure of soul in the throes of whatever passions.37

Ultimately what drove the Germans crazy was that what they saw – just like the pre-Socratics did – to be real and true, i.e., that the statue is god, was simply impossible. Thinking about it defied logic, since here the premises were true but the conclusion false. Winckelmann first drafted the maddening argument, speaking of “incorporeal forms,” of “divine attributes from the human form,” about the “more than human proportions of a deity.”38 The Winckelmannites only swarmed in like moths to the flame “god-like and youthful forms full of truth in illusion” (Herder),39 seeing there “heroes and gods take[ing] part in the action” (Lessing),40 opening up a dialogue with the statue, “Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas/Can ye listen in your silence?” (Schiller);41 they saw “snow-white images of the gods” (Goethe),42 where “I became what I saw, and what I saw was god-like” (Hölderlin).43

I stated earlier that the Germans addressed the Greek statue with an approach that was reflective but conceptually vacuous. Our cursory historical account through Butler’s panoramic view of the “tyranny” clarifies that this conceptual vacuity is the abortive outcome from a conclusion that denies its own premises. Winckelmann’s abstractification proved too weak to shake off the Christian apologist’s question of exactly when does the god come into being in the stone. This would require a rigorous shakedown of the foundational presumptions of German romanticism; it would take the analytical-phenomenological return to the Greek phenomenon that would come only with Heidegger.

A prime example of the deeply rooted confusions romantic historicism had sustained all along, visible only through an analytical-phenomenological revisiting of Greece, is Lessing’s translation of Pausanias’ references to the term ἀγάλμα ἄρχαιον. Lessing naively translates this reference to the statue as “ancient idol.”44 We had to wait for Heidegger to point at the grave losses that plagued at least early neoclassicism from the initial translation of Greek into Latin and then to the Latinate tongues, and only through Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis to retrieve at least some of the Greek experience of the statue. The adjective ἄρχαιον does not at all mean “ancient,” as even the average modern Greek believes, but literally “grounding” as it derives from the noun ἄρχη (Grund in German). For the Greeks ἄρχη meant both beginning and measure, a measure that enacts a
beginning. Likewise, ἀγαλμα did not mean “idol” for the pre-Socratics, but “glorification,” or “shining” “of the gods,” a cognate to the verb ἀγλαίζω and the adjective ἀγαλαδός; it has nothing to do with Plato’s eîdolon as copy and cognate of “idol.” Similarly, the stone over which both the Christian apologist and the German neoclassicist troubled over how the god could be installed into was not as simple a thing as a “marble,” that is, oryctologically speaking, CaCO₃. The stone was the noun μάρμαρον, derived from the verb μαρμαίρειν which means to “irradiate,” to “shine through,” referring to the grounding, founding, and bestowing of the possibility of world as a mode of knowledge installed by the statue; or at least this is how Heidegger interpreted the meaning out of his correct translation of the word.

Heidegger radically parted with the German romantics, from a tradition sustained by Judeo-Greek metaphysics as a whole since the neoclassical interpretation of the Greeks. He did this mainly on three fundamental ontological thrusts: first in arguing successfully contra Plato, Aristotle and Christian theology that God cannot be yet another being, secondly by showing that art is not about beauty but about truth, and thirdly in deconstructing realism and historicism by giving a brand new, critical meaning to the previously static concept of “world.” The combination of these radical elucidations volatized the Greeks and led Heidegger to a quasi-archaic gnosticism; the conviction that the Greek statue can be nothing but the presencing of god into a world of its own making as a mode of knowledge. This conviction somehow returned to and vindicated the Homeric experience of the statue, but now from thoroughly rational grounds not anymore liable to the accusation of mythological superstition.

Heidegger’s theory of art cannot be accounted for here, far less his metaphysical superstructure upon which this theory is based and reciprocally justified. But a slice of his edifice can still illustrate his case, in our context of what I introduced as reflective and conceptually potent but premised poorly enough to be deemed incomprehensible. Heidegger escaped the romantic schizophrenia by now accepting the conclusion of its premising, namely that the statue is, indeed as the premises established, a god. He did so by building up the arguments piecemeal throughout his extensive and labyrinthine works to conclude in The Origin of the Work of Art, one of his most impenetrable works, that it is better “cause” of the Greek statue that world and its constituency is enacted as a perceptual contingency. We have his conclusion condensed in the following passage from Origin:

The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. … It is the same with the sculpture of the god … It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself be present and thus is the god himself.

Since the statue is claimed to be god because it first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves, Heidegger would have to demonstrate that the statue, as a statue, not only meets the conditions for the possibility of
appearing in the world it determines, but much more so, that the statue itself is the condition for the possibility of human perception. So far we have seen that the entity in question does not even meet the first requirement, for it has defied all the presumed conditions for the possibility of appearance in our world: it is not art because it is not a statue, and it is not a statue because it is not a representation, nor an idealization, not a historical or climatological accident; it is not what it is, or rather it is only what it is not. And now we are about to conclude that neither is it god. The failure to meet the first condition does not necessarily preclude the statue’s meeting the second condition; in fact it may make it more likely, since as we saw, for Heidegger god cannot be yet another world being. So far this is exactly what Blonde Youth is showing to “be,” a non-being. But we are still far from accepting that the ectoplasm is a god.

To prove that the statue is god at least on his own terms, Heidegger would have to show how human perception is absolutely determined by the statue, and done so without falling into the infinite regress which condemns realism. Indeed, Heidegger has compellingly moved away from infinitism by having thoroughly replaced the concept of causality with the concept of grounding, notably the very same concept that truly defines the statue as ἀπαθαῖον in the Greek language. With equal success he has also substituted the empiricist paratactic appearance of world objects to experience, with the structural integration of beings through the phenomenological concept of intentionality. But even after these, as radical as serviceable replacements, it still has to be shown how the non-causal, now structural relation between mortals and the marble god is established in order to warrant perception of world as a mode of knowledge.

This would be viable only if Heidegger could demonstrate that the structures of the understanding through which the perception of mortals is possible, structures themselves grounded in the intentionality of a consciousness that is aware of its own impending demise, are identical to and indistinguishable from the essential structures which constitute the statue. (Recall what Schiller said at his deathbed about beauty in life as truth to be found on the other side with death.) Arguably this interpretive endeavor is viable through the phenomenological reduction of the statue, where after the removal of all the knowledge that we bring and impose to the statue, i.e., the knowledge promulgated by historicism, there would be nothing left to constitute and define the decontaminated object under the reduction except these residual, essential structures.

The reduction, or bracketing of the object in question in an “epoché,” is a standard phenomenological practice, trailblazed by Brentano and Husserl. Basically it is an analytical method of a privileged theory of perception, because unlike the theories which preceded it, it begins from acknowledging the perceptual biases of the perceiver-investigator and accepting that every perceptual event is an interpretation. In its existentialist projections the reduction reaches out to cancel our alienation from “the” world as this alienation is disseminated by realism; it confirms that the world is of our own, human making, while at the same time we are the making of world. Since contra realism Heidegger does not arrive to art having started out from the object of perception, but the other way around, the
reduction would not start from the human body in order to check the verisimilitudinal fidelity of the statue to the human body as the theorists of “Greek naturalism” saw it. It would start from the phenomenologically reduced statue in order to check whether and how the residual essences that constitute the essence of the statue are somehow related to and determine the intentional structures of human understanding.

Heidegger, however, did not produce a phenomenological reduction of the statue. The theory of embodiment implied from his *fundamental* ontology is notably still missing, although several attempts, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s in *Phenomenology of Perception*, have advanced always mere ontological and ontic appropriations of body to world. Instead Heidegger diverted his attention from the statue to poetry and architecture, where the primordial equipmentalization of intentionality that would embody the residual essences at large, are even more inscrutable.

Heidegger knew that the most primitive structure operative at the interface between what is human and what is world is *mood*. Moods are the most primitive world structures for phenomenology, preceding and determining the *how* and *only thus* the *that* of the phenomenal manifestation of beings in perception. Had Heidegger pursued the phenomenological reduction of the statue, he may have noticed that a particular mood, argued as the *most primordial of all*, is precisely the residual essence that constitutes the non-being of *Blonde Youth*. This is the primary reason why I myself have noticed this particular Greek “statue” and distinguished it out of some 400 surviving specimens that lie on either side of Archaic and Classical Greece. Another reason was the aforementioned identical mood that is *Blonde Youth* with that of the *Euthydikos Kore*, which as we saw discredited the theory of representation by verisimilitude.

If Heidegger had a chance to prove that *Blonde Youth* is a god, the terms of his own fundamental ontology would have led him to the demonstration that the mood which constitutes the essence of this questionable entity is, indeed, primordially determining human perception. For unlike any other world object, where the phenomenological reduction distills the *human* experience of the object reduced, the reduction of this statue may have yielded *no less than the conditions for the possibility of human experience together with its object, the thingliness of the statue*. Such a world-forging yield could, indeed, qualify the entity in question as a god.

Nonetheless, in the absence of the phenomenological reduction of the statue Heidegger has left us with yet another *non sequitur*. Despite his accepting the conclusion his compatriots had rejected from seeing the statue only as god’s representation, Heidegger’s claim leaves his art theory still within the tradition of the informal fallacies that undermined the neoclassic movement. With great help from Nietzsche, the romantic schizophrenia found itself entering the twentieth century basking under the light of a euphemism, which mistook proofless claims
as poetry. No wonder the Afrocentrist and the vindicationist protests against the Greeks, despite of the Greeks. Even Heideggerian phenomenologists like Julian Young resorted into saying that Heidegger could not really mean what he claimed in *Origin*; that he was there only “being poetic.” By the 1930s, when the Vienna Circle had come to age, logical positivism had all the rope it needed to lynch the Continent.

**Blonde Youth Is Not a Being**

We recall that Heidegger wrecked the superstructure of Western ontotheology on the single call that god cannot be yet another being. If god cannot be yet another being, and the statue is a being, then the statue cannot be god. Conversely, if Heidegger held that the statue is a god, he must have also seen, without being explicit about it, that the statue is not a being. Thus, much of what remains to be decided, depends on our figuring out whether Blonde Youth is a being. How Heidegger’s intuition may prove true, this we have already began to realize without Heidegger in what preceded here, In several of his works Heidegger investigated the relation between art and being, art and the work, art, the thing, and equipment; still he never claimed that the statue is not a being and how this would be possible.

Perhaps we could progress in this direction of establishing this particular “statue’s” non-being-ness by considering that since any other ontological predicates are derivatives of mood because mood is the most primordial structure that determines perception, then the one and only predicate that the entity in question may retain for itself is its mood, where moods are not beings. Then, after we refreshed our understanding of what is a being, and whether mood is one of them, we could finally determine whether the entity in question is a being.

It is arguable, though we cannot commit to produce such proof here, that the phenomenological reduction of the ectoplasm in the museum would distill its fundamental ontological essence as nothing but a certain mood. Mood in itself is not a being; it can only be reified as something else than itself, primarily and originally into human face and only secondarily into world objects in manufacture and architecture. The proof that to some degree moods in general, but more so this mood in particular that we epiphenomenally perceive as Blonde Youth, are not of this world, is the fact and the reason why ants, snakes, birds and primates have heads, but have no face. The head is a kind of an extant being, or part of a being, but mood is not. By not constituting an extant being in itself, mood is coming from without to use the head and make face out of it in a way that the head cannot use mood. Thus by means of its being a mood and that alone, the only predicate it can hold on to, Blonde Youth is not an innerworldly being.

Phenomenology, Heidegger’s predominantly included, has advanced our understanding of reality beyond empiricism and idealism from accepting that there are only two kinds of beings in the world: *extant* beings that *are*, and *intentional
beings that exist. The distinction between the two is sharp, although the ontological standing of the beings which merely are absolutely depends on the beings that exist, and (for Heidegger, but not for Husserl) vice versa. Thus when people say that a coffee mug, a primate, a talking computer, or god “exists,” they are unwittingly abusing language and fool themselves into an inauthentic relation with the world by transgressing reality with category mistakes from either side of the two kinds of beings. It is a basic principle of phenomenology to recognize the particular meaning the Greeks gave to “existence,” from the preposition ἐκ and the verb ἔστημι, meaning to “stand out, open towards what one can be.” From the original Greek understanding of “existence” we accept that only an intentional, that is, finite consciousness, a being that is human, can “exist,” because in the ecstatic only a human being can step out of itself to be what is yet to be. The thing, on the other hand, “is” only as a res extensa, and the gods, being immortal, cannot be ecstatic; at the very best only are just in case they are also found to be extant beings.

If Blonde Youth is to belong to our world, that is, if it is a being, it must qualify and be confined within either one of the two ontological qualifications of beings. If not, then it “is” not of this world. In order to “exist” the entity in question must be conscious, with a type of consciousness unlike that of mere living beings which can only die, or as Heidegger puts it, “perish.” Existence, on the other hand, requires a consciousness which understands that it dies.

As we saw earlier with Steiner, the Homeric Greeks seem to have experienced statues as beings of this type, as beings which exist, since they were indistinguishable from mortals because their agalmatophany spilled over into the world of the mortals. But this held only because the realm of mythos could not afford rational questions. Standing out open towards what one can be is only one, the fundamental ontological condition of existing beings. Besides this, there also apply the ontic or factual conditions of existence, now as a living being within the seamless network of life forms. Living in the realm of logos is meeting the three biological conditions which determine all living organisms: to use and transform energy, to procreate, and to produce detritus. Arguably the entity in question meets none of these three conditions, therefore it is not alive and thus it does not exist. This checks out the first of just two possibilities for Blonde Youth to be a being of this world.

The other possibility would require that this “statue” could retain for itself as subject some ontological predicates in order to justify the copula that it is as a res extensa. We have already determined that Blonde Youth is nothing of what it has uncritically been thought of being, that it can afford no predicates of its own in order to define itself. The cases we excluded may not exhaust all possibilities, for someone may eventually come up with a new, better idea to explain this entity. But for now the entity in question fails the qualification not only of a “statue,” but more so even of a res extensa, since none of our assumptions which could qualify Blonde Youth as a statue are defensible, and since art by itself and independently of the artwork as object does not extend in space.

The entity in question is a “statue” only if it is predicated as a representation,
or an idealization, a historical or climatological accident, or a god. If it is neither of these, then neither is it a “statue.” Then what is it? Whether it is an ἄγαλμα, that is, a god shining through in grounding, founding, and bestowing world to its preservers as a mode of knowledge, this is an altogether separate question we have left behind with Greek mythology, German schizophrenia, and Heidegger’s alleged poetry. To insist in credulity and granting it ontological status as it were by mere convention under the name “statue” is as a moot point if not altogether nonsensical as if we had agreed to call it a bathroom urinal or a spring vegetable. The ectoplasm is not a statue, for the same reason it is not a urinal or a vegetable: it cannot hold any predicates of its own or of any other object in order to establish its eidetic suchness into a legitimate object of perception.

From phenomenological grounds alone, where as Heidegger showed the reification of the object of perception is itinerant within the existential, temporal horizon of the disclosure of beings, one may want to argue that mere convention can indeed legitimatize the object of perception. But even in this “subjective” horizon of interpretation that advances our understanding of reality beyond the shortcomings of empiricism and idealism, even there nothing can survive ontologically that is entirely arbitrary. Heidegger sharply outlined just two conditions under which the object of perception can be reified into a world appearance in the as-structure of interpretation; extant beings are either as present-at-hand, or as ready-to-hand. Beings present-at-hand are those manifesting their eidetic suchness prior to explicit human intervention, but still within the holdings of human interpretation: natural objects such as galaxies, rivers, subatomic particles, milk, etc. On the other hand, beings which appear as ready-to-hand are those which have already undergone explicit human manipulation; they are objects like screw drivers, submarines, vaccines, ice cream etc. In either of these two modes of appearance, objects of perception are reified strictly in terms of their serviceability, usability, or detrimentality, exclusively for a consciousness aware of and resisting its own finitude.\(^49\)

The epistemological scandal that we casually understand as Blonde Youth satisfies neither of these two qualifications of appearance in the temporal horizon of disclosure of beings. It is not an object present-at-hand, because it is not a natural object; for some reason we cannot understand it other than as man-made. And it is not a ready-to-hand object, because it is not instrumental to the kind of world-dwelling consciousness that has a vested interest to enact the as-structure of interpretation in its temporal horizon of disclosure.

In terms of usability the entity in question is utterly useless, and the Greek peasants who in Christian times reportedly smashed and furnaced the ancient marbles reducing them to asbestolithic lime in order to plaster with it the walls of their houses, must have had a good old pragmatic grasp of this. The statue may have been thought of as useful if it did indeed represent or idealize something other than itself, useful as a means for a certain human community to reflect on itself; but a representation or idealization this entity is not.

In terms of serviceability, the entity in question is completely out of whack from the world-constitutive interrelations and interdependencies that serve the
integration of the world’s parts to the whole and vice versa. *Blonde Youth* affects no working order in the causal machinations of nature, nor is it affected by them. Since we eliminated the possibilities that it can be either a historical or hermeneutic accident, or that it is somehow dependent on weather, *Blonde Youth* is not part of the historical process or of natural law. Since Plato people have somehow accepted that it was made by an artist, but prior to someone giving us a cogent answer to Heidegger’s question of the whence of the artist, this assumption, no matter how incontestably obvious it may seem, is just part of the cover up.

As for the third and last possibility, that *Blonde Youth* may have reified to appear in perception because of its detrimental effects to beings that exist in their resisting what resists their will to live, here the always ominous Schopenhauer may have remained relevant. Yet the ectoplasm seems innocuous. It has not threatened or harmed anyone yet, save perhaps a handful of Germans with weak knees for serenity and simplicity. *Blonde Youth* is nothing that we can think of, and I don’t know why this is not even scary.

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29. Diels-Kranz, fragments 14, 15, 16.
32. *Octavius*, 22.5.
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8. 46. See also Kevin Aho, *Heidegger’s Neglect of the Body*; Francisco J. Verela, *The Embodied Mind*;
10. 47. Heidegger may have come face to face with *Blonde Youth* at his visiting the National Archaeological Museum in 1967, as he wrote after that he had “… a view that halted the will to understand as it constituted something purely strange. However, this kind of strangeness was not frightening. It led to a world, which had been determined as the inception of a great destiny.” In Martin Heidegger, *Sojourns*, State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 45.