Karsten Harries

Contributions to Phenomenology 57

Art Matters

A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art"

Springer

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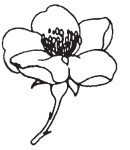
CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY

IN COOPERATION WITH
THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH IN PHENOMENOLOGY

Volume 57



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ART MATTERS

A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art"

by

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Springer

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ISBN 978-1-4020-9988-5 e-ISBN 978-1-4020-9989-2

DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2009921995

Printed on acid-free paper

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

springer.com

Preface

After *Being and Time*, "The Origin of the Work of Art" may well be Heidegger's most widely read and referred to work. It not only marks the midpoint and center of his path of thinking; but, developing earlier themes and anticipating much of what was still to come, more perspicuously than any other of his works, it presents us in a nutshell with the whole Heidegger. It is my hope that this critical commentary will demonstrate that we have no better introduction to his thought.

Certainly, no other work by Heidegger has had as profound and enduring an impact on my own philosophical development. I first discovered the essay in 1958, my first year in graduate school, when Heidegger was just beginning to arouse broad interest in this country's philosophical community. *The Meaning of Modern Art* (1968) hints at how the essay helped shape my thinking about the present situation of art. "Das befreite Nichts" (1970), my contribution to *Durchblicke*, the *Festschrift* for Heidegger's 80th birthday, attempted to develop some of these ideas with more explicit reference to "The Origin of the Work of Art." How important the essay has been to my work in the philosophy of architecture is shown by *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (2001). But it was not questions concerning art and architecture that have mattered most to me; of greater import has been the problem of nihilism that I had tackled in my dissertation (1961).

Given my understanding of the essay's importance, it is hardly surprising that over the years I should have repeatedly dedicated seminars to this text, so in the spring of 1994, the fall of 1999, the fall of 2001, and, now for the last time, the spring of 2008. What follows are my notes for these seminars, revised to minimize repetitions and amended in a number of places to take into account some of the relevant literature.

My greatest debt is to the students in these seminars. Their questions and contributions were indispensable. I also owe a special debt to George A. Schrader, who first encouraged me to read this essay and who was to direct my dissertation on nihilism, to Hans-Georg Gadamer, with whom I had many fruitful discussions and who was responsible for the invitation to contribute to the Heidegger Festschrift, to Otto Pöggeler, who so clearly understood the importance of the essay to my work, including even to my book on the Bavarian Rococo Church, to Eduard Führ, who helped me become clearer about what Heidegger still has to contribute to our understanding of the present state of architecture, and to Dermot Moran, friend and fellow phenomenologist, who encouraged me to gather these notes for the present publication.

July 15, 2008 K. Harries
Hamden, Connecticut

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Abbreviations

All references in the text are to the volumes of the Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtaugabe*, published by Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, listed below. When I use a translation, the page reference follows that to the German original, separated by a /.

G2.	*Sein und Zeit* (1927) *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962
G4.	*Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (1936–1968)
G5.	*Holzwege* (1935–1946) "The Origin of the Work of Art," trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Poetry, Langusge, Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971
G6.1.	Nietzsche 1. (1936–1939)
G7.	*Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1936–1953) "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971
G9.	*Wegmarken* (1919–1958) "What is Metaphysics?" trans. David Farrell Krell, *Basic Writings*. New York: Harper and Row, 1977, 95–112
G13.	*Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (1910–1976)
G14.	*Zur Sache des Denkens* (1962–1964) "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," trans. Joan Stambaugh, *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977, 373–392
G16.	*Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges* (1910–1976) "The Self Assertion of the German University," "The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," "Der Spiegel Interview with Martin Heidegger," *Martin Heideger and National Socialism. Questions and Answers*, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, trans. Lisa Harries. New York: Paragon, 1990
G17.	Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung (WS 1923–1924)
G19.	*Platon: Sophistes* (WS 1924–1925)
G26.	*Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz* (SS 1928)

G27.	*Einleitung in die Philosophie* (WS 1928–1929)
G29/30.	*Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit* (WS 1929–1930)
G34.	*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (WS 1931–1932)
G36/37.	*Sein und Wahrheit. 1. Die Grundfrage der Philosophie* (SS 1933). *2. Vom Wesen der Wahrheit* (WS 1933–1934).
G39.	*Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (WS 1934–1935)
G40.	*Einführung in die Metaphysik* (SS 1935) *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: Anchor Books, 1961
G41.	*Die Frage nach dem Ding. Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen* (WS 1935)
G43.	*Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst* (WS 1936–1937)
G45.	*Grundfragen der Philosophie. Ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik"* (WS 1937–1938)
G56/57.	*Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*. (1) *Die Idee der Philosophie und das Weltanschauungsproblem* (post war semester 1919); (2) *Phänomenologie und transzendentale Wertphilosophie* (SS 1919); (3) *Anhang: Über das Wesen der Universität und des akademischen Studiums* (SS 1919)
G60.	*Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*. (1) *Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion* (WS 1920–1921); (2) *Augustinus und der Neuplatonismus* (SS 1921); (3) *Die philosophischen Grundlagen der mittelalterlichen Mystik* (WS 1918–1919)
G65.	*Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–1938) *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning) Studies in Continental Thought*, trans Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000

1

Introduction: The End of Art?

1. Questioning Aesthetics

This critical commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" is part of a continuing attempt to address some questions raised by Hegel's pronouncement that "art is, and remains for us, on the side of its highest destiny, a thing of the past,"[1] questions that, as Heidegger recognized, concern much more than just the future of art.

Given that much of the art we admire most today was created long after Hegel declared the end of art "on the side of its highest destiny" in the 1820's, we may be tempted to dismiss such a declaration as just another example of philosophy losing touch with reality. And yet, the state of the current art world has made it more difficult to simply dismiss talk of the end or death of art.[2] Does art still matter? How? What kind of art?

What is at issue is hinted at by some remarks Heidegger makes in the Epilogue to the essay:

> Almost from the time when specialized thinking about art and the artist began, this thought was called aesthetic. Aesthetics takes the work of art as an object, the object of *aisthesis*, of sensuous apprehension in the wide sense. Today we call this apprehension experience. The way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its nature. Experience is the source that is standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment, but also for artistic creation. Everything is an experience. Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. This dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries (G5, 67/79).

To understand this remark we need to understand the aesthetic approach to art that is here called into question. Why should Heidegger tie this approach to the dying of art? How is "art" understood here?

We are given a first answer by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's dissertation of 1735, which not only helped to inaugurate a specifically modern approach to poetry and beyond that to art, but also gave us the word "aesthetics" to name what has developed into a main branch of philosophy.[3] In the course of his discussion, Baumgarten likens the successful poem to the world, more precisely to the world as Leibniz describes it: a perfect whole having its sufficient reason in God.[4] In this world nothing is superfluous, nothing is missing: everything is just as it should be. When Baumgarten insists that the poem be like a world, he insists that it, too, be experienced as such

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 1–15.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_1,

a perfect whole. As Paul Valéry was to claim much later, in the poem "well-known things and beings—or rather the ideas that represent them—somehow change in value. They attract one another, they are connected in ways quite different from the ordinary; they become (if you will permit the expression) musicalized, resonant, and, as it were, harmonically related."[5] To demand that the poem be a perfect whole is to claim that in the successful poem every word is experienced as having to appear just as in fact it does. This includes what Valéry calls the seemingly impossible demand that sound and sense become indissoluble: "it is the poet's business to give us the feeling of an intimate union between the word and the mind."[6] Poetry is the magical incarnation of meaning in the word. This magic is lost when we insist on wresting a meaning from the poem. As Archibald MacLeish demanded, a poem should not mean, but be. It should draw attention to itself as a self-sufficient presence. What matters is the poem's inner coherence, not that it correspond to or reveal in any way what is.

We can generalize and say the same of the work of art: It should convince us by its inner coherence. Its point is not to mean something beyond itself. Beauty, on the aesthetic approach, has little to do with truth. The beautiful work of art, so understood, does not so much reveal reality as it offers a vacation from reality. Emphasis on the unity and self-sufficiency of the aesthetic object leads thus quite naturally to an emphasis on aesthetic distance, on that separation of art from reality Kant was to insist on in the *Critique of Judgment*. Such distance is implied by that disinterested pleasure in which Kant found the key to the essence of aesthetic experience.

"The Origin of the Work of Art" calls such an understanding into question, raising the question, why, at this stage of his philosophical development, such questioning should have become so important to Heidegger. As Heinrich Wiegand Petzet recalls, already in 1930 Heidegger had become convinced of the need to not just revise, but completely break with aesthetics: "Conventional aesthetics did not work anymore."[7] Such conviction is not unrelated to a growing conviction that art does matter and Heidegger guards against a possible misunderstanding of his remark—"perhaps experience is the element in which art dies"—by glossing it in the Reclam edition (1960) of the essay with the explanation: "This sentence, however, does not assert that art as such has come to an end. This would only be the case if experience were to remain the only element for art. But everything depends on moving from experience into being-there (*Da-sein*), and this is to say: to gain an altogether different 'element' for the 'becoming' of art" (G5, 67). The essay attempts to move in this direction.

Challenging Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann and Joseph J. Kockelmans, Otto Pöggeler has insisted that "The Origin of the Work of Art" should not be read as a work in aesthetics or even as a philosophy of art. Not that "The Origin of the Work of Art" does not make a significant contribution to the philosophy of art, even if Heidegger himself in the later Reclam edition denied that the essay offers a "philosophy of art," insisting that what matters is "the question about Being."[8] No doubt, that question is what finally mattered to him. But precisely by looking at art from this perspective, he casts new light

on art. What makes this essay significant certainly includes the way it invites us to think the essence of art in opposition to the aesthetic approach.

Challenging aesthetics, Heidegger also challenges our modern world, for, if he is right, the aesthetic approach and modernity belong together—one point of this commentary is to examine that connection. Uncertainly "The Origin of the Work of Art" gestures towards a postmodern understanding of art; and not just of art, but, and more importantly, of reality. The question of Being is indeed fundamental.

To fully appreciate what is at stake, "The Origin of the Work of Art" should be read together with "The Age of the World Picture," the essay that follows it in *Holzwege* (G5, 75–113). In "The Age of the World Picture" (1938) Heidegger addresses the threat the world picture that rules modernity poses to humanity. The aesthetic approach, as will become clearer in the following, may be understood as a response to this threat; but that response, Heidegger was convinced, betrays the promise of art: understanding art first of all in aesthetic terms, it denies art its essential ethical function. Tending to reduce all art to decoration in the broadest sense, not just of buildings but of lives, "the age of the world picture" may thus be understood as "the age of the decorated shed."[9] But this reduction, as we shall see, threatens our humanity. "The Origin of the Work of Art" speaks to that threat.

2. Heidegger Contra Hegel

This is how the Heidegger student Walter Biemel understood the essay's significance. In his Heideggerian *Philosophische Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (1969) we find thus the following remark: "The epoch in which the association with art reduced itself to an aesthetic observing has come to an end. This, however, is not to say that we cannot fall back into it again and again, since this way of approaching art seems to offer itself immediately, is most readily available, and makes the fewest demands on the observer."[10] To say that "the epoch in which the association with art reduced itself to an aesthetic observing has come to an end" is not to claim that aesthetic observing has come to an end. Biemel grants that an aesthetic approach to art remains "most readily available." But he insists that there is a sense in which developments in art allow us to claim that an epoch in which art was ruled by the aesthetic approach has ended.

But if there is indeed a sense in which the development of art in the twentieth century invites talk of an epoch having ended, an epoch in which both the practice and the theory of art were ruled by the aesthetic approach, do developments in art, say the turn to performance or concept art, support the claim that we find ourselves on the threshold of a post-aesthetic art that will return to art something of the significance that Hegel had denied it? Biemel certainly thought so. Following Heidegger, he took the task of art to be to reveal what he calls *die Art des herrschenden Weltbezugs*, "the mode of the ruling way of relating to the world." The genuine work of art, according to

Biemel, reveals how we today encounter other entities, including especially other human beings, but also ourselves; reveals how we stand in the world, not so transparently that this stance becomes evident to all, but "in a kind of hieroglyphic writing that requires interpretation if it is to become understood."[11] The work of art is understood here, as Hegel put it, as "only a certain manner of expressing and representing the true."[12] This understanding of art serving truth presupposes what I shall call an ontological conception of the beautiful.[13]

As here stated, this conception is not particularly Hegelian—equally well one could point to Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas or Heidegger—to give just some examples. To tie it to a particular thinker would require a further determination of the meaning of truth—we shall return to this topic in a later chapter; but just this ontological function is denied to art in our modern age by Hegel, who figures so prominently in the Epilogue and may be said to shadow the entire essay.[14] Heidegger agrees: every artist today has to contend with "the essential destiny (*Geschick*) in which great art is no longer the necessary form for the presentation of the absolute—as Hegel saw it—and is therefore without a place. Its refuge today is the babbling turmoil in the delapidated shack called 'society'"—Arthur Danto and George Dickie were to call that shack today's "art world."[15] Heidegger's words were written only in 1972, in response to Wiegand Petzet's biography of the painter Heinrich Vogeler, which to Heidegger seemed to confirm that it is the fate of the artist today not to "find the proper place for his art; nor is his art able to determine this place, either for it or for the one that is to come after."[16] To be sure, in this letter Heidegger goes on to invoke uncertainly van Gogh and Cézanne as pointing perhaps to a less despairing understanding of the future of art. But, as already in "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger finds it difficult to step out of the shadow cast by Hegel's pronouncement.

It is important to know that the version of "The Origin of the Work of Art" we have was preceded by two earlier drafts. While the first, dating from 1931/1932 and never delivered as a lecture,[17] did not mention Hegel and concluded, guardedly optimistic, with the same Hölderlin quotation as the final version, the second version, delivered to the "Art Historical Society at Freiburg" on November 13, 1935, concluded with the more gloomy reflections on Hegel that were then relegated to the Epilogue. In a letter to Elisabeth Blochmann of December 20, 1935 Heidegger makes this interesting comment about the first draft, which he had sent her: "It dates from the happy working period of the years 1931 and 1932—to which I now have once again fully achieved the more mature connection."[18] There is a suggestion that the intervening years had not been so happy. By then he had come to think of the time of his rectorate as a misguided interruption of his philosophical work. The conclusion of the greatly expanded final version, the text of three lectures Heidegger gave at the Freie Deutsche Hochstift in Frankfurt am Main in November and December 1936, returns to the Hölderlin quote. The significance of that back and forth, from Hölderlin to Hegel and back to Hölderlin,

will demand further consideration. What is important here is that the Epilogue should not be considered something just added on to the essay, after it had been completed. From the very beginning Heidegger was formulating his thoughts in part as a response to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

Heidegger recognizes how difficult, but also how important it is to challenge Hegel's proclamation of the end of art in what once was its highest sense:

> In the most comprehensive reflection on the nature of art that the West possesses—comprehensive because it stems from metaphysics—namely Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, the following propositions occur:
>
> Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth may obtain existence for itself.
>
> One may well hope that art will continue to advance and perfect itself, but its form has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit.
>
> In all these relationships art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation something past.
>
> The judgment that Hegel passes in these statements cannot be evaded by pointing out that since Hegel's lectures in aesthetics were given for the last time during the winter of 1828–29 at the University of Berlin, we have seen the rise of many new art works and new art movements. Hegel never meant to deny this possibility. But the question remains: is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character? If, however, it is such no longer, then there remains the question why this is so. The truth of Hegel's judgment has not yet been decided; for behind this verdict there stands Western thought since the Greeks, which thought corresponds to a truth of beings that has already happened. Decision upon the judgment will be made, when it is made, from and about the truth of what is. Until then the judgment remains in force. But for that very reason, the question is necessary whether the truth that the judgment declares is final and conclusive and what follows if it is (G5, 68/79–80).

Heidegger's ambivalence concerning the finality of Hegel's judgment is shown once more, when in a later conversation (1959) with Petzet he affirms it, only to immediately call such affirmation into question by adding, "that even that would have to be shown."[19]

Our confrontation with Heidegger's thinking on art becomes thus inevitably also a confrontation with Hegel. The truth of Hegel's judgment, Heidegger insists, has not yet been decided, even as it is said to be supported by Western thought since the Greeks. We should note that the appeal here is to thought, not to art. To Hegel's reflections on the progress of spirit, which has left art behind, Heidegger opposes his own reflections on art:

> Such questions, which solicit us more or less definitely, can be asked only after we have first taken into consideration the nature of art. We attempt

> to take a few steps by posing the question of the origin of the art work. The problem is to bring to view the work-character of the work. What the word "origin" here means is thought by way of the nature of truth (G5, 69/80).

Heidegger is well aware that Hegel's pronouncement that art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation something past, never meant to deny that there would be many new works of art and future art movements. "But the question remains: is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character? If, however, it is such no longer, then there remains the question why this is so" (G5, 68/80). This suggests that we need to distinguish between two kinds of art: between art in which the truth happens that is decisive for human beings—Heidegger speaks of "great art"—and art that lacks such significance. That we moderns have difficulty with the first seems evident.

How then did Hegel understand the art that he claimed had come to an end? Apparently not as aesthetics, as defined above, would understand it. Hegel, as Heidegger suggests, understands art "on the side of its highest vocation" as the happening of truth. Just this the aesthetic approach refuses to do. It divorces beauty and truth. And this divorce, Heidegger claims, following Hegel, is a consequence of a development of thought that has shaped the world we live in today. The shape of modernity supports Hegel's proclamation of the end of art in its highest sense.

But will his be the last word on the future of art? "Decision upon the judgment will be made, when it is made, from and about the truth of what is. Until then the judgment remains in force" (G5, 68/80). Crucial then is "the truth of what is."

3. The Aesthetic Approach

Before returning to Hegel, it is necessary to take a second and closer look at what has been called the aesthetic approach. This approach and the rise of philosophical aesthetics belong together. I already pointed out that we owe the word "aesthetics" to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. But to give a bit more definition to what I mean by "aesthetic" let me turn here to a passage from Kant's "First Introduction" to the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant distinguishes two rather different meanings of "aesthetic." "Aesthetic" indicates for one what has to do with sensibility. The aesthetic is understood here as belonging to the object (phenomenon). Think of the green of the grass, the smell of the rose. These are its aesthetic qualities. From this meaning of "aesthetic" we have to distinguish a second, where by means of the aesthetic mode of representation the represented is not related to the *faculty of knowledge*, but to the *feeling of pleasure and diapleasure*:[20] I call the green

of the grass soothing, the smell of the rose delightful. Here the aesthetic is understood as belonging first of all to the subject.

It is this second sense that is presupposed by the aesthetic approach. Aesthetic judgment so understood involves a reflective movement. "Reflective" here suggests a looking back from the object to the kind of experience it elicits. The philosophy of art understood as aesthetics thus has its foundation in a more subjective approach to art that tends to reduce the work of art to an occasion for a certain kind of enjoyable experience. What is enjoyed is not so much the work of art, as the occasioned experience or state of mind. Aesthetic enjoyment is fundamentally self-enjoyment.

As the distinction between the pleasure we take in a good meal and the satisfaction we take in a beautiful picture suggests, the second sense of "aesthetic" invites a further distinction, between a broader sense that includes the merely pleasant and the beautiful, and a narrower sense, that now distinguishes properly aesthetic judgments from judgments about what makes, say, food or some caress delightful. This is how Kant came to use the term in the *Critique of Judgment*; and this is the meaning that has come to be taken for granted by aesthetics. As the distinction between the beautiful, the sublime—and we can add such other aesthetic categories as the interesting or the characteristic—suggests, not every aesthetic judgment so understood need be a judgment of beauty. To these different aesthetic categories correspond different kinds of aesthetic experience.

4. Art and Truth

It is evident that on the aesthetic approach as here defined truth and art belong to different provinces. Works of art should be enjoyable. Whether the judged works are true or false does not matter. The substance of the claim "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" holds here, too. With this art becomes a form of perhaps high class entertainment. Often art is indeed no more. As Hegel observed:

> Beauty and art, no doubt, pervade the business of life like a kindly genius, and form the bright adornment of all our surroundings, both mental and material, soothing the sadness of our condition and the embarrassment of real life, killing time in entertaining fashion, and where there is nothing good to be achieved, occupying the place of what is vicious, better at any rate, than vice. Yet although art presses in with its pleasing shapes on every possible occasion, from the rude adornments of the savage to the splendor of the temple with its untold wealth of decoration, still these shapes themselves appear to fall outside the real purposes of life. And even if the creations of art do not prove detrimental to our graver purposes, if they appear at times actually to further them by keeping evil at a distance, still it is so far true that art belongs rather to the relaxation

> and leisure of the mind, while the substantive interests of life demand its exertion.[21]

Is art more than entertainment? And if just entertainment, is it worthy of the philosopher's attention? We can of course use art to express or dress up moral and other important ideas, use it to edify, as too much art today attempts to do, but in that case is it not at bottom superfluous? Like Heidegger, Hegel, too, demands more of great art. He is well aware that in the past, say in ancient Greece or in the Middle Ages, art has been much more than just entertainment and that it is precisely this that makes it worthy of the philosopher's attention.

> Fine art is not real art till it is in this sense free, and only achieves its highest task when it has taken its place in the same sphere with religion and philosophy, and has become simply a mode of revealing to consciousness and bringing to utterance the Divine Nature, the deepest interests of humanity, and the most comprehensive truths of the mind. It is in works of art that nations have deposited the profoundest intuitions and ideas of their hearts; and fine art is frequently the key—with many nations there is no other—to the understanding of their wisdom and of their religion.[22]

Hegel places art in a common circle with philosophy and religion. In it the profoundest interests of human beings find expression. Following Aristotle, Hegel thus goes on to argue that art is more philosophical than a mere description of phenomena as they present themselves could ever be.

> Art liberates the real import of appearances from this bad and fleeting world, and imparts to phenomenal semblances a higher reality, born of mind. The appearances of art therefore, far from being mere semblances, have the higher reality and the more genuine existence in comparison with the realities of common life.[23]

But by tying art in this way to reality and truth, Hegel is forced to subordinate art to religion, philosophy, and science.[24] Have we not come to recognize the medium of thought as more adequate to the pursuit of truth than the medium of art? Does our modern world not presuppose that recognition? The argument rests on the following three considerations:

1. Art is tied to truth.
2. The adequate expression of truth can only be thought, which communicates itself in ideally clear and distinct propositions.
3. Art is essentially sensuous.

But if we accept 3, it follows that art is inadequate, measured by what the pursuit of truth demands. Like Kant, we are likely to suspect that those,

who today still dedicate their whole life to art and expect to find there what is necessary to a fulfilled life, are missing out on what matters most.

> However all this may be, it certainly is the case that art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual wants, which earlier epochs and peoples have sought therein only; a satisfaction which, at all events on the religious side, was most intimately and profoundly connected with art. The beautiful days of Greek art, and the golden time of the later middle ages, are gone by. The reflective culture of our life of today, makes it a necessity for us, in respect to our will no less than of our judgment, to adhere to general points of view, and to regulate particular matters according to them, so that general forms, laws, duties, rights, maxims are what have validity as grounds of determination and are the chief regulative force.[25]

Here I would like to add the footnote that Renaissance and Reformation witnessed not only the beginnings of a new aesthetic art, but also a return of iconoclastic tendencies. The marriage of art and religion is now beginning to come apart: as religion becomes ever more insistent that the spiritual truth of the Christian faith is debased by art, art becomes autonomous, pursued now only for art's sake.

There is still a trace of that iconoclastic spirit in Hegel. Consider the following passage:

> Of such a kind is the Christian conception of truth; and more especially the spirit of our modern world, or, to come closer, of our religion and our intellectual culture, reveals itself as beyond the stage at which art is the highest mode assumed by man's consciousness of the absolute. The peculiar mode to which artistic production and works of art belong no longer satisfies our supreme need. We are above the level at which works of art can be venerated as divine, and actually worshipped; the impression which they make is of a more considerate kind, and the feelings which they stir within us require a higher test and a further confirmation. Thought and reflection have taken their flight above fine art.[26]

The progress of truth has left art behind. Only ages that had not yet awoken to the requirements of truth could find in art a satisfaction denied to us.

The thesis that art has lost its highest significance for us moderns is stated even more strongly a bit later:

> . . . the whole spiritual culture of the age is of such a kind that he [the artist] himself stands within this reflective world and its conditions, and it is impossible for him to abstract from it by will and resolve, or to contrive

> for himself and bring to pass, by means of peculiar education or removal from the relations of life, a peculiar solitude that would replace all that is lost.
>
> In all these respects art is, and remains for us, on the side of its highest destiny, a thing of the past.[27]

To understand the force of Hegel's thesis let us consider once more the three premises on which it is based:

1. Genuine art transcends our conceptual grasp. On this point Hegel would appear to be in complete agreement with Kant. Like Kant, he insists, that while man "is born to religion, to thought, to science" and that their acquisition therefore requires "nothing besides birth itself and training, education, industry, etc.,"[28] artistic genius, on the other hand, is a gift. In the successful work of art the spirit incarnates itself so completely that it is impossible to abstract a meaning without doing violence to the integrity of the work of art. Just as aesthetic appreciation is *sinnliches Wissen*, sensible (or should it be sensuous?) knowledge, so artistic creation is *sinnliche Gestaltung*, not simply a shaping of the sensible, but a shaping that is itself sensible.[29] As a product of spirit, the work of art has a meaning, but the incarnation of this meaning in the sensible makes it impossible to capture it in concepts without destroying that unity of sense and spirit on which, according to Hegel, beauty and art rest. To thought art is essentially a mystery.

It seems difficult to deny such claims. To do so we would have to subordinate sense and imagination to a higher cognitive faculty. Such subordination threatens to make art into mere illustration and to reduce it to fundamentally superfluous decoration added to what really matters.

2. The second claim, which ties art to truth, is more controversial. Here we return to the rivalry of the aesthetic and the ontological approaches to art. I have spent enough time on the aesthetic approach already. Let me recall here just a few of its main features. The work of art is taken as an occasion intended to elicit a certain state of mind that we value. It is judged beautiful, sublime, or interesting with respect to the occasioned state of mind, which is what is really enjoyed. There is a sense in which the aesthetic approach is by its very nature self-centered and narcissistic.

I have suggested that the shift from an ontological to an aesthetic conception of art is associated with the emergence of the modern world. In holding on to the former Hegel may seem a conservative, less in tune with the world we live in and its art than Kant. And yet, I think it is Hegel rather than Kant, who helps us to understand the shape of the modern world and the place of the aesthetic approach to art within that world.[30] His *Lectures on Aesthetics* provide us with an account of the history of art that lets us recognize the reasons for the shift from an ontological to an aesthetic understanding of art: precisely because Hegel refuses to settle for an aesthetic approach that would reduce art to entertainment—if perhaps of a very refined sort—because he holds on to an ontological approach, he is forced to claim that art in it

highest sense now lies behind us. That conclusion implies the corollary: the art that continues to thrive in the present is ruled by the aesthetic approach. Thus Hegel allows us to recognize why Kant should have become the philosopher who presides over a narrative that, mediated by Clement Greenberg, helped to give modern art its direction. The art that according to Arthur Danto came to an end some time in the sixties owed its self-understanding to that narrative. Thus while Danto's thesis of the end of art owes, as he emphasizes, a debt to Hegel's seemingly related claim, they are profoundly different: the art that Danto thinks ended in the sixties presupposes what I have called an aesthetic approach to art. But all art ruled by such an approach presupposes the end of art in Hegel's sense.

To claim with Hegel that art in what once was its highest sense has ended is not to deny that there are many who continue to hold on to the ontological view. Many still expect truth from art, expect to be edified by it. Hegel helps us to understand why such attempts should so often have yielded Kitsch.

3. The central proposition is the third. Truth demands transparency. At the center of our modern sense of reality is our faith in our ability to grasp and manipulate all that is: only what can be comprehended is thought to be real. Hegel expressed this faith forcefully in his *Heidelberg Inaugural Address*:

> Man, since he is spirit, may and should consider himself worthy even of the highest; he cannot think the greatness and power of his spirit great enough; and with this faith nothing will be so stubborn and hard as not to open itself to him. The essence of the universe, hidden and closed at first, has no power that could offer resistance to the courage of knowledge; it must open itself to him and lay its riches and depths before his eyes and open them to his enjoyment.[31]

In order to gain this godlike power, we must raise ourselves above our particular being as these individuals we just happen to be:

> In all things other than thought the spirit does not come to this but in this particular manner, even if I have consciousness of this, my sentiment. Willing one has determinate purposes, a determinate interest. I am indeed free in that this interest is mine, but these purposes always contain something other, or something which for me is another, as passions, inclination, etc. Only in thought has all strangeness become transparent; has disappeared; here the spirit is free in an absolute manner. With this the interest of the idea, and at the same time of philosophy is expressed.[32]

The similarity between Hegel's analysis and the Cartesian program is evident. In the final pages of his *Discourse on Method* Descartes thus claims that his principles had opened up the possibility of finding a—

> practical philosophy by means of which, knowing the force and the action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens, and all other bodies that environ us, as distinctly as we know the different crafts of our artisans, we can in the same way employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.[33]

Metaphysics triumphs in technology.

Hegel calls art an expression of our deepest interests. What are these interests? Like Plato he ties them to our desire to be at one with ourselves: "All that happens in heaven and earth, eternally happens—the life of God and all that happens in time, only strives for this: that the spirit know itself, make itself into an object for itself, find itself, become for itself, and join itself to itself."[34] The life of the individual is part of this drama of the spirit's homecoming, which is history. Crucial for our own place in that drama is that ours is an age of reflection and by the same token an age of objectivity. Reflection lets me recognize the impossibility of stopping at any finite point of view. All merely perspectival, merely relative modes of knowing demand to be transcended. To all finite points of view I have to oppose the standpoint of the absolute. This standpoint opens up a new understanding of reality and of truth. Given this absolute standpoint the locus of truth can alone be thought. This lets Hegel claim that thought and reflection have overtaken the fine arts.

In this connection Hegel points to the need for science felt in this age. In the sphere of art this means that this is first of all the age of reflection about art, the age of aesthetics, criticism, the history of art. Note how fluid the boundary between artist and critic has become today. That modern artists so often should have turned to conceptual art is similarly symptomatic.

It is this discovery of him- or herself as free spirit that prevents the human individual from resting content with any merely finite content. Modern man, so understood, cannot but have a broken or indifferent relationship to reality, as Hegel says of the romantics. External objects are understood in all their contingency. At the same time we meet with creations of a liberated imagination, a free subjectivity.

> Today the artist is no longer bound to a specific content and a manner of representation appropriate only to this subject matter—art has thereby become a free instrument, which, his own subjective skill permitting, the artist can use equally well on any content, whatever it may be.[35]

A new freedom that draws on all that history and nature have to offer goes along with a new rootlessness. Ever more art turns into harmless, but also quite insignificant play. Measured by humanity's true interests, art comes to seem increasingly besides the point, superfluous, at best a pleasant diversion.

5. The Advent of Truth

Heidegger claims a greater significance for art and insists on a more intimate connection between truth and beauty:

> Truth is the unconcealedness of that which is as something that is. Truth is the truth of Being. Beauty does not occur alongside and apart from this truth. When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance—as this being of truth in the work and as work—is beauty. Thus the beautiful belongs to the advent of truth, truth's taking of its place (G5, 69/81).

Challenging Hegel, Heidegger would like to count art once more "as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself." What is at stake, as we shall see, is not just or even primarily the future and more especially the significance of art, but our own humanity. Authentic existence, as Heidegger understands it, may be said to demand art in that sense. To understand this demand, we have to become clearer about the meaning of authenticity. This will be the task of the next chapter.

Notes

1. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, in *Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1937), vol. 12, 31 and 32; Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. and intro. Michael Inwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 12, 13.
2. See e. g. Arthur C. Danto, *Encounters and Reflections. Art in the Historical Present* (Noonday Press, Farrar Straus Giroux: New York, 1990) and *After the End of Art. Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
3. Disagreeing with Hans-Georg Gadamer ("Zur Einführung," Martin Heidegger: *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* [Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960]), Robert Bernasconi insists that "aesthetics," as Heidegger is here using the term, is "not the name of the autonomous discipline that arose in the eighteenth century once judgments of taste had come to be separated from the understanding and its concepts." Bernasconi supports this with a reference to Heidegger's first Nietzsche course, where Heidegger is said to suggest "that philosophical speculation on the essence of art and the beautiful had already begun as aesthetics in the age of Plato and Aristotle," *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989), 32; see also Bernasconi, "The Greatness of the Work of Art," *Heidegger Toward the Turn*, ed. James Risser (Albany: SUNY, 1999], 100). But while Heidegger does trace the aesthetic approach to art back to the Greeks, the Nietzsche lectures confirm that the beginning of the cited passage refers first of all to Baumgarten's inauguration of modern aesthetics. See G6.1, 74–83; G43, 89–92.
4. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry*, trans. Karl Aschenbrenner and William B. Holther (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1954), par. 68.
5. Paul Valéry, *The Art of Poetry*, trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Vintage, 1961), 59.
6. Ibid., 192.

7. Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929–1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 34.
8. Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1987, 167. See also Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Heideggers Philosophie der Kunst*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), 20–38; Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985); my review of the latter in *International Studies in Philosophy*, vol. XXI, no. 3 (1989), 126–127; Günter Seubold, "Die Pöggeler—v. Herrmann-Kontroverse," *Kunst als Enteignis. Heideggers Weg zu einer nicht mehr metaphysischen Kunst* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996), 41–47.
9. See Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge,: MIT Press, 1997), 16–68.
10. Walter Biemel, *Philosophische Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Den Haag; Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), 1.
11. Ibid.
12. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, vols. 12–14 of *Jubiläumsausgabe*, ed. Hermann Glockner, 20 vols. (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1937), vol. 12, 135–136.
13. For the distinction between an ontological and an aesthetic conception of beauty, see Ernesto Grassi, *Die Theorie des Schönen in der Antike* (Cologne: Dumont, 1962) and Walter Biemel, *Die Bedeutung von Kants Begründung der Ästhetik* and *Philosophische Analysen zur Kunst der Gegenwart* (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1968).
14. See Jacques Taminiaux, "The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger's Overcoming of Metaphysics," *Poetics, Speculation and Judgment: The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, trans. and ed. Michael Gendre (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 127–152.
15. Arthur Danto,*Embodied Meaning* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994), 312.
16. Martin Heidegger, letter of May 17, 1972 to Wiegand Petztet. Petzet, *Encounters*,140.
17. Martin Heidegger, "Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks: Erste Ausarbeitung," ed. Hermann Heidegger, *Heidegger Studies*, vol. 5 (1989), 5–22. This first version and its date are important in that they rule out any interpretation of Heidegger's turn to art in "The Origin of the Work of Art" as a response to his failed rectorate. This first version became the basis for the reworked second version, which was given as a lecture on November 13, 1935 to the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft* in Freiburg and repeated two month later at the university of Zurich. This second version was published in a pirated German-French edition as Martin Heidegger, *De l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art*. Première version (1935), texte allemand inédit et traduction française par Emmanuel Martineau (Paris: Authentica, 1987), and is scheduled to appear in a forthcoming volume of the *Gesamtausgabe*. See von Herrmann, *Heideggers Philosophie der Kunst*, 7–9. Also Françoise Dastur, "Heidegger's Freiburg Version of the Origin of the Work of Art," in James Risser, ed., *Heidegger Toward the Turn. Essays on the Work of the 1930s* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 119–142; Kockelmans, 81; Jacques Taminiaux, "The Origin of 'The Origin of the Work of Art,'" *Poetics, Speculation and Judgment*, 153–169.
18. *Martin Heidegger—Elisabeth Blochmann. Briefwechsel 1918–1969*, ed. Joachim Stork (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1989), 87. In a letter to Karl Jaspers of July 1, 1935 Heidegger similarly speaks of recently having returned to work that he dropped in the winter of 1932/1933. Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 1920–1963*, ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner (Frankfurt am Main and Munich: Klostermann and Piper, 1990), 157. See also von Herrmann, *Heideggers Philosophie der Kunst,* 7.
19. Petzet, 149.

20. Immanuel Kant, "First Introduction into the Critique of Judgment, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, *Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis: Hackett,1987), 409–410.
21. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel,*Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. and intro. Michael Inwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 5–6.
22. Ibid., 9.
23. Ibid., 11.
24. See Karsten Harries, "Hegel on the Future of Art," *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1974, 677–696; von Herrmann, *Heideggers Philosophie der Kunst,* 398–412.
25. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures*, 12.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 13.
28. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik, vol. 12, 382.
29. Ibid., 148.
30. See Jacques Taminiaux, "Between the Aesthetic Attitude and the Death of Art," *Poetics, Speculation and Judgment. The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, 55–72.
31. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, *Jubiläumsausgabe*, vols. 17–19, vol. 17, 22.
32. Ibid., 52.
33. René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, V, *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, 2 vols., trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), vol. I, 119.
34. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 17, 52.
35. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, vol. 13, 226.

2

In Search of a Hero

1. Authenticity and Art

In the "Epilogue" to the "Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger asks us to consider Hegel's claim that for us moderns art in its highest sense is a thing of the past. As Heidegger recognizes, the world we live in invites us to take what, appealing to Baumgarten and Kant, we can call an aesthetic approach to art. Such an approach has to deny art what Hegel considers its highest task. Art and truth are now divorced. Art comes to be understood as not so much for reality's, as for art's sake. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger insists on a more intimate connection between truth and art: challenging Plato, Heidegger would like to call the poets back into the *Republic*; challenging Hegel, he would like to count art once more "as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself." To do so, he has to challenge the understanding of truth that presides over our modern world.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger understands truth as disclosure and links it to authenticity: human being is said to be essentially a being open to beings so that these can disclose themselves to us as the things they are. Such being open (*Erschlossenheit*) is presupposed by our ordinary truth claims. To support my claim that the book is yellow, that book has to present itself to us as indeed yellow; and we have to be such that we are open to the yellow book. Heidegger calls this being-open the "most primordial" truth (G2, 297/343).

But if "truth," so understood, can be said to be constitutive of human being, of Dasein, such "truth" is also presupposed when we are misled and in error—by what we normally call truth as much as by what we normally call error. When I mistake in the twilight a bush for a person, something has disclosed itself to me, but in a way that led me astray. It thus becomes necessary to distinguish "truth" as we first of all and most of the time use the term, from Heidegger's primordial truth. In the latter case again we have to distinguish an inauthentic from an authentic being in the truth, a being open to things as they really are from a being open to things that conceals their "true" being.[1]

Heidegger addresses that need when he discusses resolve (*Entschlossenheit*) as the "the most primordial, because *authentic* truth of Dasein" (*die ursprünglichste, weil eigentliche Wahrheit des Daseins*) (G2, 394/343). The English "resolve" suggests having arrived at a firm decision concerning some matter. To declare something "true" is to be resolved in that sense. But resolve would be blind were it not open to the matter in question. Such openness is suggested by the German *Entschlossenheit*, where the prefix *ent*, turns what follows, suggesting here a state of being locked up or hidden, into its opposite. This moves "resolve" into the neighborhood of the Greek *aletheia*, disclosedness.

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 17–29.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_2,

I shall have to return to Heidegger's understanding of "truth" in Chapter Nine. But this much can be said already: Heidegger's assertion of an essential link between truth and art in "The Origin of the Work of Art" leads to the difficult to accept claim that authentic, i.e. resolute existence, as he understands it, demands art. In this chapter I would like to begin to approach this claim by turning to *Being and Time* and to the concept of authenticity.

2. Authenticity and Silence

Heidegger ties authenticity to authorship. Human beings do not exist as things, as stones, trees or animals are, but for them to be is to be involved in the constitution of their own being. Human beings bear responsibility for who they are and will become. They can accept such responsibility and become authors of themselves, can own themselves as the German for "authenticity," *Eigentlichkeit* suggests; or they can also refuse such responsibility, become inauthentic, i.e. lose themselves. The twin-possibility of authenticity and inauthenticity is inseparable from human being or *Dasein*.

> And because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so. But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be *authentic*—that is something of its own—can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. As modes of Being, *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. But the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being. Rather it is the case that even in the fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity—when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment (G2, 57/68).

As Heidegger understands it, inauthenticity is not like some disease that comes over us or a temporary straying from the right path: it describes our normal way of being: first of all and most of the time we find ourselves caught up in a social world that has already assigned us our place and defined who we are. This is especially true of our language and of the way it places us in our world: we are caught up in language-games not of our making and thus we act as one acts, speak as one speaks.[2] The sway of this anonymous "one" marks our everyday being with others (G2, 168–173/163–168), where Heidegger insists that inauthenticity does not just happen to characterize our being: first of all and most of the time we cannot but understand ourselves as one of them, immersed in the same language games, bound to them by our common sense. Given such immersion, it is authenticity rather than inauthenticity that seems problematic: what could it mean, e.g., to, want to buy a dozen

eggs authentically?—a subject for a philosophical comedy. Given the way our being in this world, with others, is constituted by language, language that would be destroyed or lost by any attempt to transform it into something truly private and our own, what might it mean to exist authentically? Would such an authentic existence not place us beyond language, condemn us to silence?

There has, to be sure, long been a suspicion that language not only reveals, but conceals the being of things, that words fail us when we try to do justice to some person or thing experienced in its mysterious particularity. And such suspicion is an especially prevalent aspect of the art of the early twentieth century, inviting the question, why this should be so. Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "The Letter of Lord Chandos" offers a striking example.

The case of Hofmannsthal's fictional Elizabethan Lord is simple: a figure of the Austrian poet, who, when still a teenager, had been celebrated as a master of the German language only to be assailed by Nietzschean doubts concerning the power of language to reveal reality, the young Lord, a postmodernist before his time, writes a letter to his well-intentioned older friend, the scientist and philosopher Sir Francis Bacon in an attempt to explain to this founder of our then just emerging modern world his decision to abandon all literary activity. At issue is the rift that the young poet's merely aesthetic play with words has opened up between language and reality:

> My case in short is this: I have lost completely the ability to think or to speak of anything coherently.
>
> At first I grew by degrees incapable of discussing a loftier or more general subject in terms of which everyone, fluently and without hesitation, is wont to avail himself. I experienced an inexplicable distaste for so much as uttering the words spirit, soul, or body . . . The abstract terms of which the tongue must avail itself as a matter of course in order to voice a judgment—these terms crumbled in my mouth like mouldy fungi.[3]

Like a corroding rust this inability to use words, because they have lost touch with what they supposedly are about, spreads to ordinary language, which the Lord experiences increasingly as indemonstrable, mendacious, hollow.

> My mind compelled me to view all things occurring in such conversations from an uncanny closeness. As once, through a magnifying glass, I had seen a piece of skin on my little finger look like a field full of holes and furrows, so I now perceived human beings and their actions. I no longer succeeded in comprehending them with the simplifying eye of habit. For me everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed in one idea. Single words floated round me; they congealed into eyes which stared back at me and

> into which I was forced to stare back—whirlpools which gave me vertigo and, reeling incessantly, led into the void.[4]

But the void left by this disintegration is not completely mute. As language gains an autonomy that threatens to render it meaningless, a minimal, but intense contact with beings is established. The tearing of language by silence grants epiphanies of presence.

> It is not easy for me to indicate wherein these good moments subsist; once again words desert me. For it is, indeed, something entirely unnamed, even barely nameable which, at such moments, reveals itself to me, filling like a vessel any casual object of my surroundings with an overflowing flood of higher life. I cannot expect you to understand me without examples, and I must plead your indulgence for their absurdity. A pitcher, a harrow abandoned in a field, a dog in the sun, a neglected cemetery, a cripple, a peasant's hut—all these can become the vessel of my revelation.[5]

With "a shudder running from the roots of my hair to the marrow of my heels," the young Lord senses the infinite: "What was it that made me want to break into words which, I know, were I to find them, would force to their knees those cherubim in whom I do not believe?"[6] And so they would! For the words for which the Lord is longing would know nothing of the rift separating reality and language. The words of that language would be nothing other than the things themselves. But this is to say: they would have to be the creative words of that God in whom neither the Lord, nor Hofmannsthal could believe. Nevertheless, the idea of this divine language functions as a measure that renders our language infinitely inadequate and condemns him who refuses to sully the dream of that language to silence.

And words similarly fail me when I try to take possession of myself, here and now. My own individual being proves as mysterious and elusive as this present moment, which is inseparable from me and yet slips into a never to be recovered past whenever I attempt to seize it, recalling me to my own mortality. Once again some lines by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, this time the first of his "Terzinen über die Vergänglichkeit," address unforgettably the uncanny mystery of time, which is inextricably entangled with the mystery of our own being, towards which Heidegger gestures with his understanding of authenticity.

> Noch spür ich ihren Atem auf den Wangen:
> Wie kann das sein, daß diese nahen Tage
> Fort sind, für immer fort, und ganz vergangen?
>
> Dies ist ein Ding, das keiner voll aussinnt
> Und viel zu grauenvoll, als daß man klage:
> Daß alles gleite und vorüberrinnt.

Und daß mein eignes Ich, durch nichts gehemmt,
Hinüberglitt aus einem kleinen Kind
Mir wie ein Hund unheimlich stumm und fremd.

Dann: daß ich auch vor hundert Jahren war
Und meine Ahnen, die im Totenhemd
Mit mir verwandt sind wie mein eignes Haar.

So eins mit mir als wie mein eignes Haar.

Still I feel her breath on my cheeks:
How can that be, that these so recent days
Are gone, forever gone, and totally forgotten?

This is a thing that no one fully fathoms
And far too dreadful to lament:
That all is sliding and is passing by.

And that my own I, hindered by no thing,
Slid into this, from a small child,
Uncanny, mute, and strange to me, just like a dog.

And this: that hundred years ago I also was
And that my ancestors, in their death shroud,
Related are to me, as is my hair.
As much at one with me, as my own hair.[7]

What kind of unity is this—the unity of self? What am I including in this I? My heart? My hair? My ancestors?

3. Guilt and Conscience

These are the sort of questions with which Heidegger wrestles in *Being and Time*, looking to find there the key to authenticity. What do I refer to when I say "I"? When I speak of truly being myself? Descartes thought he had a clear and distinct idea of himself as a thinking substance? But where do I find that "I"?

When I say "I," I mean myself, this entity I know myself to be, now, in a certain place, an entity among entities, in the world; but not just another entity, but a being that experiences these other things, that endures through time—a thinking substance? But note a certain circularity in the formulation: When I say "I," I mean myself, this entity I happen to be: is the I that means itself identical with the entity I know myself to be and whose identity is established by my passport? Can we unpack the being of this "I" by understanding it, say, as a simple substance, a *hypokeimenon* or *subiectum*, something that underlies all I experience, that remains the same even though it experiences a great many different things and thinks a great many different thoughts? Something would

seem to be right about such formulations. Think once more of the poem by Hofmannsthal, of the I that slid from the small child into the adult poet. To speak that way is to suggest something like a constant self, a self that slid from one I into another? But where do we find this constant self?

Heidegger here appeals to our self-awareness as mortals, to the knowledge that we must die that we human beings all carry with us. My death is unlike anything else that can happen to me in that when it arrives there will be no further possibilities for me, and that is to say, I will no longer be. As long as we are, we possess a future; that ever present possibility that will put an end to all my possibilities has not yet arrived. In that sense we exist as essentially incomplete. The end is still outstanding. As long as we are, our lives can never possess the kind of perfection demanded by aesthetics of the perfect work of art, where everything is just as it should be: nothing superfluous and nothing missing. But the anticipation of my death allows me to gather all that I am and can ever be into a whole. My death circumscribes my life. Only the anticipation of death grants us a wordless understanding of that constant I, which once was the child and now is the adult. I can truly lay hold of myself, i.e. be authentic, only by opening myself to my mortality.

So understood, the quest for authenticity has to invite a mute dread. It thus is no surprise to learn that according to Heidegger our own being invites us to run away from what we are, more precisely, invites us to run away from what Heidegger terms our "guilt" (G2, 281/326); invites what may be called a potentiation of everyday inauthenticity: an inauthenticity that does not precede the movement towards authenticity, but follows the awakening of a dread such as that chronicled by Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos in his letter. For dread is dreadful and thus invites us to seek refuge in that familiar world in which we felt safe and secure until the awakening of dread robbed us of this home.

We should not confuse what Heidegger means by "guilt" with what is usually meant when that word is used. We call someone guilty who did what should not have been done or failed to do what should have been done. The ideas of authorship and negativity are thus linked in our ordinary understanding of guilt: to be guilty is to be author of a lack (G2, 374/327). Heidegger's understanding of guilt similarly joins the ideas of authorship and negativity, but in his fundamental ontology guilt can no longer be understood as the consequence of some particular action. We human beings are said to be guilty, because, while authors of our actions, we yet exist in such a way that we always remains in the thrall of facticity and nothingness, because, while we are free and bear responsibility for what we are and will become, we yet have not chosen to be as we are, with just these endowments and deficiencies, have been cast into a world not of our choosing, an often not at all homelike world, have been subjected to it, subjected also to death. In our dread-shadowed awareness of our own mortality what we can call potentiated inauthenticity has its deepest root. Here the individual confronts the possibility of authenticity only to escape or turn his or her back on it, seeking security in what the world has to offer. If we are to really appropriate our own being,

become authentic in that sense, we must have the strength to appropriate our mortality, the strength to acknowledge that our freedom is tied to impotence, that all our attempts to make us into our own foundation must fail, that the project of pride must inevitably suffer shipwreck. Authentic existence requires the acceptance of this essential guilt (G2, 375–377/328–330).

Authenticity does not simply refer to a possible mode of life. If Heidegger is right, that possibility claims us human beings, calls us in the call of conscience, where once again "conscience" may not be taken in the sense in which we use the word when we speak of someone having a bad conscience because of something he or she did or failed to do. What Heidegger terms conscience is thought by him to be inseparable from human being. In the call of conscience our own guilty being calls us out of our absorption in the accepted and usually taken for granted, back to ourselves and to an acknowledgement of how insecurely we dwell in a world that does not assign us our place. In the silent call of conscience, the individual calls himself home to his solitary essential self. Awakened by the sublime experience of this world as not our home, the call of conscience is the call of freedom.

Calling, conscience demands to be heard. Heidegger terms the authentic response to that demand resolve. Resolved, we appropriate ourselves as we are, that is to say in our freedom, but also in our weakness and our impotence, in our facticity and our mortality. Authenticity thus demands openness to all that is, to the possibilities and uncertainties of human existence, demands that we surrender all claims to something like a firm foundation that might allow for a secure dwelling.

4. Resoluteness and Responsibility

From Heidegger's understanding of authenticity as self-possession and of human being as essentially a being-in-the-world and a being-with-others, it follows that resolve is only inadequately understood when interpreted as the authentic response to the silent call of conscience. What the authentic person does, how he responds to others, cannot be a matter of indifference: he must also be open and respond to what is, to those with him and to the things around him. Think of speaking the truth as an example of resolute action!

If all emphasis is placed on the silent call of conscience, the authentic individual becomes a homeless stranger, who, like Kierkegaard's knight of faith, has suspended his ties to the world, in this case for the sake of nothing rather than for the sake of God. So understood, authenticity becomes an inner quality that must remain hidden from others. But to become authentic we must affirm ourselves in our entirety. Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger therefore insists that resoluteness does not mean a leave-taking from the world and does not yield a free-floating self, but pushes the individual back into the world and the community (G2, 395/344), as a member of his generation (G2, 508/436), as Abraham had to come back to Sarah and, having journeyed to Mount Moriah, return and sit down with her at the dinner table,

respond to her and what she had to say. Without this ability to respond to the other, without responsibility so understood, there can be no authenticity. In the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger thus calls spirit a "primordially attuned, knowing resoluteness toward the essence of Being" (G16, 112/9), towards the presencing of persons and things, a formulation repeated in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (G40, 53/41). *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness), we are now told, making explicit what Heidegger had already heard in that word, is to be understood as *Ent-schlossenheit*, where the hyphen is to suggest that the resolute individual has unlocked and opened himself, ready to listen and to respond to what is (G40, 23/17). *Ent-schlossenheit* and *A-letheia*, resolve and truth understood as disclosure belong together. Resoluteness is still understood here as Dasein's affirmation of itself in its entirety, but the hyphen underscores that resolute Dasein has un-locked itself, insists that such affirmation requires an openness and responsiveness to the persons and things that present themselves to us and claim us. To be resolute is "to be able to stand in the truth" (G40, 23/17).

If such formulations gesture towards the responsibility, or rather to the response-ability required of authenticity, still, such formulations do not really help one to understand the possibility of authentic choice. Inseparable from Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as care is indeed a recognition of the fact that human beings do not face a mute world, but are always already claimed and called in countless and often incompatible ways by what is, by both persons and things, also by their own embodied being. These claims may be said to furnish the necessary material for resolute action. As an artist has to be responsive to the material with which he is working, so the authentic person has to be responsive to his situation.

But to insist on such responsiveness is not to say very much about how we are to respond. How is the material in question to be ordered—and without some such ordering there can be neither knowledge nor resolute action and an individual's life would fall apart? How are we to choose between rival claims? The kind of openness demanded by what Heidegger now calls *Entschlossenheit* suggests a readiness to question rather than to take for granted a certain way of life and seeking refuge in it. The resolute human being knows that there can be no real security and that whatever place he or she chooses for herself is and remains inescapably questionable. Resoluteness means openness to the groundlessness of our existence. As Heidegger was to put it in "The Origin of the Work of Art," "Every decision . . . bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision" (G5, 42/55).[8] Such a sense of having lost one's way is inseparable from freedom. Authentic decision takes place against a background of doubt. In the "Rectorial Address" Heidegger thus will call for a defiant resoluteness that lets us act despite our knowledge that error cannot be neatly separated from truth. As everything is questionable, "questioning itself becomes the highest form of knowing" (G16, 111/8). But this does not help those who have lost their way.

Someone who turns to *Being and Time* looking for personal guidance is thus likely to be disappointed. In vain do we look for a definite moral or political message. And this, it would appear, is as it should be: as a work in fundamental ontology *Being and Time* has to remain formal and abstract; as a quasi-transcendental inquiry it can only describe possibilities of human existence, without prescribing where human beings are to stand. To be sure, terms like "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" do not function in a purely descriptive manner, despite Heidegger's repeated claims to the contrary—consider once more the quote cited above, which asserts that "the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being." But despite such claims, Heidegger uses these terms to call his readers, if not to a particular life, at least to a particular way of living. *Being and Time* can indeed be read as an edifying discourse in the guise of fundamental ontology. Thus while Heidegger himself may insists that terms like "inauthenticity" and "idle talk" are not being used in a derogatory sense (G2, 57, 222/68, 211), he later acknowledges that finally we cannot divorce ontological inquiry from the ontic stance of the inquirer, and that is to say, from an ideal image of man:

> Is there not, however, a definite ontical way of taking authentic existence, a factical ideal of Dasein, underlying our ontological Interpretation of Dasein's existence? That is so indeed. But not only is this Fact one which must not be denied and which we are forced to grant; it must also be conceived in its *positive necessity*, in terms of the object which we have taken as the theme of our investigation (G2, 411/358).

Heidegger's choice of words communicates the ideal underlying and steering his ontological investigations. *Being and Time* does more than describe existential possibilities; it calls its readers to that acceptance of our own guilty being that Heidegger terms "resoluteness."

> To project oneself upon this Being-guilty, which Dasein is *as long as it is*, belongs to the very meaning of resoluteness. The existentiell way of taking over this 'guilt' in resoluteness, is therefore authentically accomplished only when that resoluteness, in its disclosure of Dasein, has become *so* transparent that Being guilty is understood *as something constant*. But this understanding is made possible only in so far as Dasein discloses to itself its potentiality-for-Being, and discloses it 'right-to-its-end'. Existentially, however, Dasein's "*Being-at-an-end*" implies being-*towards*-the-end. As *Being-towards-the-end which understands*—that is to say as anticipation of death, resoluteness becomes authentically what it can be. Resoluteness does not just have a connection with anticipation, as with something other than itself. *It harbours in itself authentic Being-towards-death as the possible existentiell modality of its own authenticity* (G2, 404–405/353).

To thus exist authentically is to exist, no longer lost to the world, tossed back and forth by competing claims, scattered into different roles and activities, but as a whole. Resolute being-towards-death holds the key to self-integration. Unity is here given a normative function.[9] For Heidegger, too, purity of heart is to will one thing: one's ever-guilty self.

But if, according to Heidegger, we exist authentically only when, integrating our lives, we affirm ourselves as the mortals we are, such a determination still leaves the meaning of "resoluteness" empty and abstract. It calls us to a form of life, not to a particular life. But human beings cannot exist thus formally: to affirm what Heidegger calls guilt, we, must choose ourselves concretely. Resoluteness becomes genuine only in particular resolute actions (G2, 395/344). The analysis of authenticity thus remains incomplete without an account of how such actions are possible. And such an account has to include an account of what will transform an only negative freedom into a truly positive freedom, a demand raised, as we shall see, both in the *Rectorial Address* and in "The Origin of the Work of Art."

But if Heidegger's analysis demands the responsible realization of resoluteness in concrete decisions and actions, how are we to understand this? Resoluteness, according to his analysis, is inseparable from an acknowledgment of guilt, from the recognition that human beings cannot secure their being and decisions by relating them to a higher authority in which they could be said to have their measure. Only an inauthentic existence gains such a measure by subordinating itself to the authority of an already established way of life. The authentic individual knows about the groundlessness of all such measures. Authentic measures appear only with resoluteness; they are not antecedently given to guide it. Resoluteness also means being able to take one's place in the world; taking his or her place, the authentic individual knows what is to be done.

5. Looking for a Hero

All this remains all too vacuous. The question returns: how are we to understand such placement in resolute action? Is the appeal to resoluteness as understood in *Being and Time* any more adequate than Sartre's closely related attempt to make freedom the foundation of value? Freedom that acknowledges no independent criteria or reasons becomes indistinguishable from spontaneity and subverts itself. What gives weight to our actions must be discovered; it cannot be invented. As Heidegger recognizes, when he understands *Entschlossenheit* as *Ent-schlossenheit*, freedom requires responsibility. But responsibility requires the ability to respond appropriately, requires, if not what might deserve to be called a moral sense, at least a sense that some things matter and that not all things matter equally. What lets me judge one possibility to be weightier than another cannot have its sole determining ground in a subjective choice. If that were so, I would be able to elevate whatever I choose,

no matter how insignificant, into the organizing center of my life. But such choice would inevitably be experienced as arbitrary and thus devalue itself. Where there are no criteria to evaluate what is to be said or done and "decision" is blind, it is impossible to preserve an understanding of responsibility. The valorization of resolute being-towards-death and the implied idealization of self-integration do provide a form, but not the content necessary to organize and integrate life. More is needed than the abstract demand for self-integration to render responsible action intelligible. Freedom requires criteria or reasons, some authoritative measure to guide decision.

But how are we to reconcile this requirement with the analysis of resoluteness found in *Being and Time*? Is it enough to call attention to the way resoluteness may not be divorced from the ability to respond to what is? But has this appeal to "what is" not been rendered profoundly questionable by Heidegger's insistence that all we experience is mediated by language and thus subject to idle talk? Where are we to look for what would render our saying and acting truly responsible?

Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger recognizes the need for some authority that would allow for an escape from arbitrariness and thus make authentic action possible. In *Being and Time* he looks for such an authority to the past that has shaped our present and illuminates our future possibilities: our being, essentially a being with others, is ruled by the destiny of the commnity or people (*Volk*[10]) we belong to (G2, 508/436). Authentic action is said to be repetition, where repetition should not be thought of as a mechanical reenactment of some past paradigm, but as an appropriating response that does not sacrifice future challenges to the shelter provided by the past (G2, 510/437).[11]

But every such turn to history to banish the specter of arbitrariness remains haunted by it: like the present, the inherited past speaks with many and conflicting voices. No past event, even when looked at as a repeatable possibility, is as such authoritative; it becomes such only when recognized as worthy of repetition. But does this not presuppose some independent understanding of what makes it thus worthy?

In *Being and Time* Heidegger significantly does not speak of recognition, but of the individual choosing his hero, where we can think of this hero as either a real person or as a fictional character or as a god or demigod (G2, 509/437). To choose a hero is to choose what we can call an ideal image of man that provides orientation or a sense of vocation and thus helps us shape our life into a meaningful whole. Such a choice would grant a concrete measure able to cast light on particular decisions to be made. But the problem returns: how are we to understand this choice of a hero?[12] Heidegger gives no examples and does not elaborate. Was he still thinking of the Christian's choice of Christ, mediated by the four evangelists as his poets? Today Heidegger's talk of choosing one's hero has been rendered questionable by his own subsequent and soon repudiated choice of Hitler for his hero, which raises the question: how are we to distinguish the choice of a genuine hero from worship of some

golden calf, where, born of the human need for a measure, such worship seeks to banish that hard to bear lightness of being of which Milan Kundera speaks, a lightness that is the other side of a freedom that knows neither ground nor measure? Authenticity and bad faith would seem to be incompatible. But how are we to distinguish bad faith from good faith? If there is to be an alternative to idolatry, to bad faith, must there not be something about the individual and his situation that claims him and allows him to recognize in the hero's life the measure of his own? But where are we to look?

In *Being and Time* this question remains unanswered. Its analysis of authenticity remains therefore dangerously incomplete. Due to its formal character *Being and Time* invites a resolve to be resolved, a readiness to choose one's hero without assurance that this hero is indeed worthy to be chosen. The resolve to be resolved makes the individual vulnerable, opens him to attack and seizure, where such seizure promises deliverance from a freedom that has become too heavy to bear. Here we have a key to Heidegger's—and not only his—vulnerability to National Socialism. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" he struggles with what he soon came to recognize as his fatal misjudgment of what was then happening in Germany, attempting to sort out what distinguishes authentic from inauthentic resolve. But I shall turn to the events of 1933 and to the *Rectorial Address*, which must be kept in mind when reading "The Origin of the Work of Art," in the following chapter.

Notes

1. For a thorough discussion of Heidegger on truth see Ernst Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, 2nd. ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970) and Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), which includes an unusually thoughtful critical discussion of Tugendhat's probing critique.
2. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* are, seen from this perspective, an analysis of inauthentic Dasein.
3. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos," *Selected Prose*, trans. Mary Hottinger and Tania and James Stern (New York: Pantheon, 1952), 134–135.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 135–136.
6. Ibid., 137.
7. Hugo von Hoffmansthal, "Uber Vergänglichkeit," *Ausgewählte Werke in zwei Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1957), vol. 1, *Gedichte und Dramen*, 36–37. My translation.
8. Cf. G2, 395/345: "But on what basis does Dasein disclose itself in resoluteness? On what is it to resolve? *Only* the resolution itself can give the answer." Ever since Karl Löwith suggested a connection between Carl Schmitt's decisionism and Heidegger's thought in "Les implications politiques de la philosophie de l'existence chez Heidegger," *Les temps modernes*, II, 14, Nov. 1946, 348, this and similar passages have invited talk of Heidegger's decisionism. A recent, thoughtful reading of Heidegger as a decisionist is found in Herman Philipse, "Heidegger and Ethics," *Inquiry*, 42, 439–474. According to Philipse "With Heidegger's moral decisionism, the historical development of ethical foundationalism has reached its final stage. The attempt to ground ethics on secure first principles first

shifted from heteronomy to autonomy, and then from Kantian universalizability to unrestricted freedom" (458). But, as this commentary shows, it is a mistake to overlook what so profoundly separates Heidegger's from a Sartrian understanding of freedom (455). I agree with Beat Sitter ("Zur Möglichkeit dezisionistischer Auslegung von Heideggers ersten Schriften," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, vol. 24. No. 4, 1970) that Heidegger would have to understand decisionism as a "phenomenon of inauthenticity." See also Herman Philipse, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being. A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 256.

9. For a fuller account see Karsten Harries, "Death and Utopia: Towards a Critique of the Ethics of Satisfaction," *Research in Phenomenology*, vol. 7, 1977, 138–152.
10. This is the one place where the term *Volk* occurs in *Being and Time* and as such has drawn a great deal of attention. For an thoughtful discussion of its significance, see James Phillips, *Heidegger's Volk. Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 5–14.
11. Since Heidegger understands thinking, too, as such action, it is not surprising that in the twenties he should have developed his own philosophy as a creative repetition of philosophy's Greek origin, working especially on Aristotle. Here, too, the question arises: what makes the past worthy of being repeated? If that question is to receive an answer the heroic precursor's work may not limit our own sight. As Mark Sinclair puts it in *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): "the analytic of Dasein seeks to think the problematic originally constitutive of Greek ontology more originally than the Greeks themselves" (8). This poses the question: what origin do we have in mind when we say "more originally"? Does phenomenology hold the key to an answer?
12. Sartre faces an analogous problem in *Being and Nothingness*. According to Sartre "fundamentally man is *the desire to be*, and the existence of this desire is not to be established by an empirical induction; it is the result of an *a priori* description of the being of the for-itself, since desire is lack and since the for-itself is the being which is to itself its own lack of being." Sartre thus understands the impossible project to be God to be the fundamental and finally inevitably vain project of every human being. Each individual appropriates this fundamental project in a particular way. Sartre calls such appropriation the individual's original project, where such appropriation is said to be itself chosen. Recalling Kant and Schopenhauer, Sartre speaks in this connection of the "choice of an intelligible character," which names "the total relation to the world by which the subject constitutes himself as a self." I find such an essentially groundless choice that allows the subject to constitute itself as a self unintelligible. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. and intro. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 565, 602, 615. Also Karsten Harries, "Sartre and the Spirit of Revenge," *Sartre Studies International*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2004), 25–38.

3

Leaders and Followers

1. Choosing a Hero

The first chapter claimed that authentic existence, as Heidegger understands it, demands art, i.e. that "The Origin of the Work of Art" addresses what may be considered an incompleteness in the understanding of authenticity developed in *Being and Time*. The second chapter addressed the nature of that incompleteness by linking it to a certain one-sidedness of Heidegger's analysis of authenticity. Instead of "one-sidedness" I could also have spoken of the all too formal character of Heidegger's analysis of authenticity.

Heidegger, as we saw, ties authenticity to authorship. First of all and most of the time I have always already lost myself to the world, which has placed me in ways that I have not chosen: I act and speak as one acts and speaks. Resoluteness, as Heidegger understands it, means a recovery of self. The authentic individual chooses him- or herself in his or her entirety, that means in his or her inescapable facticity, and that means also and especially, in his or her mortality. In *Being and Time* Heidegger therefore insists that resoluteness does not mean a leave-taking from the world and does not yield a free-floating self, but, on he contrary, pushes the individual back into the world and the community (G2, 365/344). Authenticity thus demands a double-movement: (1) a leave-taking from the world that leaves us homeless in the world; (2) a return that lets us take our place in the world. But how is this return to be thought? The difficulty is analogous to the difficulty we face trying to understand Abraham's return home from Mount Moriah, following his teleological suspension of the ethical.

Authenticity is linked by Heidegger to care. Inseparable from his understanding of Dasein as care is a recognition of the fact that we human beings do not face a mute world, but are always already claimed and called in countless and often incompatible ways, by persons and things, also by our own embodied being. These claims may be said to furnish the necessary material for resolute action.

But *how* is this material to be ordered? The analysis of authenticity remains incomplete without an account of how such an ordering is to be thought.[1] What lets us choose one course of action over another? One thing seems clear: they cannot be considered equally weighty.

What gives weight to our actions must be discovered; it cannot be freely invented. Freedom requires responsibility. But responsibility requires the ability to respond appropriately, requires, if perhaps not what might deserve to be called a moral sense, at least a sense that things matter and that not all things matter equally. What lets me judge one thing to have more weight

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 31–52.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_3,

than another cannot have its sole determining ground in a free choice. The analysis of authenticity remains incomplete without some account of how such an ordering is possible. Authenticity requires an affirmation of the limits of freedom, requires an authentic appropriation of our inescapable inauthenticity.

For the inauthentic individual this material has always already been ordered in some way or other by his or her world, where "world" here does not mean the totality of facts, but a space of meanings—think of the world of a baseball player or the medieval world. First of all and most of the time our place in such a world has already been established for us: we don't really need to confront and thus assume responsibility for our situation; we find ourselves caught up in it—Wittgenstein might say, caught up in some language-game or other. But authenticity calls into question our place in all such usually taken for granted worlds. In this sense Heidegger can speak of authentic Dasein's essential homelessness. Such homelessness carries with it the promise of a new freedom, a freedom from what once sheltered and bound us. And yet such homelessness and with it the promised freedom prove finally incompatible with authenticity, which demands not only a leave-taking from, but a return to the world. That is to say: authenticity, too, requires a home, but this home may not be taken for granted, but must be resolutely chosen.

What authority can such a choice appeal to? In *Being and Time* Heidegger links authentic existence to an affirmation of the history that has made us who we are. But that history speaks with many different voices. Which ones should we listen to? In this connection, as we saw, Heidegger speaks of the choice of a hero. Today such talk has been rendered more than questionable by Heidegger's own soon repudiated choice of Hitler for his hero: take this notorious and altogether un-Hegelian statement made in the fall of 1933 to introduce a new semester:

> Nicht Lehrsätze und Ideen seien die Regeln eures Seins. Der Führer selbst und allein ist die heutige und künftige deutsche Wirklichkeit und ihr Gesetz (G16, 184).
>
> Not theorems and ideas should provide your being with rules. The leader himself and he alone is today and for the future German reality and its law.

This call on German students to make a decision for Hitler raises the question: how are we to distinguish the choice of a genuine hero from worship of some golden calf, where, born of the human need for a measure, such worship seeks to banish that hard to bear lightness of being that is the other side of a freedom that, knowing neither ground nor measure, is totally negative?[2] This call also raises a question about Heidegger's understanding of his own task as philosopher. He does not suggest, following Kant, that reason should bind freedom; philosophy can exhibit the necessity of such a bond, but it cannot provide it. That requires work of a very different sort. The cited quote suggests that at that time he thought he had found in Hitler the creator of just such

a work. Soon he was to recognize how disastrously he was mistaken. "The Origin of the Work of Art" gives us some insight into how Heidegger understood the nature of his error.

2. The Rectorate

Enough has been said to make clear why the question of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism continues to present us with an important philosophical problem. Not only is there an essential connection between Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism and his philosophical thinking. At issue is also the role of philosophy in public life.

In this connection Hans-Georg Gadamer's response to Victor Farías's *Heidegger and Nazism*[3] is of interest:

> For the past fifty years, some of us have thought about what alarmed us at that time and separated us from Heidegger for many years. Thus it can hardly be expected that we will be surprised when we hear that he "believed" in Hitler in 1933—and many years before and how many years afterward? He was no mere opportunist. It would be better to call his political engagement not a political point of view but a political illusion that had less and less to do with political reality. Later, when he continued to dream his dream of a "national religion" (*Volksreligion*), despite all realities, he was naturally very disappointed in the course of events. But he still guarded his dream and was silent about it. In l933 and 1934, he believed that he could follow his dream and fulfill his most authentic philosophical mission in revolutionizing the university from the bottom up. In order to attain this, he did things that horrified us at the time. He wanted to break the political influence of the church and the inertia of the academic bigwigs. He also placed Ernst Jünger's vision of *The Worker* next to his own ideas of overcoming the tradition of metaphysics from the standpoint of Being. He later outdid himself in the radical lecture he gave on the end of philosophy.[4] That was his revolution.[5]

Gadamer is here making the following points:

1. Those who had known Heidegger could hardly be expected to be surprised by the new revelations.
2. Heidegger had long dreamed of a radical transformation of European culture, of a post-Christian secular religion.
3. The National Socialist movement appeared to answer to that dream.
4. Heidegger's dream made him blind to the reality of National Socialism.
5. Heidegger's turn to Being has revolutionary implications, as does his talk of the end of philosophy and the overcoming of metaphysics.

Gadamer, too, sees an essential relationship between crucial aspects of Heidegger's philosophical thinking and his entanglement with National Socialism. And that entanglement is inseparable from what makes Heidegger a postmodern thinker.

In this connection it is illuminating to compare Heidegger to Nietzsche: I would call attention especially to *The Birth of Tragedy* and to *Wagner in Bayreuth*.[6] Common to Heidegger and Nietzsche is their critique of modernity. As I pointed out in the first chapter, what is at issue in "The Origin of the Work of Art" includes the question of the legitimacy of the modern age. Heidegger's vulnerability to Nazism was fed by his anti-modernism, where such anti-modernism is of a piece with his questioning of Hegel, and more especially of Hegel's thesis of the death of art in a world that has come of age.

That Heidegger himself claims an essential connection between his turn to National Socialism and his philosophical thinking is clear from both the *Spiegel Interview* and *Facts and Thoughts*. Both give essentially the same account; Heidegger had already given a similar version to the Rectorate of the University in Freiburg on Nov. 4, 1945, in which he was requesting to be reinstated as professor (G16, 184), a request that was unsuccessful—only in the winter semester 1950/5l was he permitted to resume his teaching. Heidegger's account gives the impression that he was all but drafted into the rectorate. As we now know, the facts were rather different: Heidegger election as rector had been well prepared by a small group of Heidegger supporters.[7] That Heidegger at that time was very interested in university reform is clear from a letter that he wrote to Karl Jaspers at that time (April 3, 1933):

> as dark and questionable as much remains, I nevertheless feel ever more clearly that we are growing into a new reality and that an age has grown old. Everything now depends on whether we prepare for philosophy the place where it can become genuinely effective and help it to find the proper words.[8]

That is essentially the same position Heidegger claims to have held in both *Facts and Thoughts* and in the *Spiegel Interview.* Both assert that the basic motive that led him to assume the rectorate had already been clearly stated in the Inaugural Lecture of l929 *What is Metaphysics?*

> We are questioning, here and now, for ourselves. Our existence—in the community of researchers, teachers, and students—is determined by science. What happens to us, essentially, in the ground of our existence, when science becomes our passion?
>
> The scientific fields are quite diverse. The ways they treat their objects of inquiry differ fundamentally. Today only the technical organization of universities and faculties consolidates this burgeoning multiplicity of disciplines; the practical establishment of goals by each

> discipline provides the only meaningful source of unity. Nonetheless, the rootedness of the sciences in their essential ground has atrophied (G9, 103–104/96).

The passage recalls Nietzsche's characterization of the style of decadence in *The Case of Wagner*:

> For the present I merely dwell on the question of *style*.—What is the sign of every *literary decadence*? That life no longer dwells in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, the page gains life at the expense of the whole—the whole is no longer a whole. But this is the simile of every style of *decadence*: every time, the anarchy of atoms, disgregation of the will, "freedom of the individual," to use moral terms—expanded into political theory, "*equal* rights for all." Life, *equal* vitality, the vibration and exuberance of life pushed back into the smallest forms; the rest *poor* in life. Everwhere paralysis, arduousness, torpidity *or* hostility and chaos: both more and more obvious the higher one ascends in forms of organization. The whole no longer lives at all: it is composite, calculated, artificial, and artifact.[9]

This critique of decadence implies an attack on freedom.

The *Spiegel* picks up on this, reminding Heidegger of what he had said in the Rectorial Address:

> To give oneself the law is the highest freedom. The much lauded "academic freedom" will be expelled from the German university; for this freedom was not genuine because it was only negative. It primarily meant lack of concern, arbitrariness of intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint in what was done and left undone. The concept of the freedom of the German student is now brought back to its truth. In future, the bond and service of German students will unfold from this truth (G16, 113/10).

In opposing a purely negative freedom Heidegger would seem to agree with philosophers such as Rousseau and Kant. But long before he had despaired of reason's ability to furnish the necessary bond. Instead he looked to the movement that claimed to inaugurate a new order. The paragraph in which this initially Kantian sounding reference to freedom is found had thus begun with a reference to "the resoluteness of the German students, who, they are told by their new rector, will to be equal to the "German destiny in its most extreme distress." Consider especially this sentence: "This will is a true will, provided that German students, through the new Student Law, place themselves under the law of their essence and thereby first define that essence" (G16, 112–113/10). The student law in question was proclaimed on May 1, 1933. It sought to organize the students according to the *Führerprinzip*. The bond that is to

transform a merely negative into a positive freedom and to allow these students to "place themselves" under the law of their essence" was in fact imposed by the regime that had just come to power.

When the *Spiegel* conjectures that Heidegger would still support much of what he had then asserted, he quite readily admits this.

> Yes, I still stand by it. For this "academic freedom" was basically purely negative: the *freedom from* the effort of getting involved in the reflection and contemplation scholarly study demanded. Incidentally, the sentence you picked out should not be isolated, but placed in its context. Then it will become clear what I wanted to have understood as "negative freedom" (G16, 655/44).

Here Heidegger suggests that he was first of all concerned with the kind of freedom demanded by responsible scholarship, not by responsible citizenship. The address itself blurs that distinction. There is indeed the suggestion that the university should lead the citizens toward such responsibility. But the problem with that positive freedom that Heidegger would oppose to the merely negative freedom of the liberal state and its universities is of course: where is it to receive its content if not from reason?

In the heated atmosphere of l933 that question received an all too easy answer from the movement in which Heidegger, too, felt himself swept up, like many of the students he was supposed to lead and who often were more strident in their demands than the party. He readily admits that he was then convinced of "the greatness and magnificence of this new departure" (G16, 655/44). He admits also that at that time he saw no alternative to Hitler. And in the *Spiegel* interview he goes on to suggest that things have not improved in the meantime, certainly not as far as the university is concerned; the slide into decadence that he was then trying to stem is said to have "become extremely deteriorated" (G16, 654/42).

According to his own account, Heidegger assumed the rectorate to rescue the university by recalling science to its original essence, allowing it to recover its Greek root. To return science to its origin means for Heidegger inevitably also to render that origin questionable. Consider in this connection the sentences that preceded the cited passage from *What is Metaphysics?*

> First, every metaphysical question always encompasses the whole range of metaphysical problems. Each question is itself always the whole. Therefore, second, every metaphysical question can be asked only in such a way that the questioner as such is present, together with the question, that is, is placed in question. From this we conclude that metaphysical inquiry must be posed as a whole and from the essential position of the existence [*Dasein*] that questions (G9, 106/95–96).

Metaphysics, so understood, is unsettling, destabilizing. It prepares for revolution.

In this connection it is helpful to look back to *Being and Time*, where in paragraph 3, "The Ontological Priority of the Question of Being," Heidegger provides a clear formulation of his understanding of science: Each science presupposes a particular determination of the being of the beings under investigation. Consider the Cartesian determination of the being of nature as *res extensa*. That determination sought to provide the science of the time with a firm foundation; it prescribed a certain mode of access. Bound up with that determinations are basic concepts. To question the determination of the being of things presupposed by a particular science is to prepare for a scientific revolution.[10]

And the point can be extended: all our actions presuppose a certain understanding of Being. To question that understanding is to let us become homeless in our once so familiar world. Authenticity and raising the question of Being thus belong together. This question invites us to question and perhaps change our orientation towards persons and things; thus it invites revolution, even as it denies any appeal to well established criteria that might guide such revolution. This finds expression in the following claim from the Rectorial Address: "Science is the questioning standing of one's ground in the midst of the constantly self-concealing totality of what is. This active perseverance knows about its impotence in the face of destiny" (G16, 110/8).

3. A "Private National Socialism"

We have to take seriously Heidegger when he claims that when he accepted appointment as chancellor of the university, he was still caught up in the questions that had been raised in *Being and Time*; also when he suggests that even as he assumed the rectorate he found himself in opposition to the official party position, despite what he was to say some months later about the *Führer* being "German reality and its law." Heidegger asserts indeed that the very title of the Rectorial Address, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* implied such opposition. Consider what he says about that title in the *Spiegel* interview:

SPIEGEL: Self-assertion of the university, in such a turbulent world, does that not seem a little inappropriate?

HEIDEGGER: Why? "The Self-Assertion of the University" goes against so-called political science, which had already been called for by the Party and National Socialist students. This title had a very different meaning then. It did not mean "politology," as it does today, but rather implied: Science as such, its meaning and its value, is appraised for its practical use for the nation [*Volk*]. The counter position to *this* politicization of science is specifically addressed in the rectorial address (G16, 656/44–45).

Heidegger had made essentially the same claim in *Facts and Thoughts*. He is quite aware that many saw his actions in a different light, as an attempt to aid the Nazis in their attempt to integrate the university into the National Socialist state, i.e. to politicize science. And in the *Spiegel* interview Heidegger admits that he allowed his rhetoric to become distorted by the need he felt to make compromises in order to work with the National Socialist regime (G16, 658/46). But a careful reading of the address shows that Heidegger resisted such attempts to integrate the university into the totalitarian state. And such resistance is in keeping with what Heidegger had to say in *Being and Time* about science and its relationship to the question of Being.

In its context *Selbstbehauptung* does indeed suggest a refusal to accept the National Socialist conception of the university. And if we are to trust Heidegger (and a healthy dose of skepticism is in order when reading *Tatsachen und Gedanken*), the Party, even if it did not understand the speech, understood the opposition. Heidegger's report on his meeting with Minister Wacker rings true:

> Although the address, and with it my attitude, was grasped even less by the Party and the relevant agencies, it was "understood" inasmuch as one immediately sensed the opposition in it. Following the inaugural banquet in the [Hotel] Kopf, Minister Wacker told me his opinion of the address on the very same day he had heard it:
>
> 1. That this was the kind of "private National Socialism," which circumvented the perspectives of the Party program.
> 2. Most importantly, that the whole address had not been based on the concept of race.
> 3. That he could not accept the rejection of the idea of "political science," even if he might be willing to admit that this idea had not yet been given sufficient foundation (G16, 381/22–23).

Wacker was quite on target with his criticism: Heidegger did hold a private National Socialism and of that he never let go. This National Socialism is not racist, although it is nevertheless marked by a pronounced national chauvinism—perhaps we can speak of a linguistic chauvinism.[11] Behind it lies a serious philosophical problem: what is the relationship between language and thinking?[12] Does it make sense to speak of a German physics, as the Nobel-Prize winning physicist Philipp Lenard did[13]—Bertolt Brecht was right to ridicule such talk in his play *Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches*.[14] But if there can be no German physics, does this mean that there can be no German philosophy, either? If so, why? If not, why not? And what about poetry? How does style function in physics, philosophy, and poetry? How does style relate to natural language? How does it relate to the question of Being? And is philosophy all of one kind? About what we can call Heidegger's linguistic chauvinism there can be no doubt.—Is it just an unfortunate prejudice that requires no further thought?

That Heidegger never wanted a politicized science in the party sense seems also clear. Equally clear is that Heidegger did not have in 1933 and did not come to have after 1945 any sympathies for liberal democracy or communism.

In the *Spiegel-Interview* Heidegger gives a more detailed account of what he had in mind:

SPIEGEL: Do we understand you correctly? In including the university in what you felt was to be a "new departure," you wanted to assert the university against perhaps overpowering trends that would not have left the university its identity?

HEIDEGGER: Certainly, but at the same time, self-assertion was to have set itself the positive task of winning back a new meaning, in the face of the merely technical organization of the university, through reflection on the tradition of Western and European thinking.

SPIEGEL: Professor, are we to understand that you thought then that a recovery of the university could be achieved with the National Socialists?

HEIDEGGER: That is incorrectly worded. The university was to have renewed itself through its own reflection, not with the National Socialists, and thereby gain a firm position against the danger of the politicization of science—in the sense already given. (G16, 656–657/45)

4. The Greek Origin of Science

But can we take Heidegger at his word? With this question in mind, let us take a more careful look at the speech. Consider the first paragraph:

> The assumption of the rectorate is the commitment to the *spiritual* leadership of this institution of higher learning. The following of teachers and students only awakens and strengthens through a true and common rootedness in the essence of the German university. This essence, however, gains clarity, rank and power if the leaders, first and foremost and at any time, are themselves led—led by the relentlessness of that spiritual mission that forces the destiny of the German people into the shape of its history (G16, 107/5).

Striking is the use of words having to do with leading and being led. By its style, the address would seem to pay homage to the *Führerprinzip*. That style invites a certain mood—the call for some leader who would provide new orientation after the collapse of the old order was heard again and again in the years following World War One.

But looking beyond the style, what is actually being said? How is this first paragraph to be understood? Almost desperate, given the circumstances, is the insistence on *Selbstverwaltung* (self-administration), *Selbstbesinnung* (self-examination), and *Selbstbehauptung* (self-assertion) (G16, 107/5–6). And disturbing is the emptiness of what Heidegger is here saying. Clear, however, is the duality present already in the title: the commitment to the essence of science is to be matched by a commitment to the German destiny. Obvious, too, is the tension between these two commitments, although the latter is left disturbingly vague in the address.

Heidegger has much more to say about the essence of science. The then prevailing understanding of science is rejected:

> However, we will not experience the essence of science in its innermost necessity as long as we—when speaking of the "new concept of science"—only mean the self-sufficiency and lack of presuppositions of an all-too-contemporary science. Such action is merely negative. Hardly looking back beyond the past decades, it becomes a mere semblance of a true struggle for the essence of science (G16, 108/6).

Heidegger goes on to insist that it is not at all necessary that there be science in his sense. What then about the *Entscheidungsfrage*, the decisive question, he raises?

> If we want to grasp the essence of science, we must first face the decisive question: should there still be science for us in the future, or should we let it drift toward a rapid end? It is never unconditionally necessary that science should be at all. But if there should be science and if it should be *for* us and *through* us, then under what conditions can it truly exist? (G16, 108/6–7)

Heidegger's answer:

> Only if we again place ourselves under the power of the *beginning* of our spiritual-historical existence. This beginning is the departure, the setting out, of Greek philosophy. Here, for the first time, Western man rises up, from a base in a popular culture [*Volkstum*] and by means of his language, against the *totality of what is*, and questions and comprehends it as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it know and wills it—or not (G16, 108/6–7).

The passage demands careful reading. Science is said to have its origin in a rising up that, for whatever reason, let some Greeks—as the similar language in the lecture course *On The Essence of Truth* (WS 1933/34) makes clear, Heidegger was thinking first of all of Heraclitus (G36/37, 89–99)—raise

themselves above that culture in which they were rooted and, supported by their language, confront the totality of what is with their questions, insisting on inquiring into what really is, refusing to rest content with phenomena as they present themselves first of all and most of the time.[15] It is to this beginning, a beginning that demands freedom from established ways of thinking, that Heidegger would recall science, a call that implies a refusal of that servile "political science" on which National Socialists such as Minister Wacker then insisted. "All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy. From it science draws the strength of its essence, assuming that is still remains at all equal to this beginning" (G16, 109/7). The university community that listened to their new leader-rector must have wondered: were they all to study Heraclitus? But what mattered to Heidegger was something else: In keeping in what he had said in *Being and Time* about authentic action as creative repetition of something past, he wanted to recall science to its origin in order to recover these two characteristics of the Greek essence of science for the present:

1. The knowledge of the way knowledge must finally suffer shipwreck on the reef of overpowering destiny (*Übermacht des Schicksals*):

> An old story was told among the Greeks that Prometheus had been the first philosopher. Aeschylus has this Prometheus utter the saying that expresses the essence knowing:
>
> *Techne d'anankes asthenestera makro* (Prom. 514, ed. Wil).
>
> "Knowing, however, is far weaker than necessity." That means that all knowing about things has always already been surrendered to the predominance of destiny and fails before it[16] (G16, 109/7).

Half a year later Heidegger was to lecture, with reference to Heraclitus, about the *Übermacht des Seins*, about overpowering Being. All our acting and thinking would be idle, impotent, were it not already bound to "what each single, manifold being is, to *what* and *how* it is, to *its Being* . . . Only because man has been transported into the overpowering might (*Übermacht*) of Being and masters it in this or that way, is he able to maintain himself in the midst of beings as such" (G36/37, 100). It is a tragic view of Promethean self-assertion in the face of a finally opaque and often cruel reality that Heidegger here proposes: we need to recognize that we are bound by overpowering Being, recognize that such being bound is a condition of responsible living, thinking, and especially of science. With Nietzsche we can say, man wills power, but willing power he has to acknowledge that he remains bound by overpowering Being. This he will never master.

2. But just this inevitable failure challenges and provokes:

> Precisely because of this, knowing must unfold its highest defiance. Only then will the entire power of the concealedness [*Verborgenheit*] of what

> is rise up and knowing will really fail. In this way, what is opens itself in its unfathomable inalterability and lends knowing its truth (G16, 109/7).

This battle between overpowering destiny and human self-assertion, which seeks to master what is, first of all by naming things, Heidegger takes to be constitutive of both Dasein and truth: "This then, that man is exposed to and open to the overpowering might of Being, and this, that he speaks, signify one and the same basic feature in the essence of man" (G36/37, 101). But to speak is to tear beings out of concealment, to establish truth. Science continues such work (G16, 109–110/7).

> In this Greek saying on the creative impotence of knowledge, one all too readily hopes to find a prototype for a knowing that is based purely on itself, when actually such knowing has forgotten its own essence. This knowing is interpreted for us as the "theoretical" attitude. But what does *theoria* mean to the Greeks? It is said pure contemplation, which only remains bound to the matter in question and all that it is and demands. This contemplative behavior is said, with reference to the Greeks, to be pursued for its own sake. But this reference is mistaken. For on the one hand, "theory" is not pursued for its own sake, but only in the passion to remain close to and under the pressure of what is. On the other, the Greeks fought precisely to comprehend and carry out this contemplative questioning as one, indeed as *the* highest, mode of human *energeia*, of human "being-at-work" (G16, 109–110/7).

We should not the shift: in the first quote "knowing" translates *techne*; now it translates *theoria*. But the two are not opposed here: theory is understood as the highest *techne*, the highest mode of "human 'being at work.'"[17] That is to say, knowing is not passive contemplation, but creative work. Just the final impotence of knowledge, the knowledge that truth does not lie open before us, that we have to work to get at it, and that we shall finally never seize the truth, if by truth we mean the adequacy of our thoughts to reality, makes knowledge creative.[18] In emphasizing the creativity of knowledge Heidegger is concerned to distance himself from an understanding of knowledge as mere theory. *Theoria*, he is concerned to show, is the highest mode of *energeia*, of human being at work.[19] Such work is to become the determining center of what Heidegger now calls the *volklich-staatliche Dasein*, giving the term *Dasein* now a definitely collective reading, tying it to "folk" and "state." In this sense science is to be understood as "the questioning standing of one's ground in the midst of the constantly self-concealing totality of what is. This active perseverance knows about its impotence in the face of destiny" (G16, 110). In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger will look for such work, able to provide a community with a spiritual center, not to theory, but to art.

5. Holy Earth

Why does Heidegger think it so important to recover the Greek origin of science? Why not be content with an understanding of science as a by now well-established, steadily advancing enterprise? And how are we to understand the claim that science, if we heed the command of its beginning, should become the center of our *geistig-volkliches Dasein*? (G16, 111/8) where we should note the shift in the adjectives: spirit is now given precedence over folk. But does this not ask too much of science, too much of theory? What could it mean for us moderns to recover the Greek origin of science?

Heidegger himself proceeds to contrast our situation with that of the Greeks: as perhaps never before, we find ourselves spiritually at sea:

> And if our most authentic existence itself stands before a great transformation, and it is true what that passionate seeker of God and last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said: "God is dead"—and if we must be serious about this forsakenness of modern human beings in the midst of what is, then what is the situation of science" (G16, 111/8).

Heidegger accepts the truth of Nietzsche's pronouncement. Such acceptance is a presupposition of all his subsequent work.[20]

But to accept Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God is to say also: what stands between us and the Greek beginning of science are centuries of Christianity and its confidence that in God reality and understanding are inseparably joined. Such confidence is transferred from God to man by the philosophy that, inaugurated by Descartes, presides over modern science, a philosophy that insists that human reason is capable of rendering us the masters and possessors of nature. Following Nietzsche, Heidegger is convinced that such confidence is misplaced, that reality transcends our understanding. He never knew the confident hope of the Enlightenment that reason will lead us to happiness. And like Nietzsche Heidegger would recall us to the tragic insight that "Knowing, however, is far weaker than necessity." If this is accepted, and we shall have occasion to take up this claim in greater detail in our discussion of "The Origin of the Work of Art," we may also want to accept Heidegger's claim that questioning now gains a new and central significance: questioning becomes a way of opening oneself to and thus getting to know the rift that separates reason and reality. That wonder with which Aristotle would have philosophy begin, now reappears transformed as the end of philosophy.

> Then the initial, awed perseverance of the Greeks in the face of what is transforms itself into a completely uncovered exposure to the hidden and uncertain; that is, the questionable. Questioning is then no longer merely a preliminary step that is surmounted on the way to the answer and thus to knowing; rather, questioning becomes itself the highest form of

> knowing. Questioning then unfolds its most authentic strength to unlock the essential in all things. Questioning then forces our vision to focus, with the utmost simplicity, on the inevitable (G16, 111/8–9).

Such questioning is to recover for the sciences the ground in which they are rooted, is to open them to what Heidegger calls their earth.[21]

It is in the *Rectorial Address* that the conception of the earth that was to become so central in Heidegger's thinking makes its first public appearance.[22] He had encountered it in Hölderlin's hymns; these must have made him receptive to the Nazi rhetoric of *Blut und Boden*[23] and it is not surprising that shortly after *The Rectorial Address* "the earth" should figure prominently in the lecture course *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germanien" and "Der Rhein,"* given in the winter semester 1934/1935. Interpreting Hölderlin, Heidegger speaks here of the *Heimat*, the home country, as "*The power of the earth*, on which the human being 'poetically dwells,' always in accord with his historical Dasein" (G39, 87). Heidegger is aware that our dwelling need not be, and our modern dwelling for the most part is not, in this sense poetic. The earth is not usually experienced as a power that lets us experience that piece of earth to which we belong and in which we have our roots as *Heimat*. We who are truly of this modern age are more likely to experience the earth only as something pregiven, to be used and exploited by us as we see fit. Such a, to Heidegger inauthentic, response fails to experience the earth, to speak with Hölderlin, as holy.

> But where, on the other hand, she reveals herself to authentic, not self-serving Dasein, she is holy—holy earth. The holy one, who
>
> *Die Mutter ist von allem, und den Abgrund trägt* (Germanien V, 76)
>
> The mother is of all, and carries the abyss (G39, 105).

This "holy earth" will prove central to the argument of "The Origin of the Work of Art" and the works that follow. I agree with Otto Pöggeler's remark that "This concept of the earth conceals within it the decisive step which Heidegger took along his way of thinking when he thought about art."[24]

6. Polemos

This emphasis on questioning leads Heidegger to a discussion of *Geist,* spirit, and of what he means by the *geistige Welt eines Volkes*.

> If we will this essence of science understood as the *questioning, uncovered standing of one's ground in the midst of the uncertainty of the totality of what is*, then *this* will to essence will create for our people its world of innermost and most extreme danger, i.e. its truly *spiritual* world. For "spirit" is not empty cleverness, nor the noncommittal play

> of wit, nor the boundless drift of rational dissection, let alone world reason; spirit it the primordially attuned, knowing resoluteness toward the essence of Being. And the *spiritual world* of a people is not the superstructure of a culture any more than it is an armory filled with useful information and values; it is the power that most deeply preserves the people's earth- and blood-bound strengths as the power that most deeply arouses and most profoundly shakes the people's existence. Only a spiritual world guarantees the people greatness. For it forces the constant decision between the will to greatness and the acceptance of decline to become the law for each step of the march that our people has begun into its future history (G16, 112/9).

Here already we are presented with a first sketch of what will become perhaps the central theme of "The Origin of the Work of Art": work that both establishes a world and presents the earth answers to the questioning that is the origin of science. In the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger expects such work not from art, but from science, and expresses himself in words one is likely to read today as spoken more *ad usum Delphini*, as the *Spiegel* put it (G16, 658/46), i.e. as catering to his National Socialist audience, so when he invokes "the spiritual world of a people" and "the people's earth- and blood-bound strengths." But what he was to say a year later in the lecture course *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der* Rhein is not so very different in tone. There he speaks of *die grossen Wendezeiten der Völker*, those epochs when the spiritual world of a people undergoes a revolutionary change. Such epochs, he insists, "emerge out of the abyss, and always to the extent to which a people reaches down into this abyss, and that is to say, into its earth and possesses a home. For that reason the *Wendezeiten* of a people are not experienced, let alone comprehended on the level of shallow everyday chatter and of the always askew misgivings and all the accidental trivialities on which they get stuck, blind for the origin and arrival of the necessary" (G39, 106). The listeners were told not to expect a reasoned argument in support of the movement that promised a radical transformation of German society. The very originality of what was happening precluded such justifications.

Not surprising therefore that in the *Rectorial Address*, too, Heidegger should be unable to justify his claim that science, once it recovers its origin will be able to create a work able to provide a people with its spiritual world. We are left with a hollow promise.

What follows this rhetorically charged appeal is a disturbingly empty discussion of the requirements of leadership, which allowed the many committed Nazis in the audience to fill the empty shells of Heidegger's words with their own content:

> If we will this essence of science, then the teachers of this university must really advance to the outermost post, endangered by constant uncertainty about the world. If they stand their ground here; that is to say, if a

> common questioning and a communally tuned saying arises from there—in essential nearness to the pressing insistence of all things—then they will gain the strength for leadership.[25] For what is decisive in leading is not just walking ahead of others but the strength to be able to walk alone, not from obstinacy or a craving for power, but empowered by the deepest purpose and the broadest obligation. Such strength binds to what is essential, selects the best, and awakens the genuine following of those who have new courage (G16, 112/9).

This leads Heidegger to his disturbing appeal to the German students, who are said to be on the march, looking for those leaders who are able to interpret to them what they are up to, to be resolute. Heidegger no doubt knew that the students he was addressing were not expecting the leadership for which they were so desperately looking from the faculty. Not even from the university's new rector-leader. At best he was able to raise important questions, at worst to invite a blind readiness to follow.

Remarkable and disturbing is the movement of the address from the resolve of the German students to confront "the German fate in its most extreme distress" to the will to the essence of the university, where this will is said to be a true will precisely in so far as the students give themselves their law in the new student law imposed on them from above. The Nazis, Heidegger here appears to be saying, have forced the German student to be free in that questionable positive sense I discussed above. The bond which now is to give freedom its positive content is unfolded in all too timely fashion in terms of the *drei Bindungen*, the three bonds: *Arbeitsdienst*, *Wehrdienst*, and *Wissensdienst*, labor service, armed service, and science service, where Heidegger is right to insist in the *Spiegel* interview that the fact that the last holds third place does not mean that it hold third place in the lecture. It is indeed the only service about which Heidegger has something significant to say. And yet the order here speaks to the tension in the lecture between a willingness on Heidegger's part to be led and a desire to lead.

Heidegger's discussion of what *Wissensdienst* entails recapitulates points with which we are by now familiar: what needs to be overcome is the current splintering of the university into departments and specialties; the sciences need to return to their common ground, reach down into their earth, where once again Heidegger admonishes students and teachers to allow themselves to be bound by *die ferne Verfügung des Anfangs unseres geistig-geschichtlichen Daseins*, "the distant command of the beginning of our spiritual-historical existence" (G16, 114/11), that is to say, by the Greek beginning of science. Once they heed where this beginning directs them and open themselves to the *letzte Notwendigkeiten und Bedrängnisse des volklich-staatlichen Daseins*, the "final necessities and pressing concerns of the existence of people and state," the university will become a place of spiritual legislation and provide the people with its spiritual world (G16, 115/12). Heidegger makes no attempt to sort out the tension between this understanding of the task of the university

as the institution entrusted with the task of spiritual legislation and his claim that, by submitting to the new student law, imposed on the university from without, the students were choosing to become truly themselves. One could attempt to explain this tension by suggesting that Heidegger then was speaking, to use once more the phrase suggested by the *Spiegel*, *ad usum Delphini*. But in that interview Heidegger himself points out that this fails to do justice to his position at the time: "I must emphasize that the expression *ad usum Delphini* says too little. I believed at the time that in the questioning confrontation with National Socialism a new path, the only one still possible, to a renewal might possibly open up" (G16, 658/46). The *Rectorial Address* was intended to inaugurate such a forward looking confrontation. That the Party would refuse that confrontation and understand the address as an unwelcome challenge is not surprising.

Nor is it surprising that Heidegger should have chosen to conclude the address with a once again all too timely appeal to battle, where he invokes the great military strategist Carl von Clausewitz. In *Tatsachen und Gedanken* he returns to his use of the *Kampf* rhetoric in the *Rectorial Address*. His gloss, which seeks to explain away the so obvious timeliness of this rhetoric by reminding the reader that he himself was thinking first of all of Heraclitus and thus of the Greek beginning of philosophy, deserves careful attention: *Kampf* (battle) is said to translate *polemos*, and *polemos* is said not to mean war (*Krieg*), but *eris*, i.e. *Auseinandersetzung* (disagreement, literally "setting apart"), which is said to reveal what is thus set apart more clearly in its essence (G16, 379–380/20–22). No doubt, Heidegger was thinking along these lines. But were those who listened to the speech really expected to hear all that in his words? Had they read their Heraclitus? And was this all that Heidegger then heard in the word *polemos*? Had he forgotten *Mein Kampf*? The interpretation of the Heraclitean fragment "War is the father of all things and king of all, and some he shows as gods, and others as men; some he makes slaves, others free"[26] that he offered his students in the winter semester following the address strikes a very different note: *polemos* here does get translated, not just as *Kampf*, battle, but explicitly as *Krieg*, war, and Heidegger insists that the individual and the nation or Volk need war, need the enemy, perhaps even have to create the enemy, lest they become blunt and decadent.[27] Such battle creates a rank order, places one thing above another, places gods above humans, free men above slaves. To be sure, Heidegger soon shifts to an interpretation of this war as the "*Ursprung des Seins*," the origin of Being" (G36/37, 93), which here is understood as the battle of the Dionysian and the Apollinian. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics* we read that the Heraclitean *polemos* precedes everything divine and everything human and does not mean what we think of when we say "war" (G40, 66). So understood battle was to remain at the very center of Heidegger's thinking.

No doubt, Heidegger was thinking of all this when he gave this address, but he was also attempting to make what then had become perhaps his central thought relevant to what was happening in Germany. We have here another

example of the disturbing ambiguity of Heidegger's speech: was it a call to return science to its Greek origin or a call to join the National Socialist movement? One could interpret that ambiguity as an attempt at philosophical subversion. Easier to accept is an interpretation of it as a co-optation. But more fundamental is the way it betrays Heidegger's inability to bridge the abyss that separated his attempt to think the origin of Being from the need to confront and speak to the problems of the day. The rhetoric bridges this abyss, but cannot conceal Heidegger's inability to show concretely how from the university might issue the spiritual legislation that might furnish the Germans with their spiritual world. Heidegger certainly did not expect the creation of such a world from philosophy. Its radical questioning could at best prepare the way for the genuine creators or leaders.

For a brief time Heidegger thought that he found such a leader in the failed artist turned politician Hitler. But we should note that Heidegger's understanding of what was demanded of authentic following is incompatible with totalitarian leadership. Hitler and his loyal followers could hardly have welcomed what Heidegger had to say about authentic "following" in the *Rectorial Address*: "leading must concede its following its own strength. All following, however, bears resistance in itself. This essential opposition of leading and following must not be blurred, let alone eliminated" (G16, 116/13). Quite in keeping with what is said about authenticity in *Being and Time*, in retrospect this reads like a desperate and futile plea.

7. "All that is Great Stands in the Storm"

Remarkable is the ending of the *Rectorial Address*, which invites comparison with the ending of "The Origin of the Work of Art," where Heidegger poses a similar rhetorical question. Much has of course changed. Most importantly, in the later essay it is no longer science, but art that is to return to its origin.

According to the Heidegger of the *Rectorial Address* we stand in the decision whether or not we, "as a historical-spiritual people, still and once again will ourselves—or whether we no longer will ourselves" (G16, 117/13).

> Do we, or do we not, will the essence of the German university? It is up to us whether, and to what extent, we concern ourselves with self-examination and self-assertion, not just in passing, but starting from its foundations, or whether we—with the best of intentions—merely change old institutions and add new ones. No one will keep us from doing this.
>
> But no one will even ask us whether we do or do not will, when the spiritual strength of the West fails and its joints crack, when this moribund semblance of a culture caves in and drags all forces into confusion and lets them suffocate in madness (G16, 116–117/13).

But having asserted that we stand in this decision, that it is up to the Germans to choose between allowing themselves to be dragged into confusion and madness and returning to the origin and to draw from it the strength to found a new culture, he continues to insist that the decision has already been made, that the question is no longer in question. "We," i.e. the movement in which "we," including Heidegger find ourselves caught up, has already decided the matter. A new world has already been born. The will to be seized, to once again know where we are to go, triumphs in this ending over the will to question.

Almost ironically, Heidegger concludes the *Rectorial Address* with a willfully translated quotation from Plato's *Republic*, taken out of context:

> *Ta . . . megala panta episphale*
> All that is great stands in the storm . . .
> (Plato, *Republic*, 497d. 9) (G16, 117/13).

Here is how Benjamin Jowett translated the passage, in its context:

> What is there remaining?
> The question of how the study of philosophy may be so ordered as not to be the ruin of the state: *All great attempts are attended with risk*; 'hard is the good,' as men say.

The context deserves to be carefully considered. Does not Heidegger himself say that only when we have understand the wisdom that found expression in the quote, do we really understand the splendor and greatness of the National Socialist movement? But what was Plato saying in this part of the *Republic*?

The discussion had turned to the question whether any of the present governments is suitable for philosophy and had come to the conclusion that no such government existed. Were those who listened to the conclusion of Heidegger's speech expected to think also of the government that had just seized power in Germany? And in the *Republic* the passage is followed with the admonition that philosophy should not be just a passing phase in the education of the young, who as they grow up and gain their place in the world turn away from it to supposedly more important matters, but just the reverse: that the old should dedicate themselves to philosophy. How strangely this contrasts with Heidegger's claim, in keeping with the Nazi youth cult, that "the young and the youngest strength of the people, which is already reaching beyond us, *has* already *decided* the matter" (G16, 117/13). Was their decision informed by philosophy? That Heidegger was then on the threshold of asking the poets back into the *Republic* from which Plato had banished them speaks to his understanding of philosophy at the time, both of it power and of its impotence.

8. A Letter

It is important to understand the *Rectorial Address* in its historical context. Let me therefore conclude with a letter Karl Jaspers wrote to Martin Heidegger at the time:

> Dear Heidegger! Heidelberg, Sept. 23, 1933
>
> I thank you for sending me your *Rectorial Address*. It was nice to be able to get to know it now in its authentic version after what I had read in the newspapers. The grand sweeping way in which you begin with the early Greek world touched me once again as a new and yet self-evident truth. In this respect you agree with Nietzsche, but with this difference: that one can hope, that some day you will be able to realize through philosophical interpretation what you say. Your address has thus a believable substance. I don't speak of its style and density, which, as far as I can see, makes this address the only document so far of an academic will that, while of the present, will remain. My confidence in your philosophizing, which since the spring and the conversations we had at that time is stronger than ever, is not disturbed by certain properties of the speech that belong to this time, by something that seems to me a bit forced, and by sentences that may seem to me to sound a bit hollow. But everything considered I am only glad that someone is able to speak in a way that touches on the genuine limits and origins.[28]

Notes

1. The problem is analogous to that presented to Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* by the need to bring the manifold of sensibility under the transcendental unity of the apperception. That problem in turn will lead to the question: how are we to understand the possibility of an empirical schematism? A parallel problem arises in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Only *The Critique of Judgment* begins to point towards an answer. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," as we shall see, Heidegger offers us parallel pointers.
2. For a more complete statement of my position on Heidegger and National Socialism see "Heidegger as a Political Thinker," *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*: *Critical Essays*, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale, 1978), 304–328. "Introduction," *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers* (New York: Paragon Press, 1990), xi–xl. "Introduction" and "Philosophy, Politics, Technology," *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology*, ed. Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994), xiii–xxxii, 225–245. "Shame, Guilt, Responsibility," *Essays on Jaspers and Heidegger*, ed. Alan M. Olson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 49–64.
3. Victor Farías, *Heidegger and Nazism*, ed. Joseph Margolis and Thomas Rockmore (Philadelphia: Temple U. Press, 1989).
4. The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," trans. Joan Stambaugh, *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 373–392; G14, 67–90.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Oberflächlichkeit und Unkenntnis. Zur Veröffentlichung von Victor Farias," *Antwort. Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1988), 153, trans. Lisa Harries, *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism. Questions and Answers* (New York: Paragon, 1990), 142–143.
6. Of interest in this connection is what Heidegger has to say about Wagner in his *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst* (WS 1937/37), G43, 100–107.
7. Cf. Farías, *Heidegger and Nazism*, 79–95; Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1988), 138–145.
8. Letter of 8/23/1933, Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 1920–1963*, ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner (Frankfurt am Main and Munich: Klostermann and Piper, 1990), 152. For a clear discussion of Heidegger's hope for university reform see Rüdiger Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland* (Munich: Hanser, 1994), 302–303.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner, The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1968), 626.
10. Heidegger's understanding of science here invites comparison with Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
11. It is impossible to agree with Parvid Emad when he writes: "There was nothing in Heidegger's rectoral address, then, that made it palatable to the functionaries to the Nazi party. Nothing! "Heinrich Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929–1976*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, intro. Parvis Emad (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1993), p. xxiii. That there was in fact quite bit the party could agree with is by now beyond serious discussion and in fact recognized by the charge that Heidegger's was a "private National Socialism."
12. Silvio Vietta appeals in this connection to Wilhelm von Humboldt's understanding of the way language establishes a way of viewing the world and to the work of Benjamin L. Whorf. See *Heideggers Kritik am Nationalsozialismus und an der Technik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989), 7.
13. Philip Lenard, *Deutsche Physik*, 4 vols. (München: Lehmann, 1936–1937).
14. Bertolt Brecht, *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006).
15. The passage invites to be read together with Heidegger's gloss in *Gelassenheit* on this passage by the poet Johann Peter Hebel: "We are plants, which—may we gladly admit it or not—have to rise with the roots out of the earth, in order to be able to bloom in the ether and bear fruit." "The poet wants to say: where human work that is truly joyous and health bringing is to thrive, the human being has to climb out of the depth of the native ground into the ether. Ether here means: the free air of the high sky, the open realm of the spirit." (G16, 521)
16. James Phillips calls attention to "how little attention has been given to this passage," pointing out that "Prior to its failure, knowledge is not strictly knowledge, but rather an unwitting collusion with the concealedness (*Verborgenheit*) of beings." *Heidegger's Volk. Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 101.
17. Cf. Jacques Taminiaux, "The Origin of 'The Origin of the Work of Art.'" *Poetics, Speculation and Judgment. The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, trans. and ed. Michael Gendre (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 137–138.
18. Cf. the analogue in late medieval thought: an omnipotent deity came to seem so far removed from human claims to knowledge that divine understanding ceased to function as a useful measure. Just this provoked a self-assertion that caused Protagoras, who took man to be the measure of all things, to be rediscovered by Alberti and Cusanus. See Karsten Harries, "Homo Faber: The Rediscovery of Protagoras," *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge: MIT, 2001), 184–199.

19. Important to understanding this part of the *Rectorial Address* is Martin Heidegger, *Sophistes* (WS 1924/25), G19, which includes a long discussion of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Heidegger's understanding of *theoria* recapitulates in a few sentences what he developed in this Marburg lecture course at great length. See Jacques Taminiaux, "The Origin of 'The Origin of the Work of Art," 158.
20. Cf. Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Hiuhglands: Humanities Press, 1987), 83.
21. As John D. Caputo points out, Heidegger's insistence on radical questioning made it impossible for National Socialism to expect from him the kind of philosophical leadership they were looking for. "Heidegger's Revolution. An Introduction to *An Introduction to Metaphysics*," *Heidegger Toward the Turn*, ed. James Risser (Albany: SUNY, 1999), 53–73.
22. It is worth noting, however, that the concept already figures prominently in the first version of "The Origin of the Work of Art," dating from 1931/1932. It is prepared for by Heidegger's discussion of truth as *Aletheia*, which as unconcealment presupposes something hidden and concealed. In this connection Heidegger's discussion of the *Cura* Fable in *Being and Time* deserves special attention (G2, 261–265). See Miles Groth, *Preparatory Thinking* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1987), 67–110.
23. The rhetoric of *Blut und Boden, Blut und Erde*, was however by no means limited to the Nazis. A look at the rhetoric employed by Zionism is of interest in this connection.
24. Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highglands: Humanities Press,1987), 167.
25. This passage invites comparison with what Heidegger had told his students in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (WS 1928/29) about their vocation to provide leadership. G27, 7–8. See Phillips, *Heidegger's Volk*, 106–107.
26. Heraclitus, *Fragment* 53, G. S, Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1957), 95.
27. Kant's remark in the *Critique of Judgment* on the sublimity of war comes to mind, while "a prolonged peace" is said to "tend to make prevalent a merely commercial spirit, and along with it base selfishness, cowardice, and softness, and to debase the way of thinking of that people." Trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), 122. The cited fragment by Heraclitus figures importantly in a letter Heidegger wrote to Carl Schmitt on August 22, 1933 (G16, 156), inviting a closer look at Heidegger's relationship to this thinker, who had so much to say about the importance of the enemy. See Ralf Rother, *Wie die Entscheidung lesen. Zu Platon, Heidegger und Carl Schmitt* (Berlin: Turia and Kant, 1993), 67–117; also Reinhard Mehring, "Heidegger und Carl Schmitt. Verschärfer und Neutralisierer des Nationalsozialismus," *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomä (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 342–344. Parvis Emad's claim that *Kampf* has for Heidegger the intellectual sense of "confrontation and contention and not the physically violent meaning of battle and struggle" is not supported by the available evidence. See his "Introduction," Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues*, xxi.
28. Letter of 8/23/1933, Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 1920–1963*, ed. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner (Frankfurt am Main and Munich: Klosterman and Piper, 1990), 155–157. Jaspers wrote almost thirty years later that from then on he no longer trusted Heidegger, although he could not stop to take him seriously as a thinker, but now as an opponent. See Ibid., 238. Also Karsten Harries, "Shame, Guilt, Responsibility," *Essays on Jaspers and Heidgger*, ed. Alan M. Olson (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 49–64.

4

Origins

1. Roots

Heidegger concludes "The Origin of the Work of Art" with the question

> whether art can be an origin (*Ursprung*) and then must be a head start (*Vorsprung*), or whether it is to remain a mere appendix and then can only be carried along (*Nachtrag*) as a routine cultural phenomenon.
>
> Are we in our existence historically at the origin? Do we know, which means do we give heed to, the nature of the origin? Or, in our relation to art, do we still merely make appeal to a cultivated acquaintance with the past?
>
> For this either-or there is an infallible sign. Hölderlin, the poet—whose work still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood—named it in saying:
>
> Schwer verlässt
> Was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort.
> Reluctantly
> That which dwells near its origin departs.
>
> —"The Journey," verses18–19 (G5, 66/78).

The Hölderlin quote can be read as referring to Heidegger himself, who, throughout his life, prided himself in having remained close to home, refusing to trade his native Baden—Messkirch, Black Forest, and Freiburg—for cosmopolitan Berlin.[1] But Heidegger also understood these lines to express a profound truth about human creativity: human beings need to dwell near their origin. As he insisted in the *Spiegel* interview: "From our human experience and history, at least as far as I am informed, I know that everything essential and great has only emerged when human beings had a home and were rooted in a tradition" (G16, 670/56). That thought remained a lifelong conviction: true creativity must remain rooted in its native soul. Berlin represented the modern metropolis, a global culture that has to dismiss such a desire for a rooted dwelling as born of a nostalgia incompatible with the shape of the modern world. And with the last Heidegger would have had to agree: our modern existence has little patience with such rhetoric: human beings are not like turnips stuck in the ground. But just because Heidegger was so convinced of the need for roots, he felt it important to challenge that modern world, as represented to him by Weimar Germany, to recall not just art or science, but

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 53–67.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_4,

the German people to its origin, where art, as we shall see, is thought to have a special significance.[2]

To understand what is at stake in Heidegger's search for "The Origin of the Work of Art," it is important to understand it as part of a broader quest to free Dasein from the rule of inauthentic *Geschwätz* and *Gerede*, from the dictatorship of the "they" and their idle talk, and to free the ground beneath, the earth, in which our modern world, too, has its forgotten roots; to recall our disintegrating Western culture to its origin so that from it might issue once again new growth. This is how Heidegger understood the *Rectorial Address*. It too is a search for the origin, as search that, as Heidegger's brief account of the genesis of "The Origin of the Work of Art" in his letter to Elisabeth Bloch hints, is framed by the essay, a biographical detail that invites us to read the address either as an interruption of Heidegger's evolving thoughts as he was working on the essay, or as its hidden core—as a pit lies buried in a cherry. With this in mind let me return for one more time to the address.

2. Disintegration and Renewal

In "Facts and Thoughts" Heidegger was to insist that the core of the *Rectorial Address* concerned the elucidation of the essence of knowledge, of science, and of the way that science should inform the professions (G16, 378/20). That does seem an appropriate theme for such an address and the greater part of it does deal with these topics. But the original context and Heidegger's all too timely rhetoric had to obscure this supposed "core." What those who heard that speech could not overhear was the call for a radical transformation of society, of the university, and of the way science was taught and practiced, in tune with the Nazis' recent rise to power, which had already begun to transform Germany, a development to which Heidegger, as he told the *Spiegel*, looked at the time as pointing to the only still possible path to a renewal (G16, 658/46). And in 1935, when Heidegger had already lost confidence in the party and grown especially critical of the position of such party ideologues as Ernst Krieck and Alfred Bäumler, he could still speak in *The Introduction to Metaphysics* of "the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely the encounter between global technology and modern man)" (G40, 208/166).[3] As he told the *Spiegel*, explaining the cited passage:

> During the past thirty years, it should meanwhile have become clearer that the planetary movement of modern technology is a power whose great role in determining history can hardly be overestimated. A decisive question for me today is how a political system can be assigned to today's technological age at all, and which political system would that be. I am not convinced that it is democracy (G16, 668/54).

As we now know, the parenthetical comment was in all probability a later addition, reflecting an interpretation of National Socialism as the political

expression of our technological age at which he had not yet arrived in 1935 (see G40, 232–234).[4] It is at any rate difficult to reconcile with the preceding sentence, which affirms "the inner truth and greatness of this movement" (G40, 208/166). Of this Heidegger remained convinced: it was the National Socialists who failed him by living up to this truth. In Chapter 10 I shall return to this issue and to the presupposed understanding of truth.

Already in the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger is concerned, not so much for the future of science, as ordinarily understood—in the Germany of the twenties and early thirties, that science, especially physics, was still in excellent shape—as for a society that seemed to have lost its way; and that loss seemed to Heidegger intimately connected to the understanding of reality that has presided both over the progress of modern science and technology and the disintegration of Western culture. A central theme in the *Rectorial Address*, this twofold concern was to remain a central concern throughout his life. And it retained its importance especially in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Both the address and the essay presuppose that the promise of the Enlightenment to establish a more truly humane culture based on reason has failed, a failure underscored at the time by all that the First World War had left in shambles. Western culture and especially Germany did indeed seem to have lost their way.

When one has lost one's way it is natural to look around, to see what place one has gotten to, to consider where to go, and, perhaps even more, how one got to where one is now, to retrace the path taken, to ask oneself where one might have taken a wrong turn or chosen the wrong road. Such questions were unavoidable following the end of World War One: a world seemed to have perished, the creation of a new world an urgent task. Heidegger, too, like so many of his contemporaries, had found it impossible to simply dismiss Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, as he made clear to his students at Freiburg in his lecture course *Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (WS 1929/30):

> What is essential to us is what, as the fundamental thesis, lies at the basis of this 'prophecy.' It is—reduced to a formula—this: decline of life because of and by means of the spirit. What the spirit, especially as reason (*ratio*) has shaped and created for itself with technology, economy, global communication, with the entire transformation of our *Dasein*, symbolized by the metropolis, turns itself against the soul, against life, squashes it, and forces culture to decline and disintegrate (GA29/30, 105).

Not that Heidegger accepted the finality of such gloomy prophecies. To it he opposed his own conviction, quite in the spirit of *Being and Time*, which had linked authenticity to creative repetition, that by returning to the origin of our Western culture we can renew it; opposed such pessimism, in the *Rectorial Address* with an exaggerated, almost desperate confidence, much more guardedly in "The Origin of the Work of Art."

Heidegger told his students that Spengler's gloomy prophecy can be understood as just one of many variations—Heidegger also mentions Ludwig Klages,[5] Max Scheler,[6] and Ludwig Ziegler[7]—on a theme by Nietzsche (G29/30, 106–111), already stated clearly in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a book that in quite a number of ways invites comparison with "The Origin of the Work of Art." Nietzsche later was to sum up his understanding of the present crisis with the phrase, "God is dead," explicitly endorsed by Heidegger in the *Rectorial Address*. Nietzsche refers here not only to the Christian God, but to the devaluation of all our highest values. And what has killed this God, what has devalued what once were the highest values, is, Nietzsche insists, we ourselves; more precisely, our Promethean will to power, which would have us assert ourselves as the masters and possessors of nature, refusing to accept that such mastery has to lead to the progressive erosion of all that can give meaning to life. To restore such meaning Nietzsche looked to art, more especially to tragedy.

The Birth of Tragedy blames the disintegration of Western culture on Socrates or more precisely on the Socratic spirit. Nietzsche understands Socrates as the model of the theoretical man: while the artist is content with beautiful appearance, theoretical man wants to understand it, wants to get to the bottom of things, grasp things as they really are. Theory, as Nietzsche presents it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is possessed of a will to power that wants to appropriate reality. The human capacity to know is made the measure of reality. What is real is equated with what we can comprehend. But we can comprehend only what has a certain hardness and endures. Ever since the Platonic Socrates metaphysics has thus understood reality in opposition to time. But if, as Heidegger is convinced, being and time cannot be divorced, a metaphysics that thinks being against time has to lose reality, even as it claims to seize it. Such a loss characterizes our modern age, which Heidegger will characterize soon after "The Origin of the Work of Art" as "The Age of the World Picture." Here we have a key to the nihilism Heidegger hoped to overcome in different ways both in the *Rectorial Address* and in "The Origin of the Work of Art."

3. Metaphysics and the Loss of Meaning

In *Holzwege* Heidegger placed his essay "The Age of the World Picture" right after "The Origin of the Work of Art." This conjunction should be preserved in English editions of Heidegger's works: the two essays belong together.

Heidegger first gave the lecture that was published as "The Age of the World Picture" in 1938 (G5, 75–113). At that time he had given it the somewhat different title "The Foundation of the Modern World Picture by Metaphysics." The original title invites us to compare the modern world picture with others, possessing presumably different foundations. It thus suggests that

every age has its own world picture. And can we not ask for the world picture of the Middle Ages or of the Greeks? World picture here means something like world-view. The revised title, however, claims something else, claims that the very attempt to understand the world as a picture helps to define our age, hinting at a connection between seeing the world as a picture and metaphysics. This suggests that while we moderns may inquire into the world picture of the Middle Ages, the medievals would not have done so. They did not experience their world as a picture. Just what is at stake?

The word "picture" offers a first answer: we can look at pictures, stand before them, but we cannot enter or leave them, cannot live or dwell in them. Pictures may include representations of persons. In this sense Leon Battista Alberti could say that pictures allow us to live even after our death. But it is of course not really we who live in such pictures. What we find in them is only a representation, a simulacrum. We cannot dwell in pictures. Pictures are not like buildings. They cannot be entered. Aesthetic objects are by their very nature uninhabitable. This suggests what is at stake in the phrase: "The Age of the World Picture." To the extent that we understand the world as a picture we have lost our place in it. In such a world we all tend to become displaced persons.

Such a displacement is demanded by metaphysics, which presupposes a self-elevation that transforms the embodied self into a disembodied thinker and observer. Consider once more what Heidegger had said in the *Rectorial Address* about the Greek origin of science: science was said to have its origin in an *aufstehen*, a standing up—we should hear in the word also *Aufstand*, revolt—that raises the inquirer above the ground in which he has his roots to inquire into what things really are. Descartes repeats this beginning when in reflection he transforms the embodied self into a disembodied thinking substance, a *res cogitans*, a transformation that repeats the Platonic understanding of the self-elevation that lets the philosopher become homeless in the *polis*. With this we touch the origin of metaphysics.

But what does that origin still matter? The scientist wants to arrive at the true picture of the world; he wants to understand what is as it is, bracketing for the sake of such objectivity himself and his place in the world. Human beings who understand themselves first of all as such thinking subjects just happen to find themselves in some particular body, in a particular place and time. They will not allow particularities of place, gender, and race to circumscribe their freedom, but will consider all of this material to be fashioned into a successful life.

Consider once more the term "picture." We tend to think of pictures as representations. Pictures refer to what they represent. Buildings, on the other hand, usually do not represent anything. We live and work in them. Houses thus offer both physical and spiritual shelter. Suppose Heidegger had called his essay "The Age of the World Building." To understand the world in the image of a building, perhaps a house, invites thoughts of God as an artist, an architect perhaps, who created his work for us to enjoy and dwell in—think of

the cosmos of the *Timaeus* or of the Middle Ages: a divine architecture that placed human beings near the center. In such a world human beings are at home.

When we think of successful pictorial representation we tend to think first of all of the kind of mastery of appearances achieved by Renaissance painting relying on the art of perspective. Leon Battista Alberti[8] helped inaugurate the rule of the picture so understood by teaching painters how to use a mathematical form of representation to create convincing simulacra of what appears as it appears, given a particular point of view. Such painting represents not the objects themselves, but inevitably perspective-bound appearances. These appearances have their measure in a stationary perceiving eye. The artificiality of such representation, the violence it does to the way we actually experience things, is evident: to put geometry in the service of his construction, Alberti thus assumes monocular vision and a flat earth. Given these assumptions, it is easy to come up with a proof of the correctness of Alberti's construction. Important here is this: for the sake of achieving a certain mastery of appearances, the perspectival art of Alberti subjects what it presents to a human measure that has itself been subjected to the demand for ease of representation.

Alberti's *On Painting,* I would like to suggest, helped to inaugurate what Heidegger calls the "Age of the World Picture." In that essay, to be sure, Heidegger was not thinking of an artist such as Alberti. The person who is said by him to have inaugurated our "Age of the World Picture" is Descartes (G5, 98–100). But Cartesian method is in important ways anticipated by Albertian perspective. Consider the way that, for the sake of achieving a certain mastery of appearances, the perspectival art of Alberti subjects what is represented to a human measure that has itself been subjected to the demand for ease of representation. That latter demand is a presupposition of Alberti's embrace of mathematics. Similarly Cartesian method, for the sake of rendering us the masters and possessors of nature, subjects nature to a human measure that has itself been subjected to the demand for ease of comprehension. As the Albertian picture assumes an eye placed before and thus outside it, the Cartesian world-picture assumes an "I" placed before and thus outside it. The Cartesian *res cogitans* has thus no place in the world whose essence Descartes determines as *res extensa*. The subject has fallen, had to fall out of the world so understood. Science cannot know anything of such a thinking substance. All it can do is study brain processes and the like. It can attempt to model human beings with robots possessing complicated computer brains. But such robots remain human artifacts, machines, simulacra. That is to say, science as such knows nothing of human beings understood as persons deserving respect. So understood persons have no place in the scientific world-picture.

It is of course easy to insist that this world-picture should not be confused with our life-world. But the correctness of this observation should not lead us to forget the extent to which our life-world is ever more decisively being transformed by technology. That transformation threatens to split the human being into object and subject, into human material, available to technological organi-

zation just like any other material, and into a subject that has to consider all material, including its own body and psyche as mere material to be shaped or played with as it is sees fit and its power permits. The former calls into question appeals to the dignity supposed to belong to human beings just because they are human beings, an appeal that to such a thinking must seem outmoded, out of touch with the modern world.[9] The latter renders our existence unbearably light. In *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* Heidegger had thus devoted some 140 pages to a discussion of boredom (*Langeweile*) as the fundamental mood of modern man (G29/30, 117–255). To the extent that our modern world has to transform the human being in the image of the Cartesian subject, it will make us feel ever more free, ever less bound to particular places, but that means also ever more mobile, rootless, and ghostly: what now is to keep freedom responsible and give weight and substance to our lives?

Heidegger claims that the age of the world picture has its foundation in metaphysics. Metaphysics seeks to comprehend the being of all that is. But we cannot comprehend what is fleeting. Metaphysics thus tends to think being against time. And we cannot comprehend what cannot be analyzed into simple elements and pictured by joining these elements. In this sense we really understand something only to the extent that we can make it. This is why Descartes promises a practical philosophy that will allow us to understand nature as distinctly as a craftsman understands what he is able to make. Understanding here means know-how. No surprise therefore that Heidegger should claim that metaphysics culminates in technology. And this culmination has to carry the self-displacement that is a presupposition of metaphysics back into our life-world; no surprise then either that that world, too, should be experienced ever more decisively as a world in which neither gods nor values are to be found. The modern world-picture has no room for whatever it is that can make life meaningful. That, as Wittgenstein put it, must be sought outside that world, outside "all happening and being so," which cannot help but be, as Wittgenstein put it, "accidental."[10]

4. The Need for Art

If Heidegger is in fundamental agreement with Nietzsche's understanding of the process that let Spengler speak of the *Untergang des Abendlandes*—the German is more deliciously ominous than *Decline of the West*—he also follows Nietzsche in his refusal to accept the finality of this decline. If Nietzsche had indeed gotten hold in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as he later was to put it, of "the problem of science itself, science considered for the first time as problematic, as questionable,"[11] the title suggests that he was more interested in art, more especially in tragedy. Science mattered to him because it seemed to provide the key to the malaise of western culture, in a way related to Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics as providing the key to our destitute age. For a cure Nietzsche looked to tragedy, beyond tragedy to the Dionysian soil from which

it once arose and to which he now turned expectantly, hoping for a rebirth. Here already we find the fundamental pattern of both the *Rectorial Address* and "The Origin of the Work of Art." Not reason, but artistic creation is to overcome the decline of the West. And if our culture was put on the road that had to lead to disintegration and end in nihilism by that optimism and faith in the power of reason that has presided not just over our science, but our modern world, might a more hopeful alternative not be found by looking to the Greek origin of both science and philosophy, to this origin of our Western culture. Or does that origin really lie so irrevocably behind us that that it is futile to even hope for a return to what has been lost?

Nietzsche refused to allow science to circumscribe our understanding of reality. Crucial here is Nietzsche's conviction that meaning and value are artistic creations. "In the book itself the suggestive sentence is repeated several times, that the existence of the world is justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon."[12] Despite Heidegger's uneasiness with "aesthetics," both the *Rectorial Address* and "The Origin of the Work of Art" presuppose a related conviction. And while the young Nietzsche looked to Wagner for such creation only to be soon disappointed by his chosen artist-hero who proved human, all-too-human, the no longer quite so young Heidegger looked to Hitler, soon to be similarly disappointed. The author of *The Birth of Tragedy* thought that philosophy should be content to prepare the way for the artist. Artist enough to dare to put himself in the place of Wagner, an older Nietzsche dreamed of becoming that music-making Socrates demanded by *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the "Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger, a less successful poet, settled for the more modest role of serving some creator. By that time he was convinced that he had found the poet for the modern age in Hölderlin.

5. The Origin of Metaphysics

In the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger demands that to overcome that slide into nothingness that Nietzsche took to be a consequence of the death of God we must return to the Greek origin of our spiritual-historical existence. If we accept Heidegger's claim that God has no place in the modern world picture and that this picture was given its contours by metaphysics, this is to demand that we recover the origin of metaphysics. But how are we to understand this origin? In the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger had spoken of it as Western man's rising up from the ground provided by a *Volkstum,* supported by "the people's earth- and blood-bound strengths." With this rising a new way of seeing persons and things was inaugurated. To understand that origin, this rising from the earth into the light, the metaphor of a tree suggests itself. That Heidegger, too, found that metaphor suggestive is shown by the way he exploits it in his later *Introduction* to *What is Metaphysics*?

> Descartes, writing to Picot, who translated the *Principia Philosophiae* into French, observed: "Thus the whole of philosophy is like a tree: the roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches that issue from the trunk are all the other sciences . . ." (Opp. ed. Ad. et Ta. IX, 14)
>
> Sticking to this image we ask: In what soil do the roots—and through them the whole tree—receive the nourishing juices and strength? What element, concealed in the ground, enters and lives in the roots that support and nourish the tree (G9, 365).

By 1949 the rhetoric of 1933 had become untimely. But the fundamental thought remained the same.

In the later introduction to *What is Metaphysics*? to be sure, that ground is given a seemingly very different determination: "The truth of Being may be called . . . the ground in which metaphysics, as the root of the tree of philosophy, is kept and from which it is nourished" (G9, 366/208). This truth is said to remain unthought by philosophy:

> The tree of philosophy grows out the ground in which metaphysics is rooted. The ground is the element in which the root of the tree lives, but the growth of the tree is never able to absorb this soil in such a way that it disappears in the tree as part of the tree. Instead the roots, down to the subtlest tendril lose themselves in the soil (G9, 366/206).

To think this truth we need to think the truth of Being. But what does this truth have to do with a "people's earth- and blood-bound strengths"? And should not metaphysics, too, be said to attempt to think that truth? Think of Descartes' determination of the being of nature as *res extensa*. But when metaphysics thus thinks about beings, attempting to determine their being as beings, that and how these beings present themselves is presupposed and remains unthought. Consider for example Descartes' reflections on a piece of wax: does not common sense offer the philosopher his inescapable point of departure? Is this not the ground in which metaphysics has its roots? Beings have always already been encountered in some way or other. But consider how differently a botanist, a craftsman, or an artist understand, say, a tree. Is one mode of understanding more adequate than the others? In each case a being has disclosed itself to some consciousness. Only because of this can it be said to be. Being is understood here as an entry into the light of consciousness. Metaphysics presupposes such an entry. "Wherever metaphysics represents beings, Being has entered into the light. Being has arrived in a state of unconcealedness (*Aletheia*). But whether and how Being involves such unconcealedness, whether and how it manifests itself in, and as, metaphysics, remains obscure" (G9, 366/207–208). It is in Being's obscure entry into light that we must seek the ground in which the tree of philosophy has its roots.

To ask whether and how Being manifests itself in and as metaphysics is to suggest that philosophy is perhaps one, but certainly not the most fundamental or the only way Being enters into the light. Metaphysics thus presupposes common sense. Common sense, however, does not provide anything like a stable foundation. It has itself a history, differs with time and place—and with it changes the way we encounter persons and things, Heidegger might say, how Being enters into the light.

What is called common sense is always something that has come to be established. How then are we to think of its establishment? Heidegger, as we shall see, speaks a different language. He speaks of the establishment of a world. To share a world is to share a common sense.

Our common sense, the modern world picture, Heidegger insists, has been shaped by metaphysics, which has triumphed in modern science and technology. But while the progress of technology has opened up long unthought-of possibilities, thus greatly increasing our power and with it the scope of our freedom, freedom must degenerate into willfulness unless bound by responsibility. The understanding of reality that presides over our science and technology is incapable of generating the needed responsibility. This is the fundamental problem that Heidegger addresses in "The Origin of the Work of Art" and with which he was wrestling in the "Rectorial Address," indeed was wrestling with from the beginning to the end of his philosophical career.

In the address Heidegger appears confident that science, *were* it to heed the command of its Greek beginning, could once again become the center of our *geistig-volkliches Dasein*?—where we should note the tension between *Geist* and *Volk* in the adjective, which mirrors the tension between *Welt* and *Erde*, world and earth, buried in the tree metaphor. This tension begins to announce itself in the *Rectorial Address* and pervades "The Origin of the Work of Art." Questioning now becomes central:

> Such questioning shatters the encapsulation of the sciences in separate specialties, brings them back from their boundless and aimless dispersal in individual fields and corners, and directly exposes science once again to the productivity and blessing of all world-shaping powers of human-historical existence such as nature, history, language; people, custom, state; poetry, thought, faith; disease, madness, death; law, economy, technology (G16, 112/9).

Radical questioning is to recover for the sciences their ground, their earth, and thus to prepare for the establishment of the *geistige Welt eines Volkes*, the spiritual world of a people.

But are the sciences capable of such an establishment? Certainly not science as we usually understand it. Not that Heidegger, by opposing to science his "primordial concept of science," denies the legitimacy of science's commitment to objectivity and it pursuit of truth. But the task is to understand not only its legitimacy, but also its limits. "*This* primordial concept of science

obligates us not only to 'objectivity,' but, above all, to make our questioning in the midst of the historical-spiritual world of the people essential and simple. Indeed, it is only then that objectivity can truly ground itself—i.e. discover its nature and its limit" (G16, 112/11).

What becomes clear is that we should not look to science so understood as capable of originating what Heidegger here calls a spiritual world. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" he looks to art instead.

6. Art as Origin

As much as "The Origin of the Work of Art" is an inquiry into art, it is also an inquiry into the meaning of *Ursprung*, of origin, of originality. Art and origin are of course related: do we not demand originality of the genius, of great art that it be original? Is not art in its very essence origin, *Usprung*?

This twofold significance is suggested by the essay's title. For how is the word *Ursprung* (origin) to be understood here? Usually, when we ask for the origin of something, we ask for where and under what circumstances it came into being. To ask for the origin of oil painting, is thus to ask for when and where artists first used this medium. And similarly to ask for the origin of the work of art would be to ask for when and where human beings first created works of art: where does art come from? What was it that let human beings create works of art in the first place? There does not seem to be an obvious need for such creation.

But this way of taking the question is challenged by the way Heidegger would have us hear *Ursprung* also as *Ur-Sprung* meaning primordial leap. So understood the title would lead us to expect an inquiry into the nature of the leap, perhaps the leap of some creative genius, that allows art works to come into being. It could lead to a determination of the essence of the work of art as an enactment of such a leap that carries those who come under its spell to some other place.

Heidegger begins the essay by appealing to the first and usual meaning of the term. But he also unpacks it in a way that makes clear that we should not expect an inquiry into archaic art: "Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is and as it is. What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature. The origin of something is the source of its nature. The question concerning the origin of the work of art asks about the source of its nature" (G5, 1/17). Heidegger is not interested in the question: when and where did human beings first create works of art; he is not concerned with the facts relating to such a beginning. What interests him is the essence or nature of art; he wants to know how to understand this essence and where it comes from. In the language of *Being and Time* we might say that the essay engages not in an ontic, but an ontological inquiry.

Origin, Heidegger tells us names the source of something's nature. Where then does the nature of art come from? The answer seems obvious. Do works of art not have their origin in artists? That can of course not be denied.

> But by what and whence is the artist what he is? By the work; for to say that the work does credit to the master means that it is the work that first lets the artist emerge as a master of his art. The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names—art (G5, 1/17).

The question thus becomes the question about the nature of art. "As necessarily as the artist is the origin of the work in a different way than the work is the origin of the artist, so it is equally certain that, in a still different way, art is the origin of both artist and work" (G5, 1/17). This may seem a rhetorical slight of hand: Could not the same be said about the engineer and his work? Engineering is the origin of both the engineer and his work. And the same goes for the farmer, and so on—assuming that we are thinking of sound engineering and sound farming. And similarly Heidegger is thinking of art that really deserves to be called that: of what he terms "great art."

But are we not taking words too seriously here? Isn't art whatever we choose to call and count as art? That is claimed by what has come to be called the institutional theory of art.[13] Today we count and honor a great deal as significant art that was not considered art in earlier times. And many cultures are not at all concerned with art, as we now understand the term. It is difficult today to take seriously an inquiry into the essence of art. Is there such an essence?

Heidegger would seem to agree that today there is no such essence: "Art—this is nothing more than a word to which nothing real any longer corresponds" (G5, 2/17). But to claim that today art is "nothing more than a word to which nothing real any longer corresponds" is to suggest that once things were different. Heidegger thus refuses to endorse such an all too timely understanding of art. Regardless of what we today may happen to consider art, if Heidegger is right, there is an ontological necessity for art in the sense developed in this essay. The truth of being, as he will attempt to show, demands that there be art: there must be this sort of primordial leap or *Ursprung*. That distinguishes the genuine artist from the engineer or the farmer, who follow well established paths. But as Heidegger recognizes: our age of the world picture no longer has room for art understood in his sense as an origin. He himself raises the obvious question: "But can art be an origin at all? Where and how does art occur?" (G5, 1/17). Is it really in the nature of great art to be an origin?

To demand originality of the work of art has become a commonplace in aesthetics ever since the romantics. Kant thus demands it of the genius: one cannot learn how to be a genius, he tells us. Great art demands a creative leap that cannot be derived from or justified by what has gone before. Every great work of art is the result of such a leap. But this result must be such that it lets those who come under its spell be carried by it out of their ordinary ways of understanding into another world. What is it that allows others to appreciate the work of the genius? Must it not be some hidden ground in which the creative genius and those who appreciate his work both participate? It is such participation that allows the latter to follow the genius, just as Heidegger had suggested in the *Rectorial Address* that the followers are carried out of their everyday, into a different world, by genuine leaders. Not that Kant attributes to the work of genius a political significance. But there are striking similarities between the genius cult of the romantics and the leader cult of the early twentieth century.

To say that we understand the work of the genius in some sense is not to say that we are able to communicate what we have understood in clear concepts.[14] While there is much that can be said about such a work, it remains a riddle. There are thus no rules to be drawn from the works of genius that will allow others to produce works of equal quality. But a genius can inspire another artist and awaken his genius.

How does what Kant has to tell us about the originality of genius in *The Critique of Judgment* relate to what Heidegger is telling us in "The Origin of the Work of Art"? As we shall see, the *Critique of Judgment* and "The Origin of the Work of Art" illuminate each other in ways that call for a more comprehensive study.

But does the preceding help us to understand Heidegger's claim that works of art and artist exist only because they have their origin in art understood as an origin. Does this not reify art in an indefensible way? How then are we to answer Heidegger's question: "Do works and artists exist only because art exists as their origin?" (G5, 2/18). For the time being, Heidegger leaves the answer open:

> Whatever the decision may be, the question of the origin of the work of art becomes a question about the nature of art. Since the question whether and how art in general exists must still remain open, we shall attempt to discover the nature of art in the place where art undoubtedly prevails in a real way. Art is present in the art work. But what and how is a work of art? (G5, 2/18)

Works of art should provide us with an answer. But what works should we choose? Would the works featured in the most recent Venice biennale be good examples? If so, why? If not, why not? This returns us to the question: what works deserve to be called works of art. As Heidegger points out, we are moving in a circle.

> What art is can be gathered from a comparative examination of actual art works. But how are we to be certain that we are indeed basing such an examination on art works if we do not know beforehand what art is? And the nature of art can no more be arrived at by a derivation from higher concepts than by a collection of characteristics of actual art works. For such a derivation, too, already has in view the characteristics that must suffice to establish that what we take in advance to be an art work is one in fact (G5, 2/18).

Reflections on art cannot avoid this circle.[15] We cannot arrive at a determination of the essence of art from an examination of works of art without already having selected works that we have judged to be art, thus presupposing what we were trying to determine. Nor can we hope to arrive at a determination of the essence of art by deriving it from higher principles, for how would we know that what we have thus derived is indeed art without already knowing what art is?

> Thus we are compelled to follow the circle. This is neither a makeshift nor a defect. To enter upon this path is the strength of thought, to continue on it is the feast of thought, assuming that thinking is a craft. Not only is the main step from work to art as the step from art to work a circle, but every separate step that we attempt circles in that circle (G5, 3/18—translation changed).

To really understand the title of the essay is already to have been cast into this circle.

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "Schöpferische Landschaft: Warum bleiben wir in der Provinz," G13, 9–13.
2. Of special interest in this connection is James Phillips' thoughtful discussion of *Heimat* in *Heidegger's Volk. Between National Socialism and Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). Phillips points out that Heidegger distances himself from all those who, like the Nazis, would apprehend *Heimat* as "a stable and distinct entity" (191). But such distancing is not at all unambiguous. In this connection I would have welcomed more discussion of Heidegger's appropriation of Hölderlin's earth. See Karsten Harries, "Herkunft als Zukunft," *Annäherungen an Martin Heidegger: Festschrift für Hugo Ott zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Hermann Schäfer (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996), 61. Heidegger often celebrates rootedness in ways that invite the Kitsch label or worse. Consider e.g., the way Heidegger concludes his remarkable letter to Victor Schwörer of October 2, 1929, in which he supports a stipend for his assistant Eduard Baumgarten by saying, how now in his new house he rejoices every day about being, with his work, *verwachsen* with his *Heimat*. *Verwachsen* here means "grown into one." But *verwachsen* can also mean malformed: in that letter he had supported the stipend by speaking of the decision "we" face: to either restore to "our *German* spiritual life" "truly earthbound

forces and educators" or "to abandon it definitively to the growing Judaization (*Verjudung*) in the broader and the narrower sense." The letter was published by Ulrich Sieg, "Die Verjudung des deutschen Geistes—Ein unbekannter Brief Heideggers," *Die Zeit* , no. 52, December 22, 1989, 50. See Ralf Rother, *Wie die Entscheidung lesen. Zu Platon, Heidegger und Carl Schmitt* (Berlin: Turia and Kant, 1993), 104–107. Also Phillips, *Heidegger's Volk*, 39.

3. Jürgen Habermas, then still a student, criticized these remarks in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (July 25 1953), deploring Heidegger's willingness to publish them in 1953 without a word about the millions that were to be murdered. See "Zur Veröffentlichung von Vorlesungen aus dem Jahre 1935," in *Philosophisch-Politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 72–81. Also: Christoph Demmerling," Heidegger und die Frankfurter Schule. Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomä (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 361–369.
4. Cf. Phillips, 30.
5. Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1929).
6. Max Scheler, *Philosophische Weltanschauung* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1929).
7. Ludwig Ziegler, *Der europäische Geist*, (Darmstadt: Reichl Verlag,1929).
8. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. and intro. John R. Spencer (New Haven and London: Yale,1956).
9. See "Überwindung der Metaphysik" (G7, 90–96).
10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosphicus* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922), 6.41.
11. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) p. 18.
12. Ibid., 22.
13. Arthur Danto's and George Dickie's institutional theory of art holds that "something is a work of art when decreed to be such by a loose constellation of individuals who are defined by their institutional identities to be within something called 'the art world': curators, art writers, collectors, dealers, and, of course, artists themselves who, for whatever reasons, put forward certain objects as candidates for assessment as works of art." Arthur Danto, *Embodied Meaning* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994), 312.
14. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987) par. 49, 182.
15. On this circle and its antecedents in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* see Jacques Taminiaux, "The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger's Overcoming of Metaphysics," 132–135. Also Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985), 100–108; Hans-Georg Gadamer "Vom Zirkel des Verstehens," *Martin Heidegger zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Günther Neske (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 24–34.

5

Art Work and Thing

1. The Work of Art as a Thing

"The origin of something," Heidegger tells us, "is the source of its nature." How then do we begin our inquiry into the origin of the work of art? The obvious answer: by looking at works of art. And do we not all have some understanding of where to look?

> Works of art are familiar to everyone. Architectural and sculptural works can be installed in public places, in churches, and in dwellings. Art works of the most diverse periods and peoples are housed in collections and exhibitions. If we consider the works in their untouched actuality and do not deceive ourselves, the result is that the works are as naturally present as are things. The picture hangs on the wall like a rifle or a hat. A painting, e.g., the one by Van Gogh that represents a pair of peasant shoes, travels from one exhibition to another. Works of art are shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest. During the First World War Hölderlin's hymns were packed in soldier's knapsacks together with cleaning gear. Beethoven's quartets lie in the storerooms of the publishing house like potatoes in a cellar (G5, 3/18–19).

But Heidegger's claim that, whatever else they are, works of arts are things, raises questions that are discouraged by the seeming confidence with which the propositions above are presented, as if they were so obvious that no doubt were possible. But are they? To be sure, a painting is a thing that can be transported like many other things. But what about a hymn by Hölderlin in some soldier's knapsack? Were that knapsack destroyed by a grenade, would the work of art, i.e. Hölderlin's poem, have been destroyed? That cannot be identified with some particular printed copy! Where then is the poem? Can it even be located in space and time? What allows Heidegger to say so confidently that "All works have this thingly character?" (G3, 5/19). What does this mean in the case of a poem? Analogous questions are raised by Beethoven's quartets, said to lie in some cellar like potatoes. But once again: were these scores to be destroyed, that would not mean that Beethoven quartets were destroyed. But where are they? In the performances? But the quartets do not depend on particular performances: a quartet will be performed and listened to again and again. And even the case of paintings is not as simple as it at first might seem? When I am looking at a reproduction of, say, a painting by van Gogh, am I not looking at the work of art? Or take the case of woodcuts,

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 69–82.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_5,

meant to be issued in multiple exemplars: where here is the work of art? What Heidegger is claiming when he insists that, whatever else it may be, the artwork is a thing is far from obvious. It raises questions not only about the essence of art, but also of things.

Just how important is what Heidegger calls the thingly quality of the work of art? Have Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol,—and in a very different way Walter Benjamin,[1]—not taught us what should have been evident all along: that this thingly quality is inessential? Arthur Danto's discussions of recent art underscore this lesson.[2] So does much recent concept art. To be sure, there is always some thing that mediates the aesthetic experience, even if that experience leaves the mediating thing behind and renders it quite unimportant. And what case can be made for its importance? Had not Kant already called the importance of the thingly character of art into question? For him the aesthetic object is in an important sense not a thing at all. He too recognizes that paintings or works of architecture are things, that for those of us who lack a sufficiently strong imagination, aesthetic experience depends on objects that present themselves to our senses. But a pure aesthetic experience surpasses the material object and leaves it behind. The thing is here like a gate that grants us access to the beautiful forms that are the object of a purely aesthetic and that means for Kant a spiritual understanding. The emphasis on form, which means a devaluation of the sensible and material, is but a corollary of Kant's understanding of aesthetic experience, understood here as first of all the experience of the beautiful. The beautiful Kant defines as the object of a liking that is "devoid of all interest."[3] "Interest" he understands as "the liking we connect with the presentation of an object's existence."[4] Accordingly a pure aesthetic judgment is not interested in the existence of the object, and that means in its thingly character. Given such an understanding of art, the technical reproducibility of works of art should pose no threat to their art character. It also lets us understand why the beauty of the reflection of some arching bridge in the mirror of calm water is not at all diminished by the fact that it is only a reflection and not some thing that could be shipped like a sack of potatoes. Heidegger's insistence on the thingly character of works of art is nor at all unproblematic. It leaves the reader with questions both about the defensibility of the claim and of its importance. Why does Heidegger place so much weight on the thingliness of the work of art?

Heidegger's emphasis on the thing has to call an aesthetic approach such as Kant's into question. To be sure, Heidegger, too, takes it for granted that the work of art is more than just a mere thing. And isn't it obvious that an artwork is a thing that has been made, and made to be more than just another piece of equipment, such as a pair of shoes? A Kantian might want to be more specific: made to be appreciated as an aesthetic object. And should we not focus on this aesthetic aspect of the artwork rather than its thingliness? Heidegger recognizes the force of this question: "Presumably it becomes superfluous and confusing to inquire into this [thingly] feature, since the art work is something

else and above the thingly element. This something else in the work constitutes its artistic nature" (G5, 4/19).

The "presumably" (*vermutlich*) that begins the sentence invites questioning: is the presumption justified? On this "presumed" view something higher is added to something lower. Artwork = (material) thing + (spiritual) aesthetic component. It is the addition of an aesthetic component that makes something a work of art. In the same spirit Nikolaus Pevsner has insisted that it is the addition of an aesthetic component that raises a mere building to the level of a work of art.[5] But such an aesthetic approach is said to obscure the nature of art, which presumably stands in a different relationship to what is here called the thing.

To repeat, Heidegger's emphasis on the thingly character of the artwork invites challenge. That Hegel should have visual art begin with architecture, turn then to sculpture, and finally to painting is significant: this movement represents an ever more resolute devaluation of the materiality of the art work. Kant's understanding of beauty could be cited in support. So could Duchamp's desire "to get away from the physical aspect of painting."[6] Challenging any such account Heidegger reasserts the importance of the thingly element. Not that he wants to reduce the artwork to a mere thing. But he does suggest that, if we are to understand what a work of art is, we must know first what a thing is. Only then can we gain a clearer understanding of just what it is that lets the work of art be more than a mere thing.

But even if we grant Heidegger for the sake of argument that art works are things, even he has to agree that they certainly are things of a particular type, and what matters about them as works of arts would seem to be just this excess that lets them be more than mere things. Works of art, we said, are things + some aesthetic addendum. And Heidegger agrees that this is how works of art have long been understood: as things to which something else has been added that transforms them into works of art:

> The work of art is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than the mere thing itself is, *allo agoreuei*. The work makes public something other than itself. It manifests something other; it is an *allegory*. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring things together is, in Greek, *sumballein*. The work is a *symbol* (G5, 4/19–20).

We may wonder about Heidegger's insistence here on understanding the artistic addendum that makes a thing into a work of art in terms of symbol and allegory and suggest instead that emphasis be placed on beautiful form. But while this raises a question, it does not challenge what here appears as the essential claim: something other and higher is added on to something lower. This offers something like a lens through which to look at the work of art.

That this is not an approach that Heidegger wants to endorse will become clearer as the essay develops. In the second 1935 version of the essay Heidegger had discussed this understanding of the artwork only towards the end, where he calls it both *immer richtig*, "always correct," even as he speaks of it as a *merkwürdiges Verhängnis*, something we are fated to agree with, although it blocks a deeper understanding.[7] "The possibility of understanding the work of art first of all and authentically from its own essence has been surrendered from the very beginning and is not even recognized."[8]

But does Heidegger himself not invite a similar charge when he insists on the thingly character of the work of art? The question is underscored by his rhetorical question: "And is it not this thingly feature in the work that the artist really makes by his handicraft?" (G5, 4/20). But how important is handicraft to art? Must every artist also be a craftsman? Much recent art production certainly suggests a negative answer.

2. What is a Thing?

To understand what a work of art is, Heidegger insists, we have to understand first what a thing is. The questions raised in the preceding section suggest that a consideration of art does not obviously support such insistence. There is something forced and artificial about the way Heidegger leads the discussion away from aesthetics to ontology, from an inquiry into what makes a work of art a work of art to an inquiry into what makes a thing a thing. In the following 15 pages art seems to have been forgotten, as Heidegger turns to a topic that preoccupied him throughout his long career and demanded far more of his time than art ever did. Especially relevant to the thing discussion in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, a lecture course Heidegger gave at just about the same time, in the winter semester 1935/1936, although then the course had the title *Grundfragen der Metaphysik*.[9] This was first of all a course concerned with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. But the first 13 paragraphs, i.e. the first 53 pages, can be read as a greatly expanded version of the thing discussion in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Art is hardly mentioned and not missed in these pages. And just as a discussion of art is not missed in these pages, so the thing discussion in the final version of "The Origin of the Work of Art" is missing and not missed in the first and second drafts of the essay, raising the question just what it contributes to the essay's central argument.

But before we can answer that question we have to address the more fundamental question: what is a thing? It is a strange question, as Heidegger points out in *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, the kind of question about which servant girls laugh, especially when they see the questioner fall into some sort of well, as Thales, often said to have been the first philosopher, is supposed to have done (G41, 3). It is thus a question meant to return us to the very origin of philosophy.

But what is there to ask? Are not things all around us? Do we not just need to look at them to know what a thing is?

> The stone in the road is a thing, as is the clod in the field. A jug is a thing, as is the well beside the road. But what about the milk in the jug and the water in the well? These too are things if the cloud in the sky and the thistle in the field, the leaf in the autumn breeze and the hawk over the wood, are rightly called by the name of thing. All these must indeed be called things, if the name is applied even to that which does not, like those just enumerated, show itself, i.e., that which does not appear. According to Kant, the whole of the world, and even God himself, is a thing of this sort, a thing that does not itself appear, namely, "a thing-in-itself." In the language of philosophy, both things-in-themselves and things that appear, all beings that in any way are, are called things.
>
> Airplanes and radio sets are nowadays among the things that are closest to us, but when we have ultimate things in mind we think of something altogether different. Death and judgment—these are ultimate things. On the whole the word "thing" here designates whatever is not simply nothing. In this sense the work of art is also a thing, so far as it is not simply nothing (G5, 5/ 20).

Yet this all-embracing definition is so broad as to be unilluminating. It certainly does not capture what Heidegger is after. He therefore moves to another use of the word that limits itself to what we can call mere things:

> A man is not a thing. It is true that we speak of a young girl who is faced with a task too difficult for her as being a young thing, still too young for it, but only because we feel that being human is in a certain way missing here and think instead that we have to do here with the factor that constitutes the thingly character of things. We hesitate even to call the deer in the forest clearing, the beetle in the grass, the blade of grass, a thing. We would sooner think of a hammer as a thing, or a shoe, or an ax, or a clock. But even these are not mere things. Only a stone, a clod of earth, a piece of wood, are for us such mere things. Lifeless beings of nature and objects of use, natural things and utensils are the things commonly so called (G5, 6/21).

"Mere" suggest that something has been left out. From the widest definition we have turned to one where thingliness would seem to mean something rather like mute materiality. Emphasizing the thingly element in works of art, Heidegger calls attention to their inescapable materiality. But how does this present itself? We still have not learned what a thing is.

For help we may want to look to the way philosophers have answered this question, a question that is as old as philosophy and helps to characterize its very origin. Heidegger discusses three such answers in some detail.

3. First Inadequate Answer: The Thing as Bearer of Properties

The first understands the thing as a bearer of properties:

> This block of granite, for example, is a mere thing, It is hard, heavy, extended, bulky, shapeless, rough, colored, partly dull, partly shiny. We can take note of all these features of the stone. Thus we acknowledge its characteristics. But still, the traits signify something proper to the stone itself. They are its properties. The thing has them. The thing? What are we thinking of when we now have the thing in mind? Obviously a thing is not merely an aggregate of traits, not an accumulation of properties by which the aggregate arises. A thing as everyone thinks he knows, is that around which the properties have assembled. We speak in this connection of the core of things. The Greeks are supposed to have called it *to hupokeimenon* (GA 5, 7/22–23).

Do we understand what we mean when we call the thing the bearer of properties? In some sense we surely do. Heidegger can even call this the standard interpretation, an interpretation that, like so many others, can be traced back to the Greeks: the "Western interpretation of the Being of beings" is thus said to begin with the appropriation and translation "of Greeks words by Roman-Latin thought: *Hupokeimenon* becomes *subiectum*; *hypostasis* becomes*substantia*; *sumbebekos* becomes *accidens*" (G5, 23). As Heidegger points out, such translation is anything but innocent. Words can seem natural, even obvious, even though they have lost their ground in the experience that they once sought to articulate. The task then becomes that of recovering that ground. In this sense Heidegger remains committed to phenomenology, which also wanted to return to the origin, to the things themselves, which had been covered up by countless interpretations.[10] The translations of Heidegger's German into English support his warning about translation, threatening the generation of a jargon that obscures rather than reveals the matter to be thought.

But is an understanding of the thing as the bearer of properties not supported by the very structure of our language?

> A simple propositional statement consists of the subject, which is the Latin translation, hence already a reinterpretation, of *hupokeimenon* and the predicate, in which the thing's traits are stated of it. Who would have the temerity to assail these simple fundamental relations between thing and statement, between sentence structure and thing-structure? Nevertheless we must ask: Is the structure of a simple propositional statement (the combination of subject and predicate) the mirror image of the structure of the thing (of the union of substance with accidents)? Or could

> it be that even the structure of the thing as thus envisaged is a projection of the framework of the sentence? (G5, 8/23–24).

How are we to understand this strange parallel between ontology and grammar, reality and language? Which is more fundamental? And how are such questions of priority to be decided? Many philosophers today want to make language constitutive of things. Heidegger, too, has often been read in this way and been claimed for a transcendental understanding of language. Has he not called language the house of Being? In fact he calls such an approach into question:

> What could be more obvious than that man transposes his propositional way of understanding things into the structure of the thing itself? Yet this view, seemingly critical yet actually rash and ill-considered, would have to explain first how such a transposition of propositional structure into the thing is supposed to be possible without the thing having already become visible. The question which comes first and functions as the standard, proposition structure or thing-structure remains to this hour undecided. It even remains doubtful whether in this form the question is at all decidable (G5, 8–9 24).

Responsible speech has to respond to things. That seems obvious enough. But can there be an experience of things without language? Related is another question: must responsible art respond in some sense to things? Do we perhaps distort the essence of art when we seek its origin in the creative subject?

Bracketing such issues for the time being, let us return to the question at hand: does an understanding of the thing as the bearer of properties capture its thingly character? Take the proposition "this rose is red." Consider the corresponding experience of a red rose. The proposition translates the thing into a conceptual framework. What does such translation do to its thingly character? That there is a problem here is suggested by Descartes who in the *Meditations* discusses a piece of wax in a passage that Heidegger must have been thinking of when describing his block of granite. Descartes notes how when heated all the properties of the wax change: in the beginning "it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey which it contains; it still retains somewhat of the odour of the flowers from which it has been culled; its colour, its figure, its size are apparent; it is hard, cold, easily handled, and if you strike it with a finger, it will emit a sound." All this changes when it is brought to the fire: "what remained of the taste is exhaled, the smell evaporates, the colour alters, the figure is destroyed, the size increases, it becomes liquid, it heats, scarcely can one handle it, and when one strikes it, no sound is emitted." And yet, Descartes observes, "the same wax remains." We are still dealing with the same thing. What is essential has been preserved. But where do we find that essence? "Certainly nothing remains excepting a certain extended thing

which is flexible and movable."[11] And this, Descartes points out, cannot be seen or touched. "But what must particularly be observed is that its perception is neither an act of vision, nor of touch, nor of imagination, and has never been such, although it may have appeared formerly to be so, but only an intuition of the mind, which may be imperfect and confused, as it was formerly, or clear and distinct as it is at present, according as my attention is more or less directed at the elements which are found in it, and of which it is composed."[12] The wax that remains the same in this process cannot be sensed or even imagined, Descartes insists; it can be grasped only by the mind. Has the mind here grasped the thing in its thingliness? Descartes' determination of the wax as "a certain extended thing" makes us wonder? The meaning of "thing" is presupposed, but remains elusive. And that such elusiveness is inseparably bound up with the thingliness or substantiality of things is reiterated by Descartes in the *Principles*, when he calls created things "substances which need only the concurrence of God to exist" and adds "But yet substance cannot be discovered from the fact that it is a thing that exists, for that fact alone is not observed by us. We may, however, easily discover it by means of any of its attributes because it is a common notion that nothing is possessed of no attributes, properties, or qualities. For this reason, when we perceive any attribute, we therefore conclude that some existing thing or substance to which it may be attributed, is necessarily present."[13] This suggests that the thingliness of the thing is not perceived at all, but something spiritual, arrived at by a conclusion supported by the common notion that attributes presuppose something that possesses them.

The common notion invoked by Descartes is anything but clear and distinct: it is the sediment of a way of speaking and thinking that has come to be so much taken for granted that we think it unnecessary to inquire into what experience might ground it. Heidegger would have us recover a more original understanding of reality and he looks to art to help us to such an understanding. But why art? Just what is at stake here? Presumably more than a philosophical puzzle that troubled already Descartes. What do we have to learn from Heidegger's ruminations on the essentially elusive thingliness of things? And what does this ontological detour have to contribute to our understanding of art?

Heidegger concludes his consideration of this first understanding of what a thing is by suggesting that violence has here been done to the thing: "To be sure, the current thing concept always fits each thing. Nevertheless it does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it" (G5, 10/25). The thing, as we have seen, is volatilized, spiritualized, lost. Can we avoid that assault and let the thingly character of the thing display itself more directly?

4. Second Inadequate Answer: The Thing as Object of Perception

This question is addressed by the second interpretation: Can we not surrender ourselves to the unmediated presencing of things, attend to the way they move us quite literally bodily, are conveyed to us through our senses? Did Descartes not have good reason to suggest that whenever we perceive any attribute, the thing is somehow present, even if it has no place in the space of attributes or properties? This leads to the second answer to the question: what is a thing?

> The thing is the *aistheton*, that which is perceptible by sensations in the senses belonging to sensibility. Hence the concept later becomes a commonplace according to which a thing is nothing but the unity of the manifold of what is given in the senses. Whether this unity is conceived as sum or as totality or as form alters nothing in the standard character of this thing-concept (G5, 10/ 25).

We have arrived at another familiar understanding of the thing. But again the thingliness of the thing proves elusive. It is said to be nothing but "the unity of the manifold of what is given in the senses," but how is that unity that gathers a throng of sensations into a whole grasped? The key to the thingliness of the thing would seem to reside in this gathering power. But how is this to be understood? Does it belong to the perceiver or to the perceived? This mysterious power proves as elusive as Descartes' understanding of substance.

There is another difficulty with this attempt to come closer to the thing:

> We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises, in the appearance of things—as this thing-concept alleges; rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-motored plane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e., listen abstractly (G5, 10/26).

By insisting on the primacy of unmediated perception the second thing-concept brings things so close to us as to make them vanish. Philosophy here, too, loses sight of the way things present themselves to us first of all and most of the time. We should note that just as there has been a tendency in modern art to move away from the physical to the spiritual, so there has been the seemingly opposite tendency to reduce the work of art to the *aistheton*, raising the question of just what it was that made this pursuit of pure perception seem important.

5. Third Inadequate Answer: The Thing as Formed Matter

The third interpretation, too, is familiar. It understands the thing as formed matter, where now it is the matter or *hule* that is identified with the thingly character of the thing. It is the substrate that supports the form or *morphe*.[14] "The distinction of matter and form is *the conceptual schema which is used, in the greatest variety of ways, quite generally for all art theory and aesthetics*" (G5, 12/27). Works of art have long been discussed as formed matter. Indeed, this fits all humanly produced work so well that we begin to wonder whether we have not illegitimately read the essence of what we are able to produce into the essence of things. How adequate is the matter-form distinction? "Form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything may be subsumed. And if form is correlated with the rational and matter with the irrational; if the rational is taken to be the logical and the irrational the alogical; if in addition the subject-object relation is coupled with the conceptual pair form-matter; then representation has at its command a conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding" (G5, 12/27). But once again such seeming obviousness invites questioning: "Where does the matter-form structure have its origin—in the thingly character of the thing or in the workly character of the art work?" (G5, 12–13/28).

To approach this question Heidegger contrasts two things, the already familiar block of granite and a piece of equipment.

> The self-contained block of granite is something material in a definite if unshapely form. Form means here the distribution and arrangement of the material parts in spatial locations, resulting in a particular shape, namely that of a block. But a jug, an ax, a shoe are also matter occurring in a form. Form as shape is not the consequence here of a prior distribution of the matter. The form, on the contrary, determines the arrangement of the matter. Even more, it prescribes in each case the kind and selection of the matter—impermeable for a jug, sufficiently hard for an ax, firm yet flexible for shoes. The interfusion of form and matter prevailing here is, moreover, controlled beforehand by the purposes served by jug, ax, or pair of shoes (G5, 13/28).

Does the form matter distinction operate the same way in the two cases? Does it seem more obvious in one than in the other? It would indeed seem that the understanding of things as formed matter is read off human artifacts, of a jug for example, or any other piece of equipment.

It is in light of the equipment paradigm that Heidegger proceeds with his discussion.

> The matter-form structure, however, by which the being of a piece of equipment is first determined, readily presents itself as the immediately

> intelligible constitution of every entity, because here man himself as maker participates in the way in which the piece of equipment comes into being. Because equipment takes an intermediate place between mere thing and work, the suggestion is that nonequipmental beings—things and works and ultimately everything that is—are to be comprehended with the help of the being of equipment (the matter-form structure) (G5, 14/29).

Something like the priority of equipment had indeed been recognized by Descartes in the already cited passage from the *Discourse on Method*, where he claims that his principles had opened up the possibility of finding a—

> practical philosophy by means of which, knowing the force and the action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens, and all other bodies that environ us, as distinctly as we know the different crafts of our artisans, we can in the same way employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.[15]

We understand things distinctly to the extent that we can make them.

And is it not precisely this ability to make things that makes us godlike? Is not God said to have created the world and us in his image? The interpretation of all things in the image of things we are able to make received thus additional support from the Biblical interpretation of God as the master craftsman, which allows every thing other than God to be understood as an *ens creatum*. Every created thing is the work of the divine artificer, in this sense an artifact.

This interpretation was transposed into a different, more epistemological key when modern philosophy made the knower into a kind of maker. Kant provides the most obvious example: the knower imposes on the material provided by sensibility the form of his concepts and thus constitutes the phenomena that make up the world. The difficulty of being a phenomenologist here announces itself. At first it seems so easy: leave behind your preconceptions, open yourself to the phenomenon in question. But just this proves difficult and, Heidegger suggests, the source of this difficulty lies not just on our side, but has to do with what we are investigating.

Has this third paradigm brought us closer to the thingly character of the thing? Or have we once again done violence to the thing? Does equipment provide us with the Ariadne's thread that will lead us first to the thingliness of the thing and then perhaps to the essence of the work of art?

6. Looking to a Work of Art for an Answer

We looked to the history of philosophy for an answer to the question: what is a thing? But this look raised the suspicion that instead of leading us to a more thoughtful appreciation of the thingliness of the thing, it let us become

entangled in prejudices of different kinds. As Heidegger warns us in the later "Building, Dwelling, Thinking": "Our thinking has of course long been accustomed to understate the nature of the thing. The consequence, in the course of Western thought, has been that the thing is represented as an unknown X to which perceptible properties are attached. From this point of view, everything that already belongs to the gathering nature of this thing does, of course, appear as something afterwards read into it" (G7, 155/153). "Understate" here translates "zu dürftig ansetzen." The German suggests that philosophy has gotten used to working with resources that are insufficient, that cannot do justice to the being of the thing. The task is to gain a freer, more adequate access to things, more responsive to the gathering power that lets a thing be a thing. The questioning exploration of three traditional approaches to the problem represents a first step. By calling into question what philosophers have too often taken for granted, it opens a way to what in "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" is called "the gathering nature" of the thing, a nature understood only inadequately when a philosopher speaks of the unity that gathers a throng of sensations into a whole. To understand that nature we may not allow our thinking to remain imprisoned by what philosophers like Descartes have thought. Consider once more his example of the wax. It was preceded by radical doubt that left Descartes only with the one certainty, that he, the thinker, existed. The individual engaged in a world, of which he or she is a part, is transformed into a thinking subject, rather like Kant's disinterested aesthetic subject. To that transformation corresponds the transformation of things that first of all engage our interest in some way or other into objects, things possessing certain properties, or a certain form. But does such a transformation give us access to the thingliness of the thing?

Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger had raised this question: We speak of things and mean first of all things like Descartes' piece of wax, things that are, as Heidegger puts it, present-at-hand. "When analysis starts with such entities and goes on to inquire about Being, what it meets is Thinghood and Reality. Ontological explication discovers, as it proceeds, such characteristics of Being as substantiality, materiality, extendedness, side-by-side-ness, and so forth" (G2, 91/68). How different is our everyday experience of things—Heidegger mentions "equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement" (G2/92/68). Such things always already have some meaning, are good for something or perhaps in our way. Equipment does seem to provide a natural starting point for an inquiry into the thingly character of the thing. In "The Origin of the Work" Heidegger thus decides to follows, at least provisionally, this clue provided by *Being and Time*.[16]

But just what is the essence of equipment? The answer should be easy.

> We choose as example a common sort of equipment—a pair of peasant shoes. We do not even need to exhibit actual pieces of this sort of useful article in order to describe them. Everyone is acquainted with them. But since it is a matter here of direct description, it may be well to facilitate the

> visual realization of them. For this purpose a pictorial representation will do. We shall choose a well-known painting by Van Gogh, who painted such shoes several times, (G5, 18/32–33)

This move to the painting seems a sleight of hand. Why does the speaker not simply take off or point to his own shoes? Faced with a different audience Heidegger did in fact point to the skis he had used to get to his lecture to make what would seem to be essentially the same point. Why now turn to a work of art? Could it be that in this age of the world picture art is able to open windows to the thingly character of things in a way denied to common sense, denied also to philosophy, windows to a reality concealed by what we usually take reality to mean and that is yet a presupposition of living a meaningful life?

Notes

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217–251.
2. Arthur C. Danto, *Encounters and Reflections. Art in the Historical Present* (Noonday Press, Farrar Straus Giroux: New York, 1990); *Embodied Meaning* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1994); *After the End of Art. Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, par. 5, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), 53.
4. Ibid., par. 2, 45.
5. Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 23.
6. Marcel Duchamp, "Painting . . . at the Service of the Mind," in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, comp. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 393–394.
7. Martin Heidegger, *De l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art*. Première version (1935), Texte allemand inédit et traduction française par Emmanuel Martineau (Paris: Authentica, 1987), 52 (This is actually the second version.) The implied critique of Aristotle is pointed out by Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 136–137.
8. *De l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art*. 52.
9. Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach dem Ding. Zu Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen,* G41. See also Karsten Harries, "Unterwegs zum Geviert," *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomae (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 290–302. Especially the first part of that essay traces the evolution of Heidegger's thinking of the thing.
10. See Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 23–26.
11. René Descartes, *Meditation II, The Philosophical Works*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), vol. I, 154.
12. Ibid., 155.
13. René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy,* Part I, LII. *The Philosophical Works*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), vol. I, 240.
14. Cf. Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art*, 30.

15. René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, V, *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, 2 vols., trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), vol. I, 119.
16. The debt Heidegger's analysis of the ready-to hand owes to Aristotle has often been noted. See the helpful discussion in Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art*, 47–77.

6

A Pair of Shoes

1. Peasant Shoes

Heidegger insists on the seemingly obvious when he remarks that whatever else a work of art may be, it is a thing. To be sure, it is not just that: it is a thing that has been made, a work, and not just a work, but one that in a distinctive way points beyond itself. Traditionally the work of art has thus been understood as an allegory or a symbol. But whatever else it may be, the work of art is also, Heidegger here insists, a thing: work of art = thing + artistic addendum, however that is to be understood. With reference to Kant, I pointed out that such insistence on the thingly character of the work of art is not at all as unproblematic as Heidegger here seems to take it. Heidegger's turn to the thing demands thoughtful questioning.

Following the observation or claim that whatever else it may be, a work of art is certainly a thing, Heidegger raises the question: what is a thing? But that discussion, it turns out, never really gets off the ground. In his search for the essence of the thing Heidegger reviews three different traditional interpretations. But all of these turn out to be inadequate. None of them capture what Heidegger calls the thingliness of the thing.

Of these three inadequate interpretations, the third is nevertheless accorded a certain privilege. This interpretation takes its cues from a particular type of thing, from a piece of equipment, say a jug or a pair of shoes. It is on this paradigm that the traditional analysis of the thing in terms of matter and form is said to be based.

In search of the thingliness of the thing Heidegger thus continues his ontological detour in apparently good phenomenological fashion by wanting to "simply describe some equipment without any philosophical theory" (G5, 17–18/ 32). And so he chooses "as example a common sort of equipment—a pair of peasant shoes," where we should remember that the point of phenomenology is not to describe some particular entity in its particularity, but to reveal the being of that entity, not some particular piece of equipment, but equipmentality. What is called for is thus a repetition of the kind of analysis he had already provided in *Being and Time*.

But why a pair of peasant shoes? Why not something that speaks more of the world in which we today live? An airplane or a radio, today a computer, might serve the discussion better! To be sure, the example chosen by Heidegger was timely: the critique of the metropolis and its rootless existence, the celebration of peasant life, were very much in the air and helped shape the art and the intellectual climate of the thirties. Heidegger, too, as we have seen, liked to think of himself as someone out of place in metropolitan Berlin, at

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 83–94.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_6,

home with peasants, in the province.[1] Already in 1923 he wrote his student Karl Löwith: "For years a saying of van Gogh's has obsessed me: 'I feel with all my power that the history of man is like that of wheat: if one is not planted in the earth to flourish, come what may, one will be ground up for bread. Woe to him who is not pulverized.' "[2] In the painter's letters to his brother Theo Heidegger seemed to encounter a kindred soul: "When I say that I am a painter of peasants, that is indeed so and you will get a better idea from what follows that it is there that I feel in my element."[3] Deluding himself, Heidegger said of his own philosophical work that it was *of the same kind* as that of the peasant who prepares the shingles for the roof of his house (G13, 10).

2. A Willful Interpretation?

It is therefore not surprising that to "facilitate the visual realization" Heidegger should have invoked a "well-known painting by van Gogh," who, he reminds us, "painted such shoes several times," as if to tell us how unimportant this particular work of art is, given the use to which it is to be put in his essay: to help us understand the true being, not of art, but of equipment. "From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong—only an undefined space. There are not even clods of soil from the field or the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use" (G5, 18/33). Heidegger was to add in the Reclam edition that the painting does not even allow us to determine "to whom they belong" (G5, 18), calling his own subsequent discussion of the owner into question. We are indeed struck by the contrast between how little the painting has to tell us about these shoes and how much the philosopher has to say about them. But is he really trying to describe the painting? What matters seems to be something else: a certain mood into which Heidegger was put by what he saw, which, in a way not free from nostalgia, generated images suggesting a life very different from life in the modern world. His words seek to communicate something of that mood and that way of life.

But why a painting? And why this painting?[4] Heidegger appears to have a ready answer, an answer that suggests that the choice of this particular painting is not all that significant: "We are so familiar with these things that we do not even need to produce the shoes. A picture will do." Heidegger speaks of "a picture," not of this particular picture. We are indeed so familiar with such things as shoes that there seems little need even for a picture. In fact, instead of helping us to a better understanding of the being of equipment, what Heidegger had to say about the painting draws attention to itself in a way that threatens to derail the smooth progress of the philosophical discussion. Or is such derailment the point of Heidegger's turn to van Gogh's shoes? Do we have here a clue to the relationship in which art should stand to everyday life:

to derail us in order to make the being of things more visible? To recall us to that earth on which we stand and on which we walk with our shoes? To make us more thoughtful about what it means to dwell on the earth?

But once more: why turn to this particular painting? If a picture is wanted, why choose a painting that draws attention first of all to itself, to the way this particular painter put paint on canvas, expressed himself in his handling of paint? Does Heidegger not himself call attention to the self-sufficiency of the work of art, which is not respected when it is used *en passant* to illustrate a philosophical point, which, it seems, could have been made quite well without appealing to a work of art at all?[5] Why did Heidegger not choose a photograph showing some quite ordinary shoes, perhaps his own? Or better yet: why not just point to an actual pair of shoes?

Why this artist and this painting? Was the audience even sufficiently familiar with the work to visualize it? Did Heidegger bring in a reproduction to help his listeners? One would assume not. And, as already suggested, somehow this does not seem necessary, might even have made them less attentive to what the philosopher had to say. Certainly in the essay the work of art, although referred to and discussed, remains strangely absent, somewhat in the way the thing itself remained absent from the philosophical interpretations considered earlier. And it is of interest that in the first and second versions of the essay neither the thing discussion nor the painting by van Gogh figured at all. What contribution does it make to the argument of the essay?

The painting is not even clearly identified. From Meyer Schapiro we learn that van Gogh painted such shoes eight times, three of which might be the painting Heidegger had in mind.[6] To an inquiry by the art historian Heidegger responded that he had in mind a painting he saw in Amsterdam in March 1930. This allowed Schapiro to identify the painting and the owner of the shoes, at least to his own satisfaction: they are the artist's own, neither a woman's, nor a peasant's. Jacques Derrida and Joseph Kockelmans have called both this identification and Shapiro's mode of argumentation into question. Derrida does so in 125 playfully rambling pages that place an emphasis on the controversy that raises some interesting questions, but uses it as an occasion to spin out his own thought-provoking ruminations on the relationship of painting and truth. Little light is cast on Heidegger's essay.[7] Kockelmans admits that Heidegger probably did have this painting in mind, although he suggests two other possible candidates. More importantly he rightly emphasizes that, as Derrida too recognizes, Heidegger does not attempt to give a description of a pair of shoes, that Schapiro failed to consider Heidegger's discussion of the painting in the context of the essay, that Heidegger's main goal here was to deepen our understanding of the being of equipment.[8] Indeed: the whole controversy about which van Gogh painting Heidegger had in mind seems only tangentially related to what matters in this essay. But this leaves us with the question: if so, why did Heidegger invoke the painting at all? Did it provide him with more than a rhetorical dress for thoughts that can readily dispense with such packaging? Günter Seubold thus asks, what did the painting of the shoes

allow Heidegger to experience that he could not have experienced looking at a real pair of shoes? and answers: nothing.[9] And why did he attribute the shoes to a woman? A peasant woman?

3. Seeing a World in a Pair of Shoes

What does Heidegger "see" in the picture? A great deal; we may well think far too much:

> From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth**,** and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself (G5, 2/34).

For the first time in the essay Heidegger speaks here of the opposition of earth and world, which indebted to Hölderlin, figured importantly already in the first and second versions of the essay and continued to retain its significance in his subsequent work. The introduction of the earth into his discussion of the thingliness of the thing represents an important step beyond *Being and Time*.[10] We should note that the earth is described here as calling, calling in silence, language that recalls what in *Being and Time* was said about the silent call of conscience. But in the silent call of conscience Dasein was said to call itself back to itself. What calls in the silent call of the earth is not the self, but what in the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger had called "the people's earth- and blood-bound strengths." Authentic dwelling responds to this silent call. The shoes are said to belong to the earth and to be protected in the world, where we should also note the many ways in which time is present in Heidegger's description. The peasant woman is thus said to live her life between birth and death. What Heidegger here has to say recalls not only what Heidegger had to say about death in *Being and Time*, but also Rilke's way with words.

How does Heidegger's evocative description of the shoes in van Gogh's painting relate to the way shoes actually serve their wearers? Just this generally taken for granted service is absent from the shoes in the painting. Their conspicuousness contrasts with the inconspicuousness of what we just wear.

How different would have been the relationship of Heidegger's peasant woman to her shoes from that of the artist to the shoes he painted or from that of the philosopher to the remembered shoes in van Gogh's painting. There is, to be sure, a sense in which she knows her shoes, knows them intimately, but knowing here means first of all knowing how to use them. Such knowledge is wordless and very distant from the painter's understanding and from the philosopher's reflections. Heidegger himself calls our attention to this distance and the difference between real shoes and the shoes in the painting. The latter cannot be worn. And what Heidegger discovers in these shoes, a disclosure of the being of equipment, did not concern the peasant woman at all. And so Heidegger himself remarks: "But perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes" (G5, 19/34). The German, *Aber all dieses sehen wir vielleicht nur dem Schuhzeug im Bilde an* seems to me to raise even more strongly the possibility that we, i.e. Heidegger, may be reading all this into the picture.

The following lines underscore the distance between the shoes in the painting described by the philosopher and the shoes worn by the peasant woman.

> The peasant woman, on the other hand, simply wears them. If only this simple wearing were so simple. When she takes off her shoes late in the evening, in deep but healthy fatigue, and reaches out for them again in the still dim dawn, or passes them by on the day of rest, she knows all this without noticing or reflecting. The equipmental quality of the equipment consists indeed in its usefulness. But this usefulness itself rests in the abundance of an essential being of the equipment. We call it reliability (*Verläßlichkeit*) (G5, 19/34).

When shoes really function, e.g., when the peasant woman trudges through the field, she is hardly aware of them. Their very proximity brings with it a certain blindness. And that is indeed how equipment usually serves us. Thoughts of the equipmentality of equipment are very distant. Shoes thus may call themselves to our attention only when something goes wrong, say when a heel falls off or when people stare at our shoes because they are so extravagant. Openness to the being of equipment requires an even more radical distancing from the way we ordinarily use it. It calls for a different kind of sight. An artwork can become the vehicle of such a leavetaking from the everyday that let's us attend to what usually does not seem to matter at all.

4. The Being of Equipment

One thing the painting is supposed to show us is that we do not do justice to equipment when we understand it only in terms of what Heidegger calls its "blank usefulness." Such usefulness may give us the "impression that the origin

of equipment lies in a mere fabricating that impresses a form upon some matter. (We might want to give a similar account of the origin of art.) Nevertheless in its genuinely equipmental being, equipment stems from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction have a deeper origin" (G5, 20/35).

That equipment cannot be reduced to matter given a certain form is obvious: such a reduction elides the meaning of equipment. To understand that meaning we have to understand the activity equipment serves and beyond that a way of life. Instead of a way of life we can also speak of a way of being in the world or a way of dwelling. Such a way of dwelling is presupposed by what Heidegger calls reliability: "Only in this reliability do we discern what equipment in truth is" (G5, 20/35).

> By virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is made privy to the silent call of the earth; by virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is sure of her world. World and earth exist for her, and for those who are with her in her mode of being, only thus—in the equipment. We say "only" and therewith fall into error; for the reliability of equipment first gives to the simple world its security and assures to the earth the freedom of its steady thrust (*ständiger Andrang*) (G5, 19–20/34).

Heidegger knows that the sheltering world of his peasant woman is not our own. What he here calls reliability would hardly seem to describe our modern world. Does that world still "assure to the earth the freedom of its steady thrust"? Heidegger himself speaks of the wasting away of equipmentality, its sinking into mere stuff. "In such wasting reliability vanishes. This dwindling, however, to which use-things owe their boringly obtrusive usualness, is only one more testimony to the original nature of equipmental being. The worn-out usualness of the equipment then obtrudes itself as the sole mode of being, apparently peculiar to it exclusively. Only blank usefulness now remains visible" (G5, 20/ 35). Not that we should blame ourselves for such wasting and vanishing. It is our fate to have been born into the age of the world picture. Into this age works of art like the painting by van Gogh carry the trace of what has been lost.

We have been trying to understand the being of equipment. But have we not learned something about art: that it has the power to recall us to what is essential, if often not attended to, to the being of things, in this case a pair of shoes?

> The equipmental quality of equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description and explanation of a pair of shoes actually present; not by a report about the process of making shoes; and also not by the observation of the actual use of shoes occurring here and there; but only by bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be (G5, 20–21/35).

Not that Heidegger brought his audience literally before the painting. Lecturing, he only invited those who listened to his words to imagine a painting by van Gogh, showing a pair of shoes, to put themselves in the position of someone looking at the painting. Did it matter whether those who heard him had actually seen the painting and had a clear image of what he was talking about? To accept the invitation, in their imagination at least, they had to transport themselves out of their everyday. Entering the vicinity of art, if only in thought, we get a glimpse of what Heidegger had called the "deeper origin" of matter and form and their distinction, as important to an understanding of art as to an understanding of the being of things (GA5, 20/35).

5. A "Happening of Truth"?

"We allowed a work to tell us what equipment is. By this means, almost clandestinely (*gleichsam unter der Hand*) it came to light what is at work in the work: the disclosure of the particular being in its being, the happening of truth" (G5, 23–24/38).

Gleichsam unter der Hand: with these words Heidegger likens his procedure to that of a magician, his use of the painting to a trick that depends on the observer not noticing what goes on *unter der Hand*. But what did go on? A poetic reflection occasioned by a remembered painting took the place of a phenomenological description. But is it perhaps the very inability of phenomenological description to adequately exhibit the being of things that necessitates this turn to this quasi-poetic evocation? That the painting by van Gogh remains absent in this essay is striking; but how does this matter? Would an illustration of the painting Heidegger must have been thinking of help us understand the essay better? Or would it only distract us? Instead of the painting we get Heidegger's description of what he remembers, accompanied by this claim, a claim that has to call itself into question:

> It would be the worst self-deception to think that our description, as subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into the painting. If anything is questionable here, it is rather that we experienced too little in the neighborhood of the work and that we expressed the experience too crudely and too literally. But above all, the work did not, as it might seem at first, serve merely for a better visualization of what a piece of equipment is. Rather the equipmentality of equipment first genuinely arrives at its appearance through the work and only in the work (GA5, 21/35–36).

The last sentence demands special attention. It claims that the equipmentality of equipment did not arrive at its appearance in the peasant woman's wordless knowledge of her shoes. She was too secure and embedded in

her world for her shoes to yield such an appearance. Their very reliability precluded it. To bring the being of equipment to appearance requires something akin to what has been called aesthetic distance.

The progress of Heidegger's philosophical thought makes it difficult to take his claim that "It would be the worst self-deception to think that our description, as subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into the painting" at face value. Was the painting, was this detour in the essay, really needed for an account of the being of equipment that has its place between the analysis of the thing found in *Being and Time*, where equipment is said to give us access to things as they are "in themselves," and the late Heidegger's analysis of the thing in terms of the fourfold of heaven and earth, mortals and divinities?[11] Meyer Schapiro seems more nearly right when he writes,

> Alas for him, the philosopher has indeed deceived himself. He has retained from his encounter with van Gogh's canvas a moving set of associations with peasants and the soil which are not sustained by the picture itself, but are grounded rather in his own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and the earthly. He has indeed "imagined everything and projected it into the painting." He has experienced both too little and too much in his contact with the work.[12]

It is difficult to disagree with Schapiro. But we should also ask what understanding of properly experiencing a painting is presupposed when Schapiro uses the phrase "too little and too much." Faithful description of the painting or of the painter's intention was not Heidegger's goal, as he makes clear when he himself points out that from the painting we cannot even tell the identity of the wearer (G5, 18).

But what was his goal? Heidegger himself says that he experienced "too little in the neighborhood of the work" and "expressed the experience too crudely and too literally." But should we understand "in the neighborhood of the work" (*in der Nähe des Werkes*) to mean "standing before it?" Heidegger would seem to be thinking not of a literal, but a spiritual proximity. And we should note that what Heidegger claims to have expressed here is not so much the painting as what he experienced in the neighborhood of the work: the being of equipment: "The art work let us know what shoes are in truth" (G5, 21/35).

In the epilogue to the essay Heidegger will wonder whether experience is not perhaps "the element in which art dies" (G5, 67/79) and we may wonder whether Heidegger's experience here does not allow this particular painting to die, if only in this essay. This death, we can add, would be quite in keeping with Hegel's thesis of the end of art: here thought and reflection have indeed taken their flight above fine art.

But granting that Heidegger is substituting for the actual painting an experience or dream he had in the neighborhood of the painting, what was he dreaming of? Heidegger must have known that the world of the peasant woman

that the painting conjured up for him is a world that may still call us, but one to which neither he nor van Gogh, despite their claims to kinship, belong, or could ever have belonged. To insist that the painting reveals to us the true being of equipment, even if this is a truth denied to us by our modern world, is to call us to a home somewhere beyond our world.

Heidegger does claim that it is the painting that speaks to us. But what really speaks to us in this essay would seem to be a poetic meditation occasioned by the remembered painting. Doubly removed from the actual shoes, Heidegger's words invite comparison with Plato's—a critique Heidegger strangely inverts—even as they recall what he had to say about the rootlessness of Western thought that is said to begin with the translation of Greek words into Latin, *without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say* (G5, 8/23). Here, too, the translation claims to preserve what is essential. But the translation is no longer supported by the original experience, makes that lack of support conspicuous by its choice of words, which opens up an abyss between the philosopher's words and the picture, and again between the picture and what it pictures. But we can say this much: if only in thought, in the neighborhood of the painting Heidegger found himself transported out of his modern everyday into the vicinity of another, more archaic world, one that he considered more authentic, closer to the origin.

Heidegger himself appeals to the shoes to gain access to the "deeper origin" of the matter-form distinction (G5, 20/35). How are we to understand this "deeper"? Where does this depth find its measure? Is Heidegger claiming that in this age of the world picture we are denied access to what he terms "genuine equipmental being," denied a sheltering world, prevented from hearing the call of the earth? But if this should indeed be the case, would that not mean that adequate access to the thingly character of things is also denied to us, no matter how strenuous our effort to think it? Not that this would be something for which we could be blamed. Is it not our fate to have been born into this age of the world picture, to be ruled by its reality principle?

And yet that rule cannot be total. Were it total, Heidegger could not struggle to open windows or doors to something more primordial, more original, that lies beyond our modern world. For support in this struggle he looks to art, here to a painting by van Gogh.[13]

6. Beauty and Truth

The painting is said to have given us insight into the being of equipment. But, if so, have we not learned something about the essence of art: "Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth" (G5, 21/36). Truth here names the unconcealedness of beings in their being. This is what the Greeks are said to have called *aletheia*. Works of art can show us that *Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness* (G5, 43/56).

There is a sense in which Heidegger here returns to what would seem to be an old understanding of beauty, easily related to the Platonic understanding of beauty as the epiphany of the forms, i.e. of true being, but also to Aristotle's understanding of poetry as more philosophical than history, and to the medievals, who, understood beauty as *splendor formae*: as the becoming visible of the form. Such insistence on a link between beauty and truth challenges the separation of the two that helps to define the aesthetic approach, even as it challenges an understanding of truth as the correspondence of our propositions or thoughts to the facts. Judged as a representation of an actual pair of shoes the painting by van Gogh is less successful than a photograph. But what it reveals, according to Heidegger, is the being of the shoes, and their being is communicated, not by a faithful representation of what these shoes in fact are, but by the ability of the painting, or rather, of what Heidegger has to say about it, to put us in a certain mood, to let us participate in a certain way of standing in the world. In this way we are made more aware of the painter's, Heidegger's, and our own ambiguous relationship to an obscured more original dwelling, figured in Heidegger's account by the peasant-woman.

It is in this sense that truth is said to be established by a poem such as Hölderlin's *The Rhine*, briefly mentioned by Heidegger in this connection (G5, 22/37). In a lecture course, he had just offered a detailed interpretation of that hymn as a projection of Being, whose challenge Germans still needed to confront (GA 39). "The Origin of the Work of Art" concludes by returning to the challenge presented by Hölderlin.

Given the importance of Hölderlin and of this particular hymn for Heidegger, it may seem surprising that in this essay he only refers to it in passing to remind us that the success of a poem such as this has nothing to do with the poet's ability to represent the Rhine river in words.

Following this reminder he goes on to quote in its entirety a short poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, which, he suggests, at first glance might seem to lend support to the claim that the artwork is a copy, and yet is an example of "truth put into the work."

Der römische Brunnen
Aufsteigt der Strahl und fallend gießt
Er voll der Marmorschale Rund,
Die, sich verschleiernd, überfließt
In einer zweiten Schale Grund;
Die zweite gibt, sie wird zu reich,
Der dritten wallend ihre Flut,
Und jede nimmt und gibt zugleich
Und strömt und ruht.

Roman Fountain
The jet ascends and falling fills
The marble basin circling round;
This, veiling itself over, spills

Into a second basin's ground.
The second in such plenty lives,
Its bubbling flood a third invests,
And each at once receives and gives
And streams and rests (G5, 23/37).

Why did Heidegger choose this poem as an example of truth put into work? Does it matter that this is the only work of art that is fully present in the essay? That he has little to say about the poem, much less certainly than about the van Gogh painting, which remains so obviously absent? In just what sense is truth being set into this work? We shall have to return to these questions.

Where has our ontological detour, first to the thing, then to equipment gotten us? Our attempt to understand the work of art as a thing with something extra added that makes it into a work of art, i.e. as a made thing, an artifact, but with the specific purpose to be appreciated for its own sake, as a "self-sufficient presence" (GA2, 14/29) has failed. If we are to understand the thingly being of the work of art, we have to begin, not with the thing, but with art.

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "Schöpferische Landschaft: Warum bleiben wir in der Provinz," G13, 9–13.
2. Karl Löwith, "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism," *New German Critique*, no. 445 (Fall 1988), 119.
3. Cited in Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian MacLeod (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 367–368.
4. Julian Young, in *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), considers Heidegger's "reverie on Van Gogh's painting of shoes," while a testament to Heidegger's early love of Van Gogh," "almost totally irrelevant to, indeed, as we shall see inconsistent with, the real thrust of the essay" (5, cf. 22). The inconsistency Young has in mind is that the essay demands of great art that it be "communal and scorns private art. 0n the other it offers Van Gogh as a paradigm of greatness" (70, cf. 65). But should we speak of an inconsistency? Heidegger was quite aware that the art of van Gogh is art after the end of great art as he and Hegel understood it. What Young calls an "inconsistency" raises the question of what significance art can retain in the modern age, a question with which Heidegger continued to be concerned.
5. Mark Sinclair thus argues that the discussion of the shoes is introduced in the final version of the essay "as a way of exemplifying a philosophical thesis whose necessity has already been apprehended upon the discovery of earth." *Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 178.
6. Meyer Schapiro, "The Still Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh," in *The Reach of Mind*, ed. M. L. Simmel (New York: Springer, 1968), 206.
7. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans Geoff Bennington and Ian MacLeod (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 257–382. See also Herman Rapaport, Heidegger and Derrida (Lincoln and London: University of

Nebraska Press, 1991), 151–155. Rapaport calls it an "in many ways . . . particularly playful and comic text." For a more thought-provoking discussion of this text see Eric Bolle, *Die Kunst der Differenz* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1966), 40–47; also Otto Pöggeler, "Vincent van Gogh und die Philosophie der Kunst," *Existentia*, vol X, 2000, Fasc. 1–4, 90–102.

8. Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985), 127–132.
9. Günter Seubold, *Kunst als Enteignis. Heideggers Weg zu einer nicht mehr metaphysischen Kunst* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996), 71.
10. Cf. Walter Biemel, "Art and Aletheia ('The Origin of he Work of Art,' 1935)," *Martin Heideger. An Ilustrated Study*, trans. J. L. Metha (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 95.
11. See Karsten Harries, "Unterwegs zum Geviert," *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomae (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 290–302.
12. Meyer Schapiro, "The Still Life as a Personal Object," 206. Cited in Joseph J. Kockelmans, 128–129.
13. See Eric Bolle, *Die Kunst der Differenz* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1988), 9–63.

7

Work and World

1. The Counterplay of World and Earth

Consider once more Heidegger's use of the painting by van Gogh and the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: what is their function in the context of the essay? Heidegger, it would seem, would have us understand both as examples of truth put into work. He says so quite explicitly: "Truth happens in Van Gogh's painting. This does not mean that something is correctly portrayed, but rather that in the revelation of the equipmental being of the shoes, that which is as a whole, world and earth, in their counterplay—attains to unconcealedness." And of the poem he says: "The picture that shows the peasant shoes, the poem that says the Roman fountain, do not just make manifest what this isolated being as such is—if indeed they manifest anything at all: rather, they make unconcealedness as such happen in regard to what is as a whole" (G5, 41–42/56). In painting and poem world and earth are said to be unconcealed in their counterplay. Truth is said to be at work in both works.

And yet this claim demands to be confronted with the question Heidegger raises following the poem: "What truth is happening in the work? Can truth happen at all and thus be historical?" (G5, 23/38). I shall have more to say about Heidegger's understanding of the essence of truth in Chapter Nine. Here I only want to note that while our ordinary understanding of truth would have us answer that question with a firm "no," the truth said to be at work in both painting and poem is of a very different sort. This truth, Heidegger insists, happens and has a history. And since the happening of truth is understood by Heidegger in terms of the way the counterplay of world and earth is revealed in the particular work of art, this raises the question: what world is revealed in its counterplay with the earth in the painting by van Gogh or in the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer? The world we live in? The world of the creator? Consider once more the painting: the world of Heidegger's peasant woman is certainly not our world? Nor is it that of van Gogh? And even if we accept Heidegger's questionable interpretation of the painting, can we say that it is the world of the peasant woman? On that interpretation the shoes speak of a world that is no longer our modern world. But the shoes in the painting should not be confused with the painting. The painting itself, it would seem, establishes not so much the world of the peasant woman as it reveals the distance that separates the artist's and even more Heidegger's and our world from a world we can not longer claim to be our own. What world does it then establish?

And what world is established by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's poem on a Roman fountain? In its beautiful self-sufficiency the poem does not seem to refer beyond itself. To be sure, we know such fountains. But like the

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 95–108.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_7,

fountain of which the poem speaks, the poem itself seems self-sufficient, a well wrought aesthetic object, and our appreciation of its self-sufficiency transports us, at least for a brief time, into an aesthetic realm where everything is as it should be. How then are we to understand the world established by the poem? Is it a beautiful aesthetic world, offering us a momentary refuge from our modern world?

There is the further question: in what sense is the earth present in painting or poem? How are we to understand the earth presented by the painting, about which Heidegger has nothing to say, as opposed to the earth to which the peasant woman's shoes are said to belong? And what is the earth of the poem?

Heidegger concludes the essay's epilogue by reiterating the importance of history to reflections on the essence of art: "The history of the nature of Western art corresponds to the change of the nature of truth. This is no more intelligible in terms of beauty taken for itself than it is in terms of experience, supposing that the metaphysical concept of art reaches to art's nature" (G5, 69–70/81). The nature of truth is said to have changed. And if we follow Heidegger and understand art as the happening of truth, this means also that the nature of art has changed. This suggests that the history of art could be written as a function of the history of truth. Hegel, who understood history as the progress of spirit, and that means also of truth, demonstrated how much light such an approach can cast on the evolution of art. And while Heidegger tells his own story of the history of truth, which he understands not as the homecoming of spirit, but as departure from an origin that remains potent even if not attended to, that story, too, offers us a thought-provoking perspective on art. How then do painting and poem relate to that change? We must remember that both were created after that end of art in its highest sense proclaimed by Hegel and understood by Heidegger, too, as a consequence of the reality principle ruling our modern world. In "The Age of the World Picture" Heidegger understands the death of art in Hegel's highest sense as a consequence of the way metaphysics has triumphed in our science and technology. He, too, links this death to the rise of what I have called the aesthetic approach, which turns to art to escape from what is increasingly experienced as what Milan Kundera called "the unbearable lightness of being." Do painting and poem allow us to claim that their very existence refutes Hegel and calls into question Heidegger's characterization of the modern age as the age of the world picture? If Heidegger would have us understand both as examples of the great art Hegel thought to have ended, our answer would have to be affirmative. But we have to take seriously Heidegger's claim in the Epilogue that the truth of Hegel's proclamation of the end of great art has not yet been decided.

2. The Self-Subsistence of the Work of Art

Where has our detour, first to the thing, then to equipment, and finally back to art, gotten us? Our attempt to understand the work of art as a thing with something extra added that makes it into a work of art, as a made thing, an

artifact, but with the specific purpose to give aesthetic pleasure or to succeed as a work of art, has failed. If we are to understand the apparently essential thingly being of the work of art, we are told, we have to begin, not with the thing, but with art.

What then is art? "Art is real in the art work" (G5, 25/39). But, Heidegger suggests, "Nothing can be discovered about the thingly aspect of the work so long as the pure self-subsistence of the work has not distinctly displayed itself" (G5, 25/40). How are we to understand "pure self-subsistence," *das reine Insichstehen des Werkes*? Is the self-subsistence Heidegger claims for the work of art not another philosophical construct without an adequate basis in experience?

The formulation recalls a commonplace of aesthetics.[1] Baumgarten thus would seem to have had such self-subsistence in mind when he understood beauty as perceived perfection: in a successful work of art nothing can be left out or added without a loss of perfection. The work presents itself to us as being what it should be. Whatever the intention of the creator may have been, whatever external circumstances may have led to the creation of this work, the work itself leaves all that behind—The poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer invites discussion as such a perfect work of art. To be sure, even that poem, perfect as it may be, presupposes its creator, presupposes also the world outside it, as is suggested already by its title. The world gave the poet the needed material—and it gave him his language. It is thus not surprising that Heidegger should ask: "Yet is the work ever in itself accessible? To gain access to the work, it would be necessary to remove it from all relations to something other than itself, in order to let it stand on its own for itself alone" (G5, 26/40). In keeping with what has become another commonplace of aesthetics Heidegger adds:

> But the artist's most peculiar intention already aims in this direction. The work is to be released by him to its pure self-subsistence. It is precisely in great art—and only such art is under consideration here—that the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge (G5, 26/40).

Heidegger here suggests an inspiration theory of artistic creation. Paul Klee's lecture "On Modern Art" comes to mind, where the painter compares art to a tree:

> May I use a simile, the simile of the tree? The artist has studied this world in all its variety and has, we may suppose, unobtrusively found his way in it. His sense of direction in nature and life, this branching and spreading array, I shall compare with the root of the tree.
>
> From the root the sap flows to the artist, flows through him, flows to his eye.

> Thus he stands as the trunk of the tree . . . standing at his appointed place, the trunk of the tree, he does nothing other than gather and pass on what comes to him from the depths. He neither serves nor rules—he transmits. His position is humble. And the beauty at the crown is not his own. He is merely a channel.[2]

The artist's role is said here to be purely passive. He is no more than a passageway, as Heidegger put it. What passes through him issues from the earth in which the artist has his roots, inviting the question that Heidegger had posed with respect to Descartes' understanding of philosophy as a tree: what is the earth in which this tree is rooted. The parallels to Heidegger's understanding of original creation are striking and one is not surprised to learn that he later should have asked the participants in his 1960 Bremen lectures to prepare by reading the Klee lecture.[3]

But Heidegger's claim that in great art "the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge," invites question. The "almost" must be underscored: no artist is adequately understood as such a passageway, just as no observer is able to transform himself into a passive mirror and remove from the work all relations to something other than itself. As Kant recognized, to appreciate a work of art *as* a work of art is inevitably to understand it as a product of a deliberate doing and as such as ruled by an intention. And our experience of works of art is always mediated by some larger context. That certainly is true of the great art Heidegger has in mind: the Aegina marbles, Sophocles' Antigone, the temple in Paestum, Bamberg cathedral.

Temple and cathedral remind us that once great art served religion. Today we experience such art first of all in museums and exhibitions. But here, Heidegger suggests, we encounter what once were great works of art only as objects of the art industry. With that they would seem to have lost that aura that once belonged to them. The art industry has become the master of art. We still experience the greatness of these works, but the works have lost their power to place us into their worlds.

> Works are made available for public and private art appreciation. Official agencies assume the care and maintenance of works. Connoisseurs and critics busy themselves with them. Art dealers supply the market. Art-historical study makes the works the objects of a science. Yet in all this busy activity, do we encounter the work itself? (G5, 26/40)

Consider a museum such as Munich's *Glyptothek*. Do we encounter the sculptures from the temple of Aphaia on Aegina exhibited there in a way that does justice to their self-subsistence? No longer an integral part of the temple, transported into the museum environment, these are no longer the works they once were. "The Aegina sculptures in the Munich collection, Sophocles'

Antigone in the best critical edition, are, as the works they are, torn out of their own native sphere" (G5, 26/40). These works have become rootless, in a way that invites comparison with the way the translation of Greek terms into Latin was said to have led to the rootlessness of Western thought; and with the way modern science was said in the *Rectorial Address* to have become rootless by losing touch with its Greek origin. "Native sphere" should not be understood here as a geographical or spatial context: "But even when we make an effort to cancel or avoid such displacement of works—when, for example, we visit the temple in Paestum at its own site or Bamberg cathedral on its own square—the world of the work that stands there has perished" (G5, 26/40–41). The temple is no longer the work it once was. While still able to present the earth in some fashion, it has lost its world-establishing power. In our world it has a very different function: like the cathedral in Bamberg it invites us to consider what art once meant to human beings, how it helped establish their world. "Native sphere" then refers to a cultural context, tied to a particular region or homeland. What Heidegger means by "world" implies such a context. Having lost their world, works of art are no longer the works they were. Now they have their modest place in our modern world. The aesthetic approach to works of art with its insistence on the autonomy of art is very much part of this world.

There is tension between two claims Heidegger makes: following the tradition he speaks of the self-subsistence of works of art; at the same time he insists that they belong in a context, that they cease to be the works they were when this context is lost. But must we not then give up the first claim? Is it not essential for a work to stand in relations, relations that can be expected to change with history? (G5, 27/41).

Heidegger's response would seem to be in keeping with what the aesthetic approach demands: "The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work is present in, and only in, such opening up. We said that in the work there was a happening of truth at work. The reference to van Gogh's picture tried to point to this happening" (GA5, 27/41).

The successful work of art is said to open up its own proper context. It establishes its own world. Something like that can be said of both painting and poem. But if Heidegger's discussion of the Van Gogh painting was at all successful, why does it become "necessary" at this stage of the discussion, to "make visible once more the happening of truth in the work" (G5, 27/ 41) and to choose now a work that cannot in any way be considered representational art, a Greek temple?

It is worth noting that the discussion of painting and poem was not part of the first two versions of the essay. Why did Heidegger include it in the greatly expanded final version? One answer may be that he felt it necessary to build a bridge that would connect the discussion of the thing, which also appears only in the final version, with the discussion of the temple that dominated the first two drafts. The discussion of the thing was designed to show the inability of

philosophy to do justice to the being of things and that includes the being of works of art. Such recognition of the limits of philosophy opens the doors to art. The Greek temple exemplifies the origin of art.

3. A Greek Temple

> A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct. The temple and its precinct, however, do not fade away into the indefinite. It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from this and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfillment of its vocation (G5, 27–28/41–42).

There are difficulties with this passage. Why does Heidegger choose a work whose world has perished? And how can we expect such a work, from which, as Heidegger himself puts it, its former self-subsistence has fled, which can no longer be experienced in its genuine work-being, to make visible for us, who are of this modern world, what he calls the happening of truth? The shoes at least were painted by an artist whose world is still familiar to us. We can understand his dissatisfaction with that world. But does the temple not remain even more profoundly absent from Heidegger's essay than van Gogh's painting?

Which temple is he describing? Since he has already mentioned "the temple in Paestum," it may seem plausible to think of the ancient Poseidonia and of one of its temples, two consecrated to Hera, one of which later came to be associated with Neptune, and a third to Athena, later associated with Ceres. Kockelmans in his commentary confidently identifies the temple in question with the temple dedicated to Neptune.[4] But Heidegger chooses to speak in general terms of "a Greek temple" and in the first and second versions he mentions a temple of Zeus. His description discourages every attempt to identify the temple in question. Heidegger is not describing here a specific building, but the being of a Greek temple, as he had come to understand it. When the quoted passage is read as referring to a particular temple it quickly becomes nonsensical.[5] If every Greek temple were to "first" establish the Greek world, would that world not fall apart? Would we not have to modify Heidegger's claim and say that each particular temple interprets and opens up

the pre-given Greek world in its own distinctive way, in this sense establishes it anew? Surely, those who built such temples were already embedded in their distinctive world. And something similar has to be said about a church like Bamberg cathedral. Heidegger's temple does not have its place on earth, but in a spiritual realm.

On this much we can agree: the being of a Greek temple is not even remotely understood when it is approached in purely aesthetic terms. In Heidegger's words: "The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth, which itself only thus emerges as native ground" (G5, 28/42). As we have already seen, world may not be understood here as "the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there." It is not to be understood as the totality of facts. "But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things" (G5, 30/44). World here names a space of intelligibility or significance that determines the way human beings encounter persons and things. This understanding of world allows Heidegger to say,

> A stone is worldless. Plant and animal likewise have no world; but they belong to the covert throng of a surrounding into which they are linked. The peasant woman, on the other hand, has a world because she dwells in the overtness of beings, of the things that are. Her equipment, in its reliability, gives to this world a necessity and nearness of its own. By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom of the god remaining absent is a way in which world worlds (G5, 31/45).[6]

While much of this is in keeping with the world concept of *Being and Time*, with his talk of the earth Heidegger is taking a decisive step beyond that work, a step that brings us closer to the elusive thingliness of things. The Greek temple is to help us take that step:

> Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket

> first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates also that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the *earth*. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise earth is present as the sheltering agent (G5, 28–29/42).

This recalls what Heidegger had said about the peasant woman, whose shoes were said to belong to the earth, its silent call vibrating in them. But a difficulty is posed once more by Heidegger's claim that the temple "first makes the storm itself manifest," that only because of the temple do "tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are." We may well ask, were they not all manifest before the building of the temple began? The difficulty is compounded as Heidegger continues:

> The temple-work, standing there, opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back on earth, which itself only thus emerges as native ground. But men and animals, plants and things, are never present and familiar as unchangeable objects, only to represent incidentally also a fitting environment for the temple, which one fine day is added to what is already there. We shall get closer to what *is*, rather, if we think of all this in reverse order, assuming of course that we have, to begin with, an eye for how differently everything then faces us. Mere reversing, done for its own sake, reveals nothing (G5, 28/42).

The way we first of all and most of the time approach and think about things does indeed demand, as Heidegger recognizes, that we think of the temple as added "one fine day" to a pre-given environment. The correctness of such a description cannot be denied. To make sense of what Heidegger has to say here we have to acquire a different eye. Perhaps we can say, instead of an eye for the ontic we have to acquire an eye for the ontological; instead of an eye for beings, an eye for the being of beings. All great art, Heidegger claims, lets us encounter things differently. It changes our way of being in the world and with it our sight. In this sense the work of art places us in a different world, establishes a new world, places everything in a new light. That most facts remain the same, can be granted.

The world-establishing power of the work of art is further developed in the following paragraph—and once again we may stumble over Heidegger's use of "first":

> The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it. It is the same with the sculpture of the god, votive offering of the victor in the athletic games. 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. The same holds for the linguistic work (G5, 29/43).

This raises the difficult question, raised again and again by Heidegger in subsequent works, a question that we need to answer if we are to understand his assertion in the *Spiegel* interview that only a god can save us: how are we to understand the being of the god, who here is said to be present in the sculpture? "The Origin of the Work of Art" hints at a first answer.

A closely related question is raised when we ask: how does the temple, in this respect, compare with the painting by Van Gogh and C. F. Meyer's poem. Do these works also let some god be present? If so, how are we to understand such presence? If not, does this prevent us from considering them examples of great art? The latter question is underscored by what Heidegger has to say about the setting up of the work of art as a consecration.

> When a work is brought into a collection or placed in an exhibition we say also that it is "set up." But this setting up differs essentially from setting up in the sense of erecting a building, raising a statue, presenting a tragedy at a holy festival. Such setting up is erecting in the sense of dedication and praise. Here "setting up" no longer means a bare placing. To dedicate means to consecrate, in the sense that in setting up the work the holy is opened up as holy and the god is invoked into the openness of his presence. Praise belongs to dedication as doing honor to the dignity and splendor of the god. Dignity and splendor are not properties beside and behind which the god, too, stands as something distinct, but it is rather in the dignity, in the splendor that the god is present. In the reflected glory of this splendor there glows, i.e. there lightens itself, what we called the world (G5, 29–30/43–44).

4. What Temple?

I shall return to Heidegger's understanding of the earth in the next chapter. Here I want to return to the question: which temple is Heidegger describing? I pointed out that Heidegger chooses to speak in general terms of "a Greek temple" and suggested that, no more than he was trying to describe a particular pair of shoes, is he now trying to describe a particular temple, but the being of a Greek temple. So understood his Greek temple has its place not here on earth, but in a spiritual realm. To the extent that Heidegger's temple refers to

any particular temple, this temple is found not in Greece, nor in Southern Italy, but in Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, where Hegel discusses architecture as humanity's first attempt to give external reality to the divine, and that for Hegel means inevitably also to the spirituality that distinguishes humanity. With his discussion of the Greek temple Heidegger challenges Hegel's in many ways comparable account. Already his choice of a work of architecture is significant, for it is architecture with which Hegel had let the progress of art and indeed of spirit begin. That Heidegger should place a work of architecture at the very center of an essay on the origin of art is thus significant, if not surprising: Hegel understands architecture as the origin of art.

> It is architecture that pioneers the way for the adequate realization of the God, and in this its service bestows hard toil upon existing nature, in order to disentangle it from the jungle of finitude and the abortiveness of chance. By this means it levels a space for the God, gives form to his external surroundings, and builds him his temple as a fit place for concentration of spirit, and for its direction to the mind's absolute objects. It raises an enclosure round the assembly of those gathered together, as a defense against the threatening of the storm, against rain, the hurricane, and wild beasts, and reveals the will to assemble, although externally, yet in conformance with the principles of art.[7]

Much of this is taken up by Heidegger, but that the Hegelian account has been radically rewritten is also evident. Nothing in Hegel's description answers to what Heidegger points to when he insists that *The work lets the earth be an earth* (G5, 32/46). Hegel develops a more oppositional understanding of architecture: the temple's builders impose a spiritual, and that means for Hegel a truly human order on a recalcitrant material; human beings assert and celebrate their humanity in the face of an initially indifferent environment when they level the ground, break the stone, raise walls and columns: they defend themselves against nature, not only or even primarily against its physical threats—such defense is the task of more modest building—but against its contingency. In this struggle they rely on and exhibit the power of the universal. That is why architecture is in its very essence not the work of isolated individuals, but of the spirit and that means of the community: the spirit breaks down the walls that separate individuals.

> Architecture, however, as we have seen, has purified the external world, and endowed it with symmetrical order and with affinity to mind; and the temple of the God, the house of his community, stands ready. Into this temple, then, in the *second* place, the God enters in the lightning-flash of individuality, which strikes and permeates the inert mass, while the infinite and no longer merely symmetrical form belonging to mind itself concentrates and gives shape to the corresponding bodily existence. This is the task of *Sculpture*.[8]

Hegel assigns to the Greek temple its place in his story of the spirit's progress, a progress that has its telos in the human community's complete appropriation of the earth, an appropriation which has to break down the walls that separate persons, races, and regions, as it has to subject the earth to humanity's will to power. That progress has to leave behind, first architecture, that "first pioneer on the highway toward the adequate realization of the Godhead," and then all art, as the spirit discovers a far more complete mastery in science and technology than art can ever provide. As the "Epilogue" to "The Origin of the Work of Art" makes clear, Heidegger's essay means to call Hegel's prognosis into question, where Heidegger recognizes that any effective challenge to Hegel will also have to challenge the Cartesian promise that our spirit will render us the masters and possessors of nature and thus transform the thus overpowered world into a genuine home. Heidegger, as we have seen, is unable to recognize in the so transformed world, a world that has reduced the earth to mere material for human construction, a genuine home. And because he is convinced that we moderns have to learn once again to "let the earth be an earth," something that neither technology nor science can teach us, but only art, he returns here to architecture as to the art with which Hegel lets the spirit's progress begin, but returns to it to suggest that the challenge of that origin does not lie behind us, as Hegel thought, but ahead of us, as a future challenge.

This much at any rate should have become clear: according to Heidegger the essence of great art is not adequately understood when it is approached in purely aesthetic terms, although such an approach to art is always possible and given our modern world offers itself most readily. His then, is in Nietzsche's sense, an untimely meditation. Quite aware that today's art world will not support him, Heidegger, insists that the great work of art establishes a world. The temple is said to establish a world by letting the god be present in the temple. Hegel had suggested something rather like that when he wrote that the god enters the temple "in the lightning-flash of individuality which strikes and permeates the inert mass." And Heidegger follows Hegel, when he assigns to sculpture the task of establishing the presence of the god. This presence of the god in the temple becomes here something like an integrating center. With Baumgarten we could say, the presence of the god provides a particular region, which now finds its focus in the temple with its statue, with a theme. Apollo, say, is made to preside over this place, which is experienced as a holy precinct. Those who enter that precinct, do not simply leave the everyday world behind. The temple illuminates the everyday, speaks to what matters, placing everything in a new light, just as falling in love might be said to put everything in a new light, and experiencing the presence of a divinity has long been related to falling in love. It is this power to illuminate and integrate that lets Heidegger say that the temple reveals to a people their world and fashions them into a community. Our modern world, to be sure, has no room for gods: as Hegel would have insisted, the Greek gods do indeed belong to a world that has perished.

Heidegger agrees that the gods are absent from our modern world, but he insists that their absence be not simply accepted, but that it be questioned and thoughtfully considered. In speaking of gods, divinities, or angels his guide is once again Hölderlin, to whom he also owes his understanding of the significance of the earth. With his talk of gods, Heidegger gestures thus also towards the many-voiced ground of artistic creation that he calls "the earth." To be touched by that ground at a specific time, in a specific place, and in such a way that it puts persons and things in their proper places, so that we suddenly know what is to be done and said, is to receive some divinity's message, where, depending on the message received, we may invoke Aphrodite or Hera, Dionysus or Apollo, Ares or Zeus. The architect responds to this message by building a temple, the sculptor by creating a statue, the poet by writing a hymn. But any attempt to name the gods and thus to take the measure of human being-in-the-world, if only to return that measure to human beings and to let them dwell, is always a violation of the essentially elusive essence of divinity. We are thus always in danger of obscuring divinity with some golden calf, as Heidegger demonstrated when he turned to National Socialism in the hope of discovering there a new popular religion. To repeat: What are the gods to us moderns?

5. House of God and Gate of Heaven

Does what Heidegger has to say about the Greek temple fit what we know about Greek temples? I lack the knowledge to answer that question with confidence. But I find it suggestive to juxtapose what Heidegger has to say about his Greek temple with what Vincent Scully has to say about Greek temples in *The Earth, the Temples, and the Gods*. Scully, too, begins with the thought that certain regions seem to demand or invite the building of a temple because their appearance seemed to hint at the powers that preside over human life. Consider his suggestion that every Minoan palace makes use of the same landscape elements:

> first an enclosed valley of varying size in which the palace is set; I should call this a "Natural Megaron"; second, a gently mounded or conical hill on axis with the palace to north and south; and lastly a higher, double-peaked or cleft mountain some distance beyond the hill but on the same axis.[9]

Scully goes on to connect the cone with the maternal earth, the horns with the paternal active power. I am not interested here in the details of his account, but in the type of explanation offered. Landscape elements, Scully suggests, define the space and establish a place for architecture, providing thus an initial focusing. They put the builders in a certain mood, let them sense

the presence of divinity. The architecture responds to the landscape. It lets the divinity whose presence is obscurely sensed in this particular place become more visibly present.

Let me conclude with a quite different text, which yet points in the same direction. The traditional consecration rite establishes the meaning of the church as House of God and Gate of Heaven. The text that authorizes this understanding is *Genesis*, 28, 11–17.

> And he (Jacob) came to a certain place, and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached heaven; and behold, the angels of the Lord were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac: the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and by your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever I go, and will bring you back to this land; for I shall not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said: Surely the Lord is in this place. *This is none other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven*.

A particular landscape is experienced as filled with God's presence. It is experienced as the house of God. In this particular place heaven and earth are felt to be mysteriously joined. The place is thus also experienced as the gate of Heaven. The experience of divine presence is tied to a trust that extends into the future and beyond the individual to his offspring, to coming generations. Jacob thus experiences the world as in tune with him and his descendants. He experiences it as a meaningful order, as a cosmos or a world. (Here we should keep in mind that the experience of the beautiful had long been linked to such a sense of attunement of self and the surrounding other—so by both Burke and Kant).

Jacob responds to the experience by marking the place by raising the horizontal that served him as a pillow, turning it into a vertical pillar. This pillar is the archetypal church. Later churches reenact this archetype. Using Heidegger's language we can say: by setting up his pillar Jacob establishes the world of his people. According to the traditional Christian consecration rite, whenever a church is built this original establishment is repeated—where I am thinking of what Heidegger had to say about "repetition" in *Being and Time*. Every church, say Bamberg Cathedral, repeats, that is to say, reestablishes the Christian world anew. And can something analogous not be said of every Greek temple—that it reestablished the Greek world anew? And should something similar perhaps be said of every great work of art, as Heidegger insists?

That such world-establishment is not what we today look for in art is evident enough. We have a different understanding of artistic greatness. But it is difficult to deny that Heidegger's conception of the work of art as establishing a world does justice to what countless generations expected from sacred architecture and, more generally from art. And do such reflections not carry us to the origin of art?

Notes

1. This has led Julian Young to claim that Heidegger in such passages "lapsed into 'aesthetics,' " and that this is sufficient to render the train of thought "forgettable." See *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 49. Mark Sinclair is right to challenge such a dismissal. Of special interest here is Heidegger's interpretation of Kant's understanding of the "disinterested" character of our appreciation of the beautiful (G43, 124–133). Cf. Mark Sinclair, Heidegger, *Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 140–141.
2. Paul Klee, "On Modern Art," (1924), *Modern Artists On Art*, ed. Robert L. Herbert (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1964), 76–77.
3. Hans Wiegand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929–1976*, trans. Parvis Emad (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1993), 58–59.
4. Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985), 141–142.
5. Julian Young, in *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art,* calls such a view "extremely difficult." He suggests that "First" be read not temporally, but *poetically* (20, 31). This raises the question of how such a poetic reading relates to the question of Being.
6. For a much fuller discussion of the theses "the stone is worldless, the animal world-poor, man world-forming" see *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik* (G29/30), 261–440.
7. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. Michael Inwood (Harmondsworth Penguin, 1993), 90–91.
8. Ibid., 91.
9. Vincent Scully, *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods. Greek Sacred Architecture*, revised ed. (New York: Praeger, 1969), 11.

8

World and Earth

1. On the Way to the *Ereignis*

In the course of his discussion of the first of the three familiar, but inadequate interpretations of what makes a thing a thing, Heidegger had called attention to the remarkable way in which the structure of a simple proposition mirrors our understanding of the thing as a substance with attributes; and he had raised the question: "Is the structure of a simple propositional statement (the combination of subject and predicate) the mirror image of the structure of the thing (of the union of substance with accidents)? Or could it be that even the structure of the thing as thus envisaged is a projection of the framework of the sentence?" (G5, 8/23–24). The primacy of the simple assertion as the paradigmatic speech act and of the thing understood a something present at hand is here assumed, a primacy Heidegger had called into question already in *Being and Time*. But such questioning does not remove the fundamental problem. At issue is the relationship of what is real or things to language.

We can distinguish a realistic from a transcendental interpretation of language. By a realistic interpretation of language (or thought) I mean one that places language in some more comprehensive framework. Is not language part of the world? This interpretation thus insists that reality transcends language. But how do we get to know about this reality? Our understanding of this wider framework goes unquestioned and tends to be taken for granted by such interpretations. Does such an understanding not always already presuppose language and its structure? No understanding of the world can go beyond the limits that language imposes. By a transcendental interpretation of language (or thought) I mean one that takes language to be constitutive of all we encounter. Language, as Heidegger put it, is the house of Being; or we can say: the limits of language are the limits of reality.[1] But if much Heidegger has written invites such a reading, in his discussion of this first interpretation of the thing he explicitly calls such an approach into question: Responsible speech has to respond to things! But can there be an experience of things without language? And so he observes "The question which comes first and functions as the standard, proposition structure or thing-structure remains to this hour undecided. It even remains doubtful whether in this form the question is at all decidable" (G5, 8–9/24).

As this suggests, both the realistic and the transcendental model face serious difficulties. Attempts to resolve these difficulties confront an antinomy: The realistic model will never be able to provide us with a firm foundation. We can always point to whatever wider framework is used to describe and understand language and raise the question: how is this framework given? Will

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 109–123.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_8,

its disclosure not presuppose language? The transcendental model, however, also runs into difficulties. While it makes it possible, even demands, that we view language interpreted in this way as a ground, it loses sight of the fact that language is about reality, or, to get away from our tendency to seek the paradigm in descriptive language, it loses sight of the fact that language ties us into reality and loses its point when this tie is not preserved. If reality does not transcend language, what sense can we make of language changing, of the establishment of an altogether new language game, an establishment that would be, to use Heidegger's language, an *Ur-sprung*, a primordial leap that establishes the being of beings anew. But how are we to think this *Ur-sprung* or origin? In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger points to art to gesture towards this *Ur-sprung*, where it should be clear that any attempt to think or say it, will bump up against the limits of language.

Heidegger struggled with what is essentially the same problem in his attempts to think the ontological difference: the difference between beings and Being, the latter referring here to the way things present themselves to Dasein, i.e. to human being. When we approach that difference from the perspective of transcendental philosophy we will want to say: Being transcends beings. Beings can present themselves only to a being that is such as we are, a being that is open to a world in which beings have to take their place and present themselves if they are "to be" at all. The way beings present themselves is always mediated by language and founded in the being of Dasein as care. Language and care help constitute the Being of things.

But Heidegger qualifies this, we can call it, transcendental understanding of Being when he speaks in par. 43 of *Being and Time* of the dependence of Being, *but not of beings*, of reality, *but not of the real*, on care, i.e., on the always understanding and caring being of human beings (G2, 281/255). Beings and the real are here said to transcend Being and thus Dasein.[2] To be sure, beings could not be in Heidegger's sense without human beings. Human consciousness provides the open space that allows things to be perceived, understood, and cared for. That space is a presupposition of the accessibility of things, of their being. There is thus a sense in which Heidegger's understanding of Being is not altogether unrelated to Berkeley's *esse est percipi*. But Heidegger is no idealist. He does think idealism right when it insists that Being cannot be explained in terms of beings. But to insist that things become accessible only to Dasein, and that their being, so understood, depends on human being, is not to say that we in any sense create these beings. Our experience of the reality of the real is an experience of beings as transcending Being. Here Heidegger sides with the realist (G2, 275/250). But this experience resists being put into words. All we can do is gesture towards it.

The unresolvable tension between idealism and realism mirrors thus the tension between a transcendental and a realistic interpretation of language. Once again the attempt to think the origin of thought or language, which is but a way of approaching the question of Being, bumps against the limits of

language. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger looks to what he calls great art for pointers toward a better understanding of this tension.

As pointed out in the Introduction, in the later Reclam edition (1960) of the essay Heidegger denied that his purpose here was to provide us with a "philosophy of art." What mattered to him, he insisted, was "the question about Being."[3] Heidegger underscored that remark by adding to that essay quite a number of footnotes that relate what he had to say to his thinking of the *Ereignis,* or event or happening of the truth of being, i.e. the emergence of beings, which by 1936 had come to preoccupy him. He thus glosses his question: "What is truth that it can happen as, or even must happen as art?" with "truth from the *Ereignis*!" (G5, 25/57); "World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being (G5, 30–31/44) with *Ereignis*; "The work lets the earth be an earth" (G5, 32/46) again with *Ereignis*. Ever since 1936, as Heidegger tells us, *Ereignis* had become the guiding motto of his thinking. That he should have chosen it for the subtitle for what has been called his main[4] or at least his second main work, the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*[5] is significant. With that work Heidegger pushes self-consciously against the limits of language in a finally not successful attempt to say the truth of Being now understood as the *Ereignis*. As the later footnotes make clear, "The Origin of the Work of Art" is underway towards the *Beiträge*. The two works illuminate one another and given the hermetic character of the *Beiträge,* "The Origin of the Work of Art" may well offer the best access to the central thought of this enigmatic later work.[6] Even the three footnoted passages I just cited give us a first understanding of what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks of the *Ereignis*: it names the counterplay of world and earth, which is the happening or event of truth.[7]

The *Ereignis* does not make its first appearance in the *Beiträge*. Already in his early Freiburg lecture *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (1919) Heidegger had distinguished a mere event from an *Ereignis*, a happening to which I belong and that belongs and therefore matters to me (G56/57, 186). Heidegger contrasts an astronomer considering the rising of the sun objectively as a natural phenomenon and the chorus of the Theban elders in Sophocles' *Antigone*, who, after a successful battle, greet the rising sun. They are engaged with what they see in a way that is very different from the astronomer's distanced beholding. That it is art—here three lines from a Greek tragedy, cited in a translation by Hölderlin—that gives us a first insight into the nature of what Heidegger calls *Ereignis* is significant. The same work will be mentioned in "The Origin of the Wok of art" as an example of works that have been "torn out of their native sphere."

In *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* an experience is said to be an *Ereignis* when it is truly one's own, while the experiencing individual is open to what so beautifully manifests itself in its own splendor, here the rising sun (G56/57, 74–75). Here already *Er-eignis* names what comes to be understood as authentic experience. *Ereignis* and *Eigentlichkeit* belong together.

In *Being and Time* Dasein is said to be essentially "in the truth" (G2, 293). And, as we saw, Heidegger understands, resolve (*Entschlossenheit*) as "the most primordial, because *authentic* truth of Dasein" (*die ursprünglichste, weil eigentliche Wahrheit des Daseins*) (G2, 394). But as Heidegger recognizes when he makes Being (*Sein*), but not beings dependent on Dasein, there is a sense in which Being understood as the transcendent ground of experience (*Seyn*) transcends Being understood transcendentally (*Sein*). This demands that we think of Being (*Sein*) not just as dependent on Dasein, but as belonging to *Seyn*. The happening of truth thus comes to be understood as the presencing (*das Wesen*) of *Seyn*. That the attempt to think this happening, however, inevitably will become entangled in some version of the antinomy with which I began this chapter is suggested by this explanation: "*Seyn* needs the human being for it to be (*wese*), and the human being belongs to *Seyn*, so that he fulfill his ultimate vocation as *Da-sein*" (G65, 251). For *Seyn* "to be," it must disclose itself as *Sein*.

2. Heidegger's "World"

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger understands this "counterplay (*Gegenschwung*) of needing and belonging to as the "counterplay (*Widerspiel*) of world and earth. How are we to understand such play? To approach this question let me return once more to Heidegger's understanding of "world," which figured already in the last chapter. In *Being and Time* and the lecture courses leading up to it Heidegger understands human being as being in the world. "World" here translates the Greek *kosmos*, a space that assigns to persons and things their proper places. My world has always already placed me and all I encounter.[8] "World" thus names a way in which beings appear, not the totality of beings. Their place in my world gives to things their intelligibility.

I said "my world," but my world is not rally mine: as my being is a being with others, so my world is a shared world. And this world is a world that we have not chosen, but is part of our inheritance. It has come to be the way it is. World thus has a historical significance. "The Origin of the Work of Art" presupposes this world concept, which Heidegger had developed in *Being and Time* and before that in a number of courses. Consider once more the following passage:

> The world is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being. Wherever

> those decisions of our history that relate to our very being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognized and are rediscovered by new inquiry, there the world worlds. A stone is worldless. Plant and animal likewise have no world; but they belong to the covert throng of a surrounding into which they are linked. The peasant woman, on the other hand, has a world because she dwells in the overtness of beings, of the things that are. Her equipment, in its reliability, gives to this world a necessity and nearness of its own. By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom of the god remaining absent is a way the world worlds (G5, 30–31/44–45).

Much here is familiar from *Being and Time*. But now there is increased emphasis that our world is not so much something constructed by us, but a historical fate, that we moderns are fated to live in a world from which God and the gods have fled, and that no amount of willing, no effort can undo this process. This, however, raises the question: given all this, how then is the artist's establishment of a world in the work of art to be thought. What here is his or her contribution? Is the artist, too, not always bound to and by his world? What world then does he or she create?

In *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik* Heidegger calls our attention to a fragment by Heraclitus, where those awake are said to have one and the same world, while each sleeper has his own world (G26, 220), a comment important when we turn to the world establishing of art: is the world established by art more like that of the person awake or more like that of the dreamer? Or does it build a bridge between dreaming and waking?[9]

In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein writes that "The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy" (6.43). The first two propositions had defined the world as "everything that is the case" (1) and "the totality of facts" (1.1). But so understood the world cannot be said to be different for the happy and the unhappy person; they live in the same world. If the happy and the unhappy can be said to live in different worlds, then this difference cannot be understood in terms of different facts. The different world would seem to be the result of different ways of looking at the facts. We thus can oppose here to an objective a subjective understanding of world. The latter cannot be understood as the totality of facts. World here is better understood as grounded in a different perspective. And should we not say something like that when Heidegger's believer and the person for whom God has died are said to live in different worlds?

Heidegger, to be sure, would insist that his thinking had left the simple opposition of subject and object behind. As Wittgenstein, too, came to recognize, that opposition presupposes an unduly narrow understanding of experience, which privileges the detached observer and derives from a very

different and more engaged way of being in the world, with others, subject to a history that helps determine who we are. The world of the Middle Ages and our modern world have thus a very different spaciousness. Such spaciousness has not always been, but has come to be established. But how is such establishment to be thought. For an answer Heidegger looks to the work of art.

> A work, by being a work, makes space for that spaciousness. "To make space for" means here especially to liberate the Open and to establish it in its structure. [*Einräumen bedeutet hier zumal: freigeben das Freie des Offenen und einrichten dieses Freien in seinem Gezüge*.] This in-stalling occurs through the erecting mentioned earlier. The work as work sets up a world. The work holds open the Open of the world. But the setting up of a world is only the first essential feature in the work-being of a work to be referred to here (G5, 31/45).

In understanding this passage a look at the German proves helpful: *Einräumen* and *einrichten* are quite ordinary and related German words, the first suggesting bringing something into some room, the second furnishing a room. The work's establishing of a world is thus understood as a furnishing of the free. In this sense Kant's categories could be considered a furnishing of the free provided by the forms of intuition. Every language can be said to furnish the free. There is thus a family resemblance that joins Heidegger's "world" and what we can call categorial or linguistic space.

Kant, as Heidegger reminds us in *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik*, uses "world" to refer to the totality of all objects of possible experience (GA26, 225). So understood "world" names something like logical space. Such a space is inevitably a structured space. The free, that is said to be furnished by Heidegger, is what the word "space," in "logical space," also gestures towards. The expression "logical space" invites us to think the relationship of "logos" and "space": logos furnishes space.

As the expression "logical space" suggests, to do justice to the world understood as the "totality of what is," that is to say as a subset of all that is possible, something else is needed, something that will take its place in logical space, something like Kant's material of sensibility. There is a family resemblance between that material and what Heidegger calls the earth, the second essential feature of that counterplay of world and earth that is the *Ereignis*, the event of truth. We must take care, however, to consider what separates the two expressions, a consideration that invites us to consider also the relationship of this sensible material to the thing in itself in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Does Heidegger's earth have more to do with the former or with the latter? Or does it rather invite us to think the inescapable entanglement of the two?

3. Heidegger's "Earth"

When Heidegger speaks of the temple as establishing a world, gathering a multitude into a genuine community, he gives us what he himself considers only one side of the artwork. Equally important is its other side: its presentation of the earth.

> When a work is created, brought forth out of this or that work-material—stone, wood, metal, color, language, tone—we say also that it is made, set forth out of it. But just as the work requires a setting up in the sense of a consecrating-praising erection, because the work's being consists in the setting up of a world, so a setting forth is needed because the work-being of the work itself has the character of setting forth. The work as work, in its presencing, is a setting forth, a making. But what does the work set forth? We come to know about this only when we explore what is customarily spoken of as the making or production of works (G5, 31–32/45).

The English here is unnecessarily cumbersome. The German for *set forth out of it* is the quite ordinary *daraus hergestellt*, *setting up* is *Errichtung, setting forth* is *Herstellung.* The words return us to the making of equipment. The work of art, too, is in this sense something made, made out of some material or other, in this respect like a pair of shoes. When Heidegger speaks of the earth, he calls thus attention to something like the materiality of the artwork. But the artist's way of using his material is very different from that of the craftsman, who makes some piece of equipment.

> In fabricating equipment—e.g. an ax—stone is used, and used up. It disappears into usefulness. The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing in the equipmental being of the equipment. By contrast the temple-work, in setting up a world, does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth for the very first time and to come into the Open of the work's world. The rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and luster of metal, into the lighting and darkening of color, in to the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word.
>
> That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself, we called the earth (G5, 32/46).

What Heidegger means by "earth," I suggested, has something to do with what one might call the material of the art object, although "material" must be

thought so broadly here that it includes the rock that bears it, the sky above, the pre-given landscape setting. In presenting the earth, the artist reveals whatever material he is working with in its materiality. He reveals the marble as marble, the granite as granite, the limewood as limewood.

Significantly Heidegger here also names words as the poet's material, a formulation that forces us to question an understanding of language that tries to align it too closely with logic, for logic knows nothing of the earth. A profound distance would thus seem to separate logical space and language. Buried in all language is the rift between world and earth. Poetry reveals that rift. Revealing that rift poetry lets words speak. How does it do that? We are given a hint by the way Heidegger here draws a distinction between the way an artist uses his materials and the way a craftsman does. On Heidegger's view the artist re-presents his medium and thereby makes it conspicuous.[10] Similarly the poet re-presents his medium, makes it conspicuous.

According to Heidegger the work moves the earth itself into the Open of a world. In the world it asserts the usually passed over earth. How does it accomplish this?

> A stone presses downward and manifests its heaviness. But while this heaviness exerts an opposing pressure upon us it denies us any penetration into it. If we attempt such a penetration by breaking open the rock, it still does not display in its fragments anything inward that has been disclosed. The stone has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments. If we try to lay hold of the stone's heaviness in another way, by placing the stone on a balance, we merely bring the heaviness into the form of a calculated weight. This perhaps very precise determination of the stone remains a number, but the weight's burden has escaped us. Color shines and wants only to shine. When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelength, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained. Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction. This destruction may herald itself under the appearance of mastery and of progress in the form of the technical-scientific objectivation of nature, but this mastery nevertheless remains an impotence of will. The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up (G5, 33/46–47).

To say that the work of art sets forth the earth is to say that the artist lets us understand in some sense what the earth is. And yet this is a very peculiar kind of understanding, an understanding that is more like tasting or smelling than like clearly seeing what is before one's eyes. We can say that this is an understanding that knows that *Seyn* transcends *Sein*, knows about the impotence of

knowledge, that accepts what in *Being and Time* is said to be Dasein's essential guilt: an authentic understanding.

The understanding of the earth granted by art thus challenges the kind of understanding that tries to lay hold of the stone's heaviness by measuring it, that does not let the matter be, but seeks to master it, to overpower it by subjecting it to human measures. The artwork thus challenges that access to reality that claims that it is clear and distinct reasoning that presents to us things as they are. Art teaches us that such reasoning replaces what is with constructions of the human spirit. To be open to the reality of things is to be open to that dimension of things that will always resist human mastery. It is this dimension Heidegger calls the earth. Art recalls us to the earth.

Heidegger's earth thus names what I have come to call "material transcendence."[11] By that term I mean to refer to that aspect of things that makes them incapable of being adequately expressed in some clear and distinct discourse.

Difficult to understand are the lines that follow the cited passage:

> All things of earth, and the earth itself as a whole, flow together in a reciprocal accord. But this confluence is not a blurring of their outlines. Here there flows the stream, restful within itself, of the setting of bounds, which delimits everything within its presence. Thus in each of the self-secluding things there is the same not-knowing-of-one-another. The earth is essentially self-secluding. To set forth the earth means to bring it into the Open as self-secluding (G5, 33/47).

How are we to understand the Heraclitean metaphor: earth as a flow with many rivulets, each preserving its distinctive outline? This suggests that the earth holds the secret to each thing's unique identity. The artist preserves that identity.

> To be sure, the sculptor uses stone just as the mason uses it, in his own way. But he does not use it up. That happens in a certain way only where the work miscarries. To be sure, the painter also uses pigments, but in such a way that color is not used up but rather only now comes to shine forth. To be sure, the poet also uses the word—not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who have to use them up, but rather in such a way that the word only now becomes and remains truly a word (G5, 34/47–48).

To build a temple is, among other things, to re-present the sky under which it stands, the ground that supports it, the marble of which it is made. Thus re-presented, the sky, ground, and marble are revealed as what they are. Note how different such art is from representational painting that uses paint and canvas as means of pictorial representation. Ideally such representation lets

you forget the medium. In this sense it wants to deceive the eye. A mimetic, representational art of this sort is not at all what Heidegger has in mind. He call for an art able to re-present the earth. Much art of the sixties and seventies sought to return to art this re-presentational function: the painter tries to do little more than to reveal paint as paint, canvas as canvas.[12] It is this material aspect of the work of art that Heidegger also terms its thingly aspect.

Heidegger began the essay, trying to understand the work of art as a thing, a made thing, a made thing that has a certain meaning. We can now say that a successful work of art re-presents itself as the unique thing it is. In this sense art can be said to keep us open to material transcendence, and perhaps it can do so even when it lacks the strength to establish a world: art can open an already established world up to the earth—that power it has not lost. By so doing it also opens us to what Heidegger terms the *Ereignis*.

Heidegger concludes this discussion of "earth" by returning to the meaning of material, *Werkstoff*.

> Nowhere in the work is there any trace of a work-material. It even remains doubtful whether, in the essential definition of equipment, what the equipment consists of is properly described in its equipmental nature as matter (G5, 34/48).

Interesting here is the comparison of "Nowhere in the work is there any trace of a work-material" with the German: *Überall west im Werk nichts von einem Werkstoff*. *Wesen* suggests presencing. What is presencing in the work is this *nichts von einem Werkstoff*. That is to say, we experience the distance of such work from mere equipment. The world in which equipment and the material of which it is made have their home has been left behind.

4. The Strife of Earth and World

Having developed his understanding of the world as a setting up of a world and a setting forth of the earth, Heidegger returns to the self-subsistence (*Insichstehen*) of the art work:

> The setting up of a world and the setting forth of earth are two essential features in the work-being of the work. They belong together, however, in the unity of work-being. This is the unity we seek when we ponder the self-subsistence of the work and try to express in words this closed, unitary repose of self-support (G5, 34/48).

And yet how well does repose (*Ruhe*) capture what has been described? There has been talk of setting up and setting forth, of activity. Something would seem to happen in the work of art. It has what we might call an event character.

"But in the essential features just mentioned, if our account has any validity at all, we have indicated in the work rather a happening and in no sense a repose, for what is rest if not the opposite of motion?" (G5, 48). Here we get a hint of why Heidegger picked the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer: the key is provided by its last line:*Und strömt und ruht*. Heidegger would seem to read this poem as a poem that enacts what it is about: the essence of the work of art. Art here does not so much establish a world as it re-presents art.

Heidegger develops his understanding of art in a way that suggests not just a counterplay, but a contest between earth and world.

> The world is the self-disclosing openness of the broad paths of the simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people. The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth and earth juts through the world. But the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there.
>
> The opposition of world and earth is a strife [*Streit*—not "a striving," as the translation has it] (GA5, 35/ 49).

Earth and world are thus inescapably in tension.

Earlier Heidegger had said of the Greek temple that "standing there," it "holds its ground." We say of someone who refuses to yield to an enemy that he holds his ground. Would Heidegger then have us liken the temple's relationship to its setting to a kind of war? The present passage would have us answer with a firm "yes," although Heidegger would no doubt once again insist that "war" here translates the Greek *polemos*, which he understands with Heraclitus as *eris*, which he translates as *Auseinandersetzung* or confrontation. *Auseinandersetzen* means first of all to set apart so that what is thus set apart is rendered visible in its own proper being. As an assertive presencing of stone ordered by spirit, the temple sets itself apart from the earth that supports it, establishes itself as a figure on the ground of the pre-given landscape. Setting itself apart from its context, the temple brackets it, where such bracketing must be understood exclusively and inclusively: as a seemingly self-sufficient presence the temple draws our attention, pushing its setting at a distance. Thus distanced, the setting is, so to speak, put in a frame. Framed, it is re-presented. And something similar can be said of the material of which the temple is made. The temple lets us look again, not just at itself, at its form and materials, but at its site. By confronting the earth the artwork sets forth the earth.

The repose of the artwork is thus linked by Heidegger to strife. Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian and the Appollinian in Greek tragedy

comes to mind. So does Heidegger's insistence in *Facts and Thoughts* that what he meant when he wrote about battle in the *Rektoratsrede* was always thought philosophically and should be understood in the light of the Heraclitean *polemos***.** But if so, the thinker should have been aware that his choice of words had to invite misunderstanding on the part of those uninitiated into the Pre-Socratics.

> In setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is an instigating of this strife [*Streit*: translation corrected]. This does not happen so that the work should at the same time settle and put an end to the conflict in an insipid agreement, but so that the strife may remain a strife. Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work accomplishes this strife. The work-being of the work consists of the fighting of the battle [*Bestreitung des Streites*] between earth and world. It is because the strife [translation corrected] arrives at its high point in the simplicity of intimacy that the unity of the work comes about in the fighting of the battle (G5, 36/49–50).

Looking down Heidegger's path of thinking, the question arises, how does what "The Origin of the Work of Art" has to say about the strife between world and earth relate to later talk of the world as the fourfold of earth and heaven, mortals and gods. Earth appears now as a region of world;[13] strife is said to be between heaven and earth. We would thus seem to meet with a quite different understanding of both world and earth in the later essays. But the difference is more apparent than real: Dasein as being in the world is essentially also a dwelling on the earth and beneath the sky, where the meaning of both hovers between a literal and a figural meaning. Heaven thus names also the openness of the world, the free that above was said to be furnished by the world. This formulation suggests something Heidegger, to the best of my knowledge, does not ever clearly state or develop: a possible strife between heaven or sky and world**,** which would seem to provide the necessary complement to the strife of earth and world. The former could also be construed as the strife of freedom and the world.

5. The Place of Art in a "Needy Age"

That in "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger should turn for his main example of "great art" to architecture, to that art Hegel called "the first pioneer on the highway toward an adequate realization of the Godhead" is significant. Hegel too, took architecture to be the origin of art, an origin the progress of spirit had left behind. In "The Origin of the Work of Art Heidegger seems to be saying that, while we may stray from this origin, in an important sense we never quite leave it behind: it always remains a challenge. This is to claim also that the progress of art Hegel outlines is a highly ambiguous

progress, a progress that may have brought us much closer to becoming, as Descartes had promised, the masters and possessors of nature, but also has removed not only art from its essence, rendering it, when measured by the great art of the past, profoundly deficient, but such deficiency is at bottom just a reflection of the deficiency of the age. Heidegger thus invites us to think the deficiency of art in the modern age, understood with Hölderlin as *die dürftige Zeit*, the needy age, the age from which gods and God have fled.[14]

Both the painting by van Gogh and the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer in their different ways respond to that need, the first, if we follow Heidegger's interpretation by romantically opposing to our modern world another in which human beings are differently at home in their world and in touch with the earth, the second by opposing to our modern world an aesthetic construct so perfect that for at least for a time it lets us forget our world. Neither establishes a world that we are able to inhabit. In this respect both are very different from the Greek temple, which assigned those who came there to celebrate the god a place in the world it established. Both turn their back on our modern world.

But is it not possible to imagine art that does not turn its back on our modern world, but rather confronts it and instigates, not a strife between some world it establishes and the earth, but between our modern world and the earth? I suggested thus above that in recent years—I should add: at least since Marcel Duchamp—art has at times aimed at little more than such a presentation of the earth. Given an understanding of the art-work as both, the establishment of a world and a presentation of the earth, there would seem to be something deficient about such art. And yet it is easy to understand why just this deficient art should be particularly adequate to the modern age. For consider once more: what is the dominant understanding of reality today? I have remarked above about a tendency to count as real only what can be captured by reason, what can be rendered clear and distinct, can be measured or weighed—for example. And, as Descartes already suggested, when nature has in this sense been subjected to clear and distinct understanding, it can also be manipulated. This conception of reality triumphs in technology. Part of the modern world-view is indeed, as both Hegel and Heidegger recognized, that what they both understood as art in its highest sense lies behind us. No longer can we take seriously the world establishing power of art. Thus what Heidegger has to say about the Greek temple may reflect how people were once able to respond to sacred architecture, but our world makes it difficult for us, perhaps should even prevent us, from seriously entertaining thoughts about the artistic establishment of a world that assign us our place. Such establishment would necessarily have both a religious and a political significance. If one were to imagine what form such world establishing might take in this, our modern age, the first thing that comes to mind may well be Hitler's creation of a new Germany. Its architecture cannot but shadow Heidegger's Greek temple.[15] It is difficult for us to really appropriate what Heidegger has to say about the world establishing power of the work of art.

And yet there is a sense in which our modern world does violence to reality. Heidegger is right to suggest that when we subject nature to number, as our science must do, nature as *phusis* is in an important sense gone. And Heidegger is not alone when he insists that what is lost here is something important. By presenting the earth, art attempts to undo that loss, attempts to open a window to what I have called material transcendence.

Notes

1. See Karsten Harries, "Two Conflicting Interpretations of Language in Wittgenstein's Investigations," *Kantstudien*, vol. 59, no. 4, 1968, 397–409.
2. Cf. Herman Philipse, "Heidegger's Grand (Pascalian) Strategy: On the Problem of Reinterpreting the Existentialia," *Metaphysics: The Proceedings of the XXth World Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999), 51: "Whereas in *Sein und Zeit* there is a priority of Dasein as a *transcendental* agent, in the later works this relation of priority is reversed: Dasein is said to depend on *Sein* as an agent or event which is radically *transcendent* to the totality of beings, and the former term is defined merely in relation of priority is reversed." But if this captures the core of Heidegger's supposed *Kehre*, that core can be found already in *Being and Time*. The supposed *Kehre* represents a change in emphasis rather than a genuine reversal.
3. See also Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1987), 167.
4. Otto Pöggeler, "Heideggers politisches Selbstverständnis, *Heidegger und die praktische Philosohie*, ed. Annemarie Gethman-Siefert and Otto Pögeler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 42.
5. G65. See statement on cover. Trans by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly as *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning) Studies in Continental Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000). See also Alexander Schwan, "Heidegger's 'Beiträge zur Philosophie' and Politics," in Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme, eds., *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994), 71–88.
6. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, "'Die Beiträge zur Philosphie' und 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes'," *Heideggers Philosphie der Kunst*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), 9–39. See also von Herrmann, "Technology, Politics, and Art in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosphie*," in *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology,* 55–70.
7. See Richard Polt, "'Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)': Ein Sprung in die Wesung des Seyns," *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomae (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 184–194.
8. Cf. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik* (SS 1928), G26, 218–238.
9. Nietzsche's understanding of Apollonian art and its relationship to dreaming is of interest in this connection.
10. For a fuller discussion of re-presentation, see Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1997), 118–133.
11. Karsten Harries, "Art and the Sacred: Postscript to a Seminar," *Christian Sprituality and the Culture of Modern: The Thought of Louis Dupré*, ed. Peter J. Casarella and George P. Schner, S. J. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 189–203.
12. See Karsten Harries, "Das befreite Nichts," *Durchblicke: Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1970), 39–62. Günter Seubold, *Kunst als Enteignis. Heideggers Weg zu einer nicht mehr metaphysischen Kunst* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996), 50–51, fn 65.

13. Cf Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works*, 151. I agree that it is indeed "extremely difficult," I would say impossible, "to derive one homogeneous conception of earth" from "The Origin of the Work of Art" and such later essays as "The Thing" and "Building Dwelling Thinking." Heidegger is not at all concerned to develop a technical vocabulary. With the word "earth" he gestures towards what resists being put into "homogeneous" conceptions. And these gestures can be expected to change as his thinking evolves. But what is to be thought remains the same.
14. Martin Heidegger, "Wozu Dichter?" G5, 269–320.
15. See Robert Jan van Pelt, "Apocalyptic Abjection," in Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll Willliam Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 317–381.

9

The Essence of Truth

1. Art and Truth

As Heidegger reminds us in the epilogue to "The Origin of the Work of Art," Hegel claims that for us art in its highest sense is a thing of the past: thought and reflection have overtaken the fine arts: we who are truly of today no longer can take seriously art's claim to serve the truth. Challenging Hegel, Heidegger insists on a more intimate connection between truth and art, insists on that connection, even as he recognizes all that argues against it. What is at stake for Heidegger is, as we have seen, first of all not just or even primarily the future and, more especially, the significance of art, but the happening of truth and its significance. Challenging Hegel, Heidegger wants to understand art once more *as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself*.

Instead of opposing Heidegger to Hegel, one could also oppose him to Plato. The essential point remains the same. Recall that it was Plato's commitment to philosophy and its truth that forced him, or rather Socrates in the *Republic*, to become a critic of art and especially poetry. Heidegger rejects the presuppositions of this critique. Key here is their different understanding of the meaning of "truth." If Plato, according to Heidegger, can be said to have inaugurated the understanding of truth as correctness that has presided over the progress of metaphysics that culminated in Hegel's philosophy, Heidegger would have us return to, and even dig beneath, that earlier, more archaic understanding of truth as *aletheia* or unconcealedness that we encounter in a thinker such as Heraclitus. In this connection it is of interest to learn that, at the time Heidegger worked on the first version of "The Origin of the Work of Art," he also lectured on the essence of truth and Plato's myth of the cave.[1] He was to return to this topic shortly after the *Rectorial Address* in the winter semester 1933/1934; and in 1940 he was to draw from the 1931/1932 lecture course the essay *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* (G9, 203–238). After *Being and Time*, Heidegger clarified his own understanding of truth in the course of a continuing confrontation with Plato.[2] Crucial here is the claim that by understanding truth first of all as correctness Plato set metaphysics on a course that has shaped our modern world. Art has only a peripheral place in that world and so it seems only fitting that in Plato's *Republic* the poets should have been given a peripheral place, at best. And it is not surprising that Heidegger, having called Plato's understanding of truth into question, should want to give the poets once again a privileged place in the *Republic*. At issue is the relationship of art to truth. How then does Heidegger understand that relationship?

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 125–138.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_9,

2. The Meaning of "Truth"

Consider once more his question: "The art work opens in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the art work, the truth of what is has set itself into work. What is truth itself, that it sometimes comes to pass as art? What is this setting-itself-to-work?" (G5, 25/39).

The opening up of the Being of beings is here identified with deconcealing, which in turn is identified with the truth of beings. How are we to understand this truth of beings? Usually when we think of truth we think first of all of thoughts or propositions, not of things such as tables or chairs. To be sure, we may say "this is a true chair" and mean by this that it lives up to our understanding of what a chair should be. But can this be what Heidegger here has in mind?

Heidegger understands the essence of the work of art as the setting itself into work of the truth of what is. Later, he will describe art as *the becoming and happening of truth* (G5, 59/71). Such formulations must remain obscure as long as we do not know just how "art" and "the becoming and happening of truth" are to be linked. What necessity joins them? In the preceding chapters we have learned something about art, but very little about truth: "Until now it was a merely provisional assertion that in an art work the truth is set to work. In what way does truth happen in the work-being of the work, i.e., now, how does truth happen in the fighting of the battle between truth and earth? What is truth?" (GA 5, 36/50). We have seen already that our generally taken for granted understanding of truth argues against an intimate linkage between art and truth. In what sense can the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer or the painting by van Gogh be said to be true? What indeed does truth matter to poet or painter? The word seems somehow inappropriate.

But what is truth? How do we usually understand the meaning of "truth"? And is that understanding indeed *stunted,* as Heidegger claims:

> How slight and stunted our knowledge of the nature of truth is, is shown by the laxity we permit ourselves in using this basic word. By truth is usually meant this or that particular truth. That means: something true. A cognition articulated in a proposition can be of this sort. However, we call not only a proposition true, but also a thing: true gold in contrast to sham gold. True here means genuine, real gold. What does the expression "real" mean here? To us it is what is in truth. The true is what corresponds to the real, and the real is what is in truth. The circle has closed again (G5, 36/50).

Consider the circle that Heidegger here points out: A proposition or thought is true if it corresponds to the way things really are, to the way they are in truth. The truth of propositions may thus be said to have its measure in the truth of things. But how is this latter truth to be understood?

The tradition had a ready answer. Consider Thomas Aquinas' definition of truth as "the adequation of the thing and the understanding": *Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*.[3] Quite in keeping with our everyday understanding, the definition claims that there can be no truth where there is no understanding. But can there be understanding without human beings? Does truth then depend on human beings? This is suggested by Heidegger when he makes Being and with it truth dependent on Dasein. This would imply that there can be no eternal truths, unless human beings will be forever. But must we not dismiss that implication? When I claim some assertion, say 2 + 2=4, to be true, I claim it, not just subjectively, here and now, but for all time, provided that I have taken into account all the relevant relativities. "Today the sun is shining" may not be true tomorrow or in some other place; but that does not mean that the state of affairs expressed in the assertion is not true *sub specie aeternitatis* and can be restated in language that removes the relativities. But does the definition of truth as the adequation of the thing and the understanding allow for such an understanding of truth? Is human life here on earth more than an insignificant cosmic episode? Consider the fable with which Nietzsche, borrowing from Schopenhauer, begins "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense:"

> Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of "world history," but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die.—One might invent such a fable, and yet still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities during which it did not exist. And when it is all over with the human intellect, nothing will have happened. For this intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life.[4]

Nietzsche here calls attention to the disproportion between the human claim to truth and our peripheral location in the cosmos and the ephemeral nature of our being. Must the time not come, when there will no longer be human beings, when there will be no understanding, and hence no truth?

Thomas Aquinas, to be sure, like any believer in the Biblical God, would have had no difficulty answering Nietzsche. His understanding of God left no room for thoughts of a cosmos from which understanding would be absent. His was a theocentric understanding of truth where we should note that the definition *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* invites two readings: *veritas est adaequatio intellectus ad rem*, "truth is the adequation of the understanding to the thing" and *veritas est adaequatio rei ad intellectum*, "truth is the adequation of the thing to the understanding." And is the second not

presupposed by the first? Is there not a sense in which the truth of our assertions presupposes the truth of things?—as Heidegger, who knew his medieval philosophers so well, insists. If we are to measure the truth of an assertion by the thing asserted, that thing must disclose itself to us as it really is, as it is in truth. But what could "truth" now mean? Certainly not an adequation of the thing to our finite, perspective-bound understanding: that would substitute appearances for the things themselves.

A philosophy bound by faith once had a ready answer: every created thing necessarily corresponds to the idea preconceived in the mind of God and in this sense cannot but be true. The truth of things, understood as *adaequatio rei (creandae) ad intellectum (divinum)* secures truth understood as *adaequatio intellectus (humani) ad rem (creatam)* (see G9, 178–182)·. Human knowing here is given its measure in the divinely created order of the cosmos. And such talk of the truth of things does accord with the way we sometimes use the words "truth" and "true": e.g., when we call something we have drawn "a true circle," we declare it to be in accord with our understanding of what a circle is. What we have put down on paper accords with an idea in our intellect. Here the truth of things is understood as *adaequatio rei (creandae) ad intellectum (humanum*).

But what right do we have to think that we can bridge the abyss that separates God's infinite creative knowledge from our finite human understanding? Nietzsche was to insist that there is no such bridge. If we were to seize the truth, he claims in "On Truth and Lie," our designations would have to be congruent with things. Nietzsche here understands truth as, not just a correspondence, but as the congruence of designation and thing: pure truth, according to Nietzsche, thus would be nothing other than the thing itself.[5] This recalls the traditional view that gives human discourse its measure in divine discourse. God's creative word is nothing other than the truth of things. Here, too, our speaking is thought to have its measure in the identity of word (*logos*) and being. In this strong sense, truth is of course denied to us finite knowers. Heidegger would have agreed.

And so would Kant: if we understand truth as the correspondence of our judgments and things in themselves, understood as noumena, another term that names the truth of things, then there is no truth available to us for Kant either. But Kant does not conclude, as Nietzsche does, that therefore we cannot give a transcendental justification of the human pursuit of truth. To be sure, theory cannot penetrate beyond phenomena; things as they are in themselves are beyond the reach of what we can objectively know. But this does not mean that the truth pursued by science is therefore itself no more than a subjective illusion. The truth of phenomena provides sufficient ground for science and its pursuit of truth. Key to our understanding of that truth is this thought: to understand that what we experience is only an appearance, bound by a particular perspective, is to be already on the road towards a more adequate, and that means here first of all less perspective-bound and in this sense freer understanding. The pursuit of truth demands a movement of self-transcendence that,

by leading us to understand subjective appearance for what it is, opens a path towards a more adequate, more objective understanding. The pursuit of truth demands objectivity.

We should note how close this understanding of truth remains to the Thomistic view. Consider once more: according to the latter things are in truth the way they are known by God. To God's understanding all is transparent. He is the perfect knower. Something of this traditional understanding that every being (*ens*) is true (*verum*) because open to the divine mind is preserved by Kant with his understanding of the transcendental subject and the transcendental object. They provide our human pursuit of truth with the regulative ideal of an ideal knowing that is not distorted by any perspective.

Heidegger cannot appeal to God, and in *Being and Time* he dismisses appeals to some ideal subject as drawing illegitimately on the traditional understanding of God (G2, 303/272). But we must question such a dismissal: regardless of whether God exists or not, human beings have been able to think him as an ideal knower. Any adequate account of human being has to make room for this possibility. The mere thought of God as a perfect knower testifies to the ability of finite human knowers to transcend themselves as beings bound by some particular perspective. Emphasizing the finitude of Dasein, as he does, Heidegger fails to do justice to the way the pursuit of truth, as ordinarily understood, from the very beginning has presupposed as a regulative ideal something very much like that understanding of truth as the correspondence of our judgments with the objects that Kant suggests should be presupposed and taken for granted. Heidegger fails to develop a convincing account of the legitimacy of the understanding of truth that presides over science.

But given his rejection of any appeal to an ideal knowing no longer bound by perspective, how is "the real is what is in truth" to be understood? What meaning are we now to give to "truth?" The same we presupposed when we called some claim about what is the case true? What kind of circle do we find ourselves in?

Heidegger seizes on this "in truth."

> What does "in truth" mean? Truth is the essence of the true. What do we have in mind when speaking of essence? Usually it is thought to be those features held in common by everything that is true. The essence is discovered in the generic and universal concept, which represents the one feature that holds indifferently for many things. This indifferent essence (essentiality in the sense of *essentia*) is, however, only the inessential essence. What does the essential essence of something consist in? Presumably it lies in what the entity *is* in truth. The true essential nature of the thing is determined by way of its true being, by way of the truth of the given being. But we are now seeking not the truth of essential nature but the essential nature of truth. There thus appears a curious tangle. Is it only curiosity or even merely the empty sophistry of a conceptual game, or is it—an abyss? (G5, 37/50)

Wahrheit (truth) means the essence (*Wesen*) of what is *wahr* (true), just as*Schönheit* (beauty) means the essence of what is *schön* (beautiful). We should thus be able to look at all the things we call true and derive from this an understanding of the essence of truth. But this, Heidegger suggests, would yield only the "inessential essence." How are we to understand the distinction he draws here between a*wesentliches,* an essential, and an *unwesentliches Wesen,* an inessential essence. The former is linked by Heidegger to "what the entity *is* in truth."

But this returns us to the question: how are we to understand this being in truth? In approaching this question, Heidegger suggests, we should let ourselves be guided by the Greek word *aletheia*, where we should however keep in mind Heidegger's debt to scholastic thought. "Truth means the nature of the true. We think this nature in recollecting the Greek word *aletheia*, the unconcealedness of beings. But is this enough to define the nature of truth?" (G5, 37/51). We should ask ourselves how much is packed into the words *aletheia* and *Unverborgenheit* (unconcealedness)? Does Heidegger want to say more than that the things must somehow come out into the open, into the light of consciousness, i.e. present themselves to human beings? Or is more demanded, must they present themselves as they are in truth? But this just returns us to the question: how is "truth" to be understood now?

Heidegger proceeds to point out that the turn to the Greeks will not prove of much help here. And he is indeed only all too right. Greek philosophy did not think truth as unconcealedness. Nor did Plato stray from a supposedly more original meaning, as Heidegger claimed in *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*. From the very beginning the Greeks thought truth as correspondence, as Paul Friedländer demonstrated[6] and as Heidegger himself eventually came to admit.[7] In thinking the essence of truth as *aletheia* and*aletheia* as unconcealedness, we do not in fact think what we ordinarily mean by truth in some supposedly more fundamental way. Truth demands that it be opposed to falsity. That distinction is lost when we understand truth as unconcealedness, which is a presupposition of both, truth and falsity. What we are thinking is then a necessary, but by no means a sufficient condition of truth.[8] Why then does Heidegger find it helpful to recollect the Greek word *aletheia*?

3. Truth as Unconcealedness

Do we not possess an adequate theory of truth? Traditionally the meaning of truth has been understood as correspondence or correctness. Why do we need to understand truth as unconcealedness? "Yet why should we not be satisfied with the nature of truth that has by now been familiar to us for centuries? Truth means today and has long meant the agreement or conformity of knowledge with fact" (G5, 38/51). But how do the facts that make a proposition true present themselves? Truth as correspondence presupposes that the things have shown or revealed themselves as the things they really are.

We can call the revelation of things as they really are the truth of things. The question remains however: how are we to understand this "truth of things?"

Heidegger is right to insist that our usual understanding of truth as "the agreement or conformity of knowledge with fact" presupposes the "truth of things":

> However, the fact must show itself to be fact if knowledge and the proposition that forms and expresses knowledge are to be able to conform to the fact; otherwise the fact cannot become binding on the proposition. How can fact show itself if it cannot itself stand out of concealedness, if it does not itself stand in the unconcealed? A proposition is true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true. Propositional truth is always, and always exclusively, this correctness. The critical concepts of truth which, since Descartes, start out from truth as certainty, are merely variations of the definition of truth as correctness. The nature of truth which is familiar to us—correctness in representation—stands and falls with the unconcealedness of beings (G5, 38/51–52).

What makes a proposition correct must have disclosed itself "as it is," if the proposition deserves to be called true.

The Cartesian understanding of truth presupposes that things can present themselves to us as they are:

> If here and elsewhere we conceive of truth as unconcealedness, we are not merely taking refuge in a more literal translation of a Greek word. We are reminding ourselves of what, unexperienced and unthought, underlies our familiar and therefore outworn nature of truth in the sense of correctness. We do, of course, occasionally take the trouble to concede that naturally, in order to understand and verify the correctness (truth) of a proposition one really should go back to something that is already evident, and that this proposition is indeed unavoidable. As long as we talk and believe in that way, we always understand truth merely as correctness, which of course still requires a further presupposition, that we ourselves just happen to make, heaven knows how or why (G5, 38/52).

What is readily granted is that to verify a proposition we have to ground it in what is already evident—Descartes might have said in what has presented itself to us clearly and distinctly. But Descartes himself raised the question whether such clear and distinct presentation was sufficient to establish the truth of our propositions and had to appeal to God to secure such truth. Heidegger appeals, not to God, but to the unconcealednes of beings, i e., to Being.

> But it is not we who presuppose the unconcealedness of beings; rather the unconcealedness of beings (Being) puts us into such a condition of

> being that in our representation we always remain installed within and in attendance upon unconcealedness. Not only must that in *conformity* with which a cognition orders itself be in some way unconcealed. The entire *realm* in which this "conforming to something" goes on must already occur as a whole in the unconcealed; and this holds equally of that *for* which the conformity of a proposition to fact becomes manifest (G5, 39/52).

The unconcealedness of beings (Being)—in the later Reclam edition (1960) Heidegger will add, i.e. *das Ereignis*—happens in human beings. That is to say, we human beings are, in our being, open to beings. Such openness is a presupposition of the very possibility of perceiving particular beings. In this sense Heidegger can say that while the truth of some proposition presupposes that something has been perceived or in some way presented itself to us—in Heidegger's language, something that was hidden has in some way become unconcealed—such presentation presupposes already something like a stage—Heidegger speaks of a realm—and entities that take their place and present themselves on that stage. How then are we to understand this stage where such presentation takes place? For the sake of comparison, we may want to ask: how does Descartes think that stage?

Truth as correspondence presupposes truth as unconcealment, which now names what above was called the truth of things. To repeat: "that in *conformity* with which a cognition orders itself" must have become "in some way unconcealed": "With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealedness of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that lighted realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws" (G5, 39/52).

It is in this connection that Heidegger introduces one of his most notoriously metaphorical notions, that of the *Lichtung* or clearing. Heidegger uses this metaphor to gesture towards what I just gestured towards with the word "stage": a lighted realm, *jenes Gelichtete*. Only much later will he state explicitly that *Lichtung* names what he had heard into the Greek *aletheia* (GA14, 80–90).

The German *Lichtung* means first of all a forest clearing, an open space where trees have been cut down. The importance Heidegger attaches to this image of a clearing is underscored by the title Heidegger gave to the collection of essays in which "The Origin of the Work of Art" first appeared: he called it *Holzwege*, "wood paths." In German the term *Holzweg* has a quite specific meaning: it is a path cut by foresters to allow the trees that have been cut down to be brought out of the forest. A *Holzweg* therefore ends in a clearing. Such a path leads nowhere. For a hiker to be on a *Holzweg* means that he has lost his way. Precisely by losing our way we may find ourselves in Heidegger's clearing.

We may well be put off by Heidegger's use of such outrageously metaphorical terms as *Holzweg* and *Lichtung*. Let me therefore approach it using language more familiar to students of philosophy. For a proposition to be recognized as true, some object must have presented itself to the subject recognizing the proposition's truth. Furthermore, that object has to fall into some conceptual space or categorial framework. But note that the expressions "conceptual space" and "categorial framework" are also metaphors, although philosophers by now are likely to have become sufficiently used to them to not find them outrageously metaphorical any longer. Both expressions presuppose the metaphor "space." What does it stand for? Note that a spatial metaphor is also buried in the expression: S–O, which I may write on some blackboard to suggest that every object is for a subject. What does the line that both separates and joins subject and object stand for?

You get here a hint of what Heidegger is after when he uses a metaphor such as "clearing." One thing he is doing is calling attention to the metaphorical nature of our understanding of consciousness. That understanding is shaped by an analogy on which Plato already relies: understanding is taken to be like seeing. When we see, the object seen is quite literally at a distance from the seeing eye. Only that distance allows the seen to present itself. Similarly it is suggested that the understood object is at a distance from the understanding subject or I. And just as some light, say the sun, is needed to illuminate what I see, so the understanding has been said to be illuminated by what philosophers have spoken of as the natural light. Heidegger's metaphor of the clearing links the metaphors of distance and light on which traditional philosophy has relied. Thus Heidegger forces you to confront and struggle with what is being said, not just in this essay, but by much more traditional philosophers, say by Descartes. All talk of truth and falsity presupposes Heidegger's clearing—is this a less or a more rigorous way of speaking?

4. "The Nature of Truth is Untruth"

After this digression, let me return to Heidegger's claim that truth as correspondence presupposes truth as unconcealment, that the unconcealment of things presupposes the clearing: How are we to understand this unconcealedness as which truth is said to happen? Once more Heidegger returns to the many things that are said to be:

> Things are, and human beings, gifts, and sacrifices are, animals and plants are, equipment and works are. That which is, the particular being, stands in Being. Through Being there passes a veiled destiny that is ordained between the godly (*das Gotthafte*) and the countergodly (*das Widergöttliche*). There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. What is, is never of our making or even merely the

> product of our minds, as it might all too easily seem. When we contemplate this whole as one, then we apprehend, so it appears, all that is—though we grasp it crudely enough (GA5, 39/52–53).

Thinking perhaps of Wittgenstein's use of that term in the *Tractatus*, we may want to call the totality of what is "the world." All the things mentioned by Heidegger "are" in some sense. As Heidegger puts it, they all stand in Being. But to thus stand in Being they have to take their place in something like a space—Wittgenstein speaks of logical space. Space implies openness, implies what Heidegger gestures towards with the word "clearing." Constitutive of standing in Being is standing in a clearing:

> And yet—beyond what is, not away from it but before it, there is still something else that happens. In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting (*Lichtung*). Thought of in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree than are beings. This open center is therefore not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting center itself encircles all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know (G5, 39–40/53).

The clearing is thus comparable to what Kant might have called a transcendental condition of the presencing of things, of experience.

> That which is can only be, as a being, if it stands within and stands out within what is lighted in this clearing. Only this clearing grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are. Thanks to this clearing, beings are unconcealed in certain changing degrees (G5, 40/53).

Translating once more into a Kantian vocabulary, Heidegger's clearing could be called a transcendental presupposition of both our awareness of things and of our self-awareness. But our experience of things is never such that these things are fully transparent to us. Clearing is thus said by Heidegger to be inevitably also concealment: "And yet a being can be *concealed*, too, only within the sphere of what is lighted. Each being we encounter and which encounters us keeps to this curious opposition of presence in that it always withholds itself at the same time in a concealedness. The clearing in which beings stand is at the same time concealment" (G5, 40/53). Heidegger proceeds to distinguish two kinds of concealment:

> Beings refuse themselves to us down to that one and seemingly least feature which we touch upon most readily when we can say no more of beings than that they are. Concealment as refusal is not simply and only the limit of knowledge in any given circumstance, but the beginning of

> the clearing of what is lighted. But concealment, though of another sort, to be sure, also occurs within what is lighted. One being places itself in front of another being, the one helps to hide the other, the former obscures the latter, a few obstruct many, one denies all. Here concealment is not simple refusal. Rather, a being appears, but it presents itself as other than it is (GA5, 40/53–54).

What Heidegger here terms "refusal" (*sich versagen*) is the mark of reality. That is to say, whatever deserves to be called real will never present itself to us transparently, will never become in Descartes' sense clear and distinct. Compare understanding a circle to understanding a tree. There is a sense in which, when I am given the definition of a circle as a line defined by its equidistance from some point nothing is left out. Nothing refuses itself to me. In this sense I shall never understand a tree. When Heidegger here speaks of refusal he points in the same direction as he did with the concept "earth," which was said to "shatter every attempt to penetrate into it."

The second kind of concealment is more easily understood. In this case it is one thing that hides another. You may quite literally place yourself before another person, in this sense hide him or her. This is what the German *Verstellen*, translated by Hofstadter as "dissembling" suggests. That such a *Verstellen* is essential to understanding is tied to the way our understanding depends on language. We apply to things labels that are never adequate to them in their particularity. No matter how adequate, words conceal even as they reveal. That is suggested by Heidegger's notorious statement: *Truth, in its nature, is un-truth.* But let us consider the whole paragraph:

> We believe we are at home in the immediate circle of beings. That which is, is familiar, reliable, ordinary. Nevertheless, the clearing is pervaded by constant concealment in the double form of refusal and dissembling. At bottom, the ordinary is not ordinary; it is extra-ordinary, uncanny. The nature of truth, that is of unconcealedness, is dominated throughout by a denial. Yet this denial is not a defect or fault, as though truth were an unalloyed unconcealedness that has rid itself of everything concealed. If truth could accomplish this, it would no longer be itself. *This denial, in the form of a double concealment, belongs to the nature of truth as unconcealedness.* Truth in its nature is un-truth. We put this matter this way in order to serve notice with a possibly surprising trenchancy, that denial in the manner of concealment belongs to unconcealedness as clearing. The proposition, "the nature of truth is untruth," is not, however, intended to state that truth is at bottom falsehood. Nor does it mean that truth is never itself but, viewed dialectically, is always its opposite (GA5, 41/54–55).

With the last two sentences Heidegger distances himself from a Nietzschean and a Hegelian reading of the proposition. The essence of truth

is to be understood as the *Urstreit*, the Heraclitean *polemos*, the primordial struggle, between concealment and unconcealing, that Nietzsche understood as the struggle between Apollo and Dionysus.[9]

5. Art as One Way in which Truth Happens

Heidegger goes on to relate the interplay of concealment and unconcealment, of untruth and truth, to what he discussed before as the strife of earth and world.

> This open happens in the midst of beings. It exhibits an essential feature which we have already mentioned. To the Open there belongs a world and the earth. But the world is not simply the Open that corresponds to clearing, and the earth is not simply the Closed that corresponds to concealment. Rather, the world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies. Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something confusing; else it would never be a decision. The earth is not simply the Closed, but rather that which rises up self-closing. World and earth are always intrinsically and essentially in conflict, belligerent by nature. Only as such do they enter into the conflict of clearing and concealing (GA5, 42/55).

Human beings are those beings who are open to what is. Human being can thus be likened to a stage unto which actors can step from behind what remains concealed. That stage has always already been furnished or set in one way or another. That is suggested by characterizing human being as essentially being-in-the world. World here is figured by the stage-set. But to think here of actors that choose to step unto the furnished stage is misleading in that it fails to consider the work necessary to make what is hidden to thus present itself on the stage and the resistance that what is hidden offers to such work. Such work is a struggle to make what is hidden take its place in the world. But the hidden cannot finally be overpowered and forced to thus present itself. A better metaphor might be "persuaded."[10] There is a sense in which every appearance of the hidden is also a gift. The world is a stage and every human being is both spectator and actor, himself a battle between the open of a world and the closed of the earth. This battle of earth and world is constitutive of human freedom: without it we could not make sense of genuine decision. Whenever such a decision is made truth in Heidegger's sense happens.

Truth is said to "happen in a few essential ways. One of those ways in which truth happens is the work-being of the work. Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the fighting of the battle in which the unconcealedness of beings as a whole, or truth, is won" (G5, 42/55). The reader is left wondering about what other possible ways Heidegger might have in mind—but Heidegger will mention some of these only later. Here he returns to his

earlier examples, not only to the temple, but also to the shoes by van Gogh and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's Roman fountain. Truth is said to happen "in the temple's standing where it is," which is said to bring what is as a whole into unconcealedness. And truth is said to happen in van Gogh's painting, which, revealing the being of the shoes, also brings what is as a whole, and with it "world and earth, in their counterplay" to unconcealedness. And similarly the poem is said to reveal not just what a Roman fountain is, but to "make unconcealedness as such happen in regard to what is as a whole" (G5, 42–43/56).

And yet, despite this reference to temple, painting, and poem, the whole discussion seems to have lost sight of something essential, of the work of art as a particular thing, and more especially as a thing that is a product of human art. To be sure, Heidegger has called the work of art "one of the ways in which truth happens." But how this happens in such works remains obscure.

> We now, indeed, grasp the nature of truth more clearly in certain respects. What is at work in the work may accordingly have become more clear. But the work's now visible work-being still does not tell us anything about the work's closest and most obtrusive reality, about the thingly aspect of the work. Indeed, it almost seems as though, in pursuing the exclusive aim of grasping the work's independence as purely as possible, we had completely overlooked the one thing, that a work is always a work, which means that it is something worked out, brought about, effected (G5, 43/56).

We need to move the discussion from truth back to the work: "What is truth, that it can happen as, or even must happen as art? How is it that art exists at all?" (G5, 44/57).

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platon's Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (WS 1931/1932), G34.
2. See Hermann Mörchen, "Nachwort des Herausgebers," G34, 333.
3. Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de veritate*, qu. 1, art. 1. See Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die phänomenoloische Forschung*, (WS 1923/1924) G17, 162–194.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Unmoral Sense," *Philosophy and Truth. Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*, trans. and ed, Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979), 79. Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 2, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), 3. See also the use Heidegger makes of this passage in *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, G40, 6.
5. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie," 82.
6. Paul Friedländer, "Aletheia. A Discussion with Martin Heidegger," *Plato, An Introduction*, 2nd ed., trans. Hans Meyerhoff (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 221–229. G14, 85–87. See also Dorothea Frede, *Stichwort: Wahrheit. Vom aufdeckenden Erschließen zur Offenheit der Lichtung*, in

Dieter Thomä, *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomae (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003),127–134.

7. "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens" (1964), G14, 85–87.
8. For a thorough discussion of Heidegger on truth see Ernst Tugendhat's *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, 2nd. ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970) and Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), which includes a thoughtful critique of Tugendhat. Art, however, does not figure in this discussion, in keeping with its focus on the Heidegger of the Marburg lectures and *Being and Time*.
9. I cannot agree with Julian Young when he claims, in *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64, "that the motif of the primal conflict is really both extraneous to, and a disfigurement of, the important things 'The Origin' has to say about truth and art," that "the essay stands in need of radical surgery; the excision of the *Urstreit*. And this is precisely what Heidegger performs in a marginal note of 1960: the idea of the 1936 text that 'the essence of truth is in itself the primal conflict' is to be replaced by the idea that it is the *Ereignis*" (G5, 42). But Heidegger's later note, which invites us to think what in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is called *Urstreit* as the *Ereignis*, represents no substantial change: In the *Beiträge* Heidegger grounds the strife of world and earth in the *Ereignis*, understood as the event that lets *Da-sein* be (G65, 483). Heidegger does not abandon here the rhetoric of strife.
10. Compare the way mind cannot simply overpower necessity in Plato's *Timaeus*, but must persuade it.

10

Truth and Art

1. Art and *Techne*

The last chapter concluded with Heidegger's question: "What is truth, that it can happen as, or even must happen as art? How is it that art exists at all?" A first answer is suggested by the preceding discussion. How are we to understand the truth of things, when we are no longer able to appeal to an all-seeing God, when instead we follow Nietzsche and proclaim the death of God? Does the truth of things then not have to become *adaequatio rei ad intellectum humanum*, the adequation of the thing to the human intellect? This becomes what Heidegger calls the truth of beings and identifies with the opening up of the Being of beings. That "opening up of the Being of beings" presents itself to us as Heidegger's recasting of the Latin *adaequatio rei ad intellectum*. To be sure, *adaequatio* is hardly the right word for what Heidegger has in mind. The thing in the end always transcends the reach of our intellect. And yet, "to be," i.e. to become unconcealed and to present itself, the thing must in some fashion conform to the human understanding and its mode of operation. This raises the question of how such presentation is to be thought. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* comes to mind, and Heidegger's *Being and Time* remains indebted to Kant's transcendental idealism. We can thus speak, with Heidegger, of the idealistic cast of his fundamental ontology (G2, 275–276/251). Not that we should think of human beings as in any way creating the entities that make up the world. What human beings do appear to establish, however, is something like a framework in which things must take their place if they are to present themselves to us, i.e., if they are to "be" at all in Heidegger's sense. Instead of "framework," we may want to think instead of a logical or linguistic space, except that when Heidegger speaks of "world," he thinks that space of intelligibility in a more encompassing fashion. "To be," every thing must take its place in some "world." But all such worlds are humanly established, i.e. created. Truth, understood here as the Being of things, accordingly establishes itself in human world-creation. Heidegger understands the work of art as such creation: as the setting itself into work of the truth of what is.

The creation of such a work is itself an event in the world. It occurs in the midst of beings.

> One thing thus finally becomes clear: however zealously we inquire into the work's self-sufficiency, we shall still fail to find its actuality as long as we do not also agree to take the work as something worked, effected. To take it thus lies closest to hand, for in the word "work" we hear what is worked. The workly character of the work consists in its having been

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 139–153.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_10,

> created by the artist. It may seem curious that this most obvious and all-clarifying definition of the work is mentioned only now (G5, 45/58)

What could be more obvious: a work of art is something made by human beings. But this immediately raises the question: does a painting by van Gogh differ in this respect from a pair of shoes? If we are to do justice to the essence of art, must we not do justice to this difference? Just how does the work of art differ from a piece of equipment? The latter, too, is something produced or created (*geschaffen*). Heidegger himself raises this question, suggesting that we distinguish genuine creating (*schaffen*) from mere making or producing **or** bringing forth (*hervorbringen*):

> We think of creation as a bringing forth. But the making of equipment, too, is a bringing forth. Handicraft—a remarkable play of language—does not, to be sure, create works, not even when we contrast, as we must, the handmade with the factory product. But what is it that distinguishes bringing forth as creation from bringing forth in the mode of making? It is as difficult to track down the essential features of the creation of works and the making of equipment, as it is easy to distinguish verbally between the two modes of bringing forth. Going along with first appearances we find the same activity of potter and sculptor, of joiner and painter. The creation of a work requires craftsmanship. Great artists prize craftsmanship most highly. They above all others constantly strive to educate themselves ever anew in thorough craftsmanship (G5, 45–46/58–59).

As Heidegger himself points out, all this casts little light on what is supposed to distinguish the artist from the craftsman. To be sure, great artists have often prized craftsmanship. But does this help us understand what is distinctive about the work of art? And we are not brought closer to that distinction when Heidegger once again turns to the Greek, this time to the term, *techne***,** for help. Already in the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger had suggested that the Greeks understood theory as the highest *techne*, and *techne* as a mode of knowing; and in the lecture course *On the Essence of Truth* (WS 1933/34) he had written: "For the Greeks art, too, is a knowing, a realization of truth, a revelation of what is itself, of what is, as up to then it had not been known. Only as form-giver does the human being learn the greatness of Being" (G36/37, 238). The knowledge of the artist is a knowing how to do something. That means also knowing whatever resistance our making will encounter from whatever material is being used. More fundamentally the artist must know his place in the world. Art is thus both *techne* and *episteme*. "Only Aristotle separated *episteme* and *techne*, but in such a way that even he holds on to the fundamental meaning of knowing. Episteme is knowing and being familiar with some definite area of inquiry. *Techne* is knowing that is associated with what is produced, by craft or in some other way" (G36/37, 238). In "The Origin

of the Work of Art" Heidegger reiterates this connection between *techne* and knowing: "It has often enough been pointed out that the Greeks, who knew quite a bit about works of art, use the same word *techne* for craft and art and call the craftsman and the artist by the same name: *technites*" (G5, 46/59).

We can agree: the artist, too, is a *technites*. *Techne* brings forth things. We see a pair of shoes as a product of human work guided by an understanding of how these shoes were to serve. The shoes thus give us some understanding of the world to which they belong. And they also give us insight into the kind of knowledge, or *techne*, required to make them: "for *techne* signifies neither craft nor art, and not at all the technical in our present-day sense; it never means a kind of technical performance. The word *techne* denotes rather a mode of knowing" (G5, 46/59).

But does being told that *techne* means something rather like know-how help us to understand the essence of art any better? To be sure, the master of a *techne* must know how to deal with persons and things. Every *techne* is inseparable from a particular way of standing in the clearing of beings, suggests a certain way of being at home in some region of the world. But how does this illuminate the being of the work of art?

What matters to Heidegger here is, however, something else: "*Techne*, as knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, is a bringing forth of beings in that it *brings forth* present beings as such beings *out of* concealedness and *into* unconcealment and specifically *into* the unconcealment of their appearance; *techne* never signifies the action of making" (G5, 47/59). *Techne* lets things appear that would not have existed in that way without such work. But while that is readily granted, it still does not speak to the distinction between artwork and equipment, between genuine creation and mere making. Thus nothing of what has just been said helps us understand why Heidegger in his pursuit of the thingliness of the thing should have referred to the painting by van Gogh instead of just speaking of a pair of shoes. Nor does the immediately following discussion of the artist as a *technites* seem to help:

> The artist is a *technites* not because he is also a craftsman, but because both the setting forth of works and the setting forth of equipment occur in a bringing forth and presenting that causes beings in the first place to come forward and be present in assuming an appearance. Yet all this happens in the midst of the being that grows out of its own accord, *phusis* (G5, 47/59).

This calls attention to the obvious difference between the way things of nature, rocks, animals, and plants, come to be and the way equipment is produced. *Phusis*, the earth, both transcends and has to support *techne*: the *techne* of the craftsman as well as that of the artist. But still, or once again, we are in danger of losing sight of art.

2. Craftsman and Artist

We still have not learned anything about the different ways in which craft matters to the shoemaker, on the one hand, to the artist, on the other. Where are we to look for the difference? Heidegger points to the nature of creation, which earlier he had opposed to mere making or producing: "What looks like craft in the creation of a work is of a different sort. This doing is determined and pervaded by the nature of creation, and indeed remains contained within that creating" (G5, 47/60). How then are we to understand the createdness of the work of art? How does it allow us to distinguish a work of art from a piece of equipment, which in some sense can also be said to have been created.

> In the light of the definition of the work we have reached at this point, according to which the happening of truth is at work in the work, we are able to characterize creation as follows: to create is to cause something to emerge as a thing that has been brought forth. The work's becoming a work is a way in which truth becomes and happens. It all rests on the nature of truth. But what is truth, that it has to happen in such a thing as something created? How does truth have an impulse toward a work grounded in its very nature? Is this intelligible in terms of the nature of truth as thus far elucidated? (G5, 48/60)

Of special importance here is the explanation: "to create is to cause something to emerge as a thing that has been brought forth." (. . .*können wir das Schaffen als das Hervorgehenlassen in ein Hervorgebrachtes kennzeichnen*.) To be sure, equipment, too, is something made, and making or using it we stand in the clearing of beings, i.e. in the truth. But equipment does not call to the attention of the person using it that it has been made. He just uses it, as the peasant-woman was said to "simply wear" her shoes. In the artwork the fact that it has been made becomes conspicuous. Working this pre-given matter, this block of marble, this piece of limewood, in just this way, the sculptor created this particular work, to be appreciated as just this work. The effort it took, the resistance offered by the medium is present in the work, which thus, in its unique way, re-enacts and makes conspicuous the battle between world and earth that is the usually unattended to presupposition of our everyday being-in-the world.

The truth in which equipment lets us stand is not one that it first establishes. The making of the craftsman here presupposes an already established truth: he knows that this is how one makes this sort of thing. And something analogous can be said of those who use what he has made. The case of the artist is different. He or she is not supported by such knowledge. The artist is not yet in possession of the truth that informs his doing. That truth is established only in the work, and established for the first time. In that sense we can speak of an original establishing and demand originality of the work of art. As hinted

at by the title of Heidegger's essay: every great work of art is itself such an *Ursprung*, a primordial leap, as a spring leaps forth from the earth, to become a brook, perhaps a river.

3. The Happening of Truth in Art

Heidegger understands truth as "the primal conflict in which, always in some particular way, the Open is won within which everything stands and from which everything withholds itself that shows itself and withdraws itself as a being" (G5, 48/60–61). It should be clear by now that "truth" here does not name the truth of thoughts or propositions, nor even the truth of things that allows us to call these "true." From the truth of beings, understood in these two ways, we have to distinguish the truth of Being, that is to say the disclosure of a way of presencing that lets things present themselves as they do. Recall once more Wittgenstein's remark that the world of the happy person is different from that of the unhappy person. He is in different mood. That mood lets him see things differently. The facts may remain the same, but, Heidegger might say, they now have a different Being. In *Being and Time* Heidegger points out that being in the world is essentially also being in a certain mood. Mood discloses that and how one stands in one's world (G2, 179/173). Different moods let us see what is in a different light. The work of art provides such a light. In that light all things have a different look; their Being is transformed. Mood is constitutive of the truth of Being that is said to established by the work of art.

> The openness of this Open, that is truth, can be what it is, namely, *this* openness, only if and as long as it establishes itself within its Open. Hence there must always be some being in this Open, something that is, in which the openness takes its stand and attains its constancy. In taking possession thus of the Open, the openness holds open the Open and sustains it. Setting and taking possession are here everywhere drawn from the Greek sense of *thesis*, which means a setting up in the unconcealed (G5, 48/61).

Thesis is a presupposition of all experience. To name something for the first time and thus to allow it to be recognized and referred to henceforth as the thing it is, is *thesis* in this sense. It fixes the being of that thing, brings it to a stand. How did words such as "elephant," or "rose," or "purple" come to be established? What kind of work, what kind of creative seeing was involved? So understood *thesis* points in the same direction as Kant's schematism, where it is important to consider, going beyond the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the significance of empirical schemata.

Heidegger recognizes that such *thesis* cannot adequately be understood as the product of some subject. It is in some sense a gift. But who or what is the giver? This way of posing the question already invites misunderstanding. Especially important in this connection is the following passage,

which invites a misreading of Being that would make it into something like some transcendent thing:

> In referring to this self-establishing of openness in the Open, thinking touches on a sphere that cannot yet be explicated here. Only this much should be noted, that if the nature of the unconcealedness of beings belongs in any way to Being itself (cf. *Being and Time*, par. 44), then Being, by way of its own nature, lets the place of openness (the lighting-clearing of the There) happen, and introduces it as a place of the sort in which each being emerges or arises in its own way (G5, 48–49/61).

The place of openness happens, happens in the midst of beings. That is to say the obvious: there are human beings. To define the human being as the *zoon logon echon* or the *animal rationale* is to recognize that, unlike other things, unlike even animals, human beings are open to things. To say that the place of openness happens would seem to say little more than that there are beings possessing reason or that Dasein happens, and that means also, that Being happens. But to say now that Being lets this place of openness happen would seem to reify Being in an unwarranted fashion. It would seem more accurate to say that the place of openness is established by human beings just because they are animals that possess reason and are able to speak, although, as just pointed out, such establishment is not something that human beings can will to bring about; it just happens. Can we call this happening a gift? A gift of what? Of Being? Is this how we are to understand Heidegger's claim that Being lets the place of openness happen?

Something like that is indeed suggested by the following passage:

> Truth happens only by establishing itself in the conflict and arena [translation changed: *Spielraum*] opened up by truth itself. Because truth is the opposition of clearing and concealing, there belongs to it what is here to be called establishing. But truth does not exist in itself beforehand, somewhere among the stars, only to descend elsewhere among beings. This is impossible for the reason alone that it is after all only the openness of beings that first affords the possibility of somewhere and of a place filled by present beings. Clearing of openness and establishment in the Open belong together. They are the same single nature of the happening of truth. This happening is historical in many ways (G5, 49/61).

There is no truth without human beings producing particular works, without truth establishing itself in some work, where such establishing however, as pointed out, should not be thought of as the achievement of some subject. It would be better to call it a gift: the gift of Being that lets beings emerge. Heidegger calls this the happening of Truth. In the *Beiträge* he will attempt to think this happening as the *Ereignis* and, to distinguish

Being, understood as the giver of this gift, from Being, understood as the mode of presencing of things, he will oppose *Seyn* to *Sein*. That opposition is another expression of the opposition of realism and idealism with which Heidegger struggled in *Being and Time*.[1] The difficulty we face in thinking this opposition is suggested by this proposition from the *Beitrage*: "*Sein* and *Seyn* are the same and yet fundamentally different (G65, 171)." *Sein* and *Seyn* are the same in that both attempt to name the Being of things. But inquiry into the first (*Sein*) received its direction from the guiding question (*Leitfrage*): *was ist das Seiende*? what does it mean for something to be? What is its beingness, its Being? Such inquiry looks to beings and, as metaphysics has done from the very beginning, seeks to get hold of the ground that lets beings be, of their Being. Inquiry into the second (*Seyn*) receives its direction from what Heidegger terms the *Grundfrage*, the fundamental question: *was ist die Wahrheit des Seyns*? What is the truth of Being? (G65, 170–171). Using Kant's language we might say, aware that such talk can provide no more than an inadequate pointer, that talk of *Sein* still belongs with a transcendental approach, while talk of *Seyn* struggles with the antinomies in which we get involved whenever we attempt to think the transcendent. The transition from the guiding question to the fundamental question breaks with and leaves behind all metaphysics, including its language, returning philosophy to its beginning, thus preparing in necessarily hermetic language for a new beginning.

This happening of truth, the event of Being is historical. And in "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger insists that truth happens in many ways.

> One essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is truth setting itself into work. Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state. Still another way in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all. Still another way in which truth grounds itself is the essential sacrifice. Still another way in which truth becomes is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness. By contrast, science is not an original happening of truth, but always the cultivation of a domain of truth already opened, specifically by apprehending and confirming that which shows itself to be possibly and necessarily correct within that field. When and insofar as science passes beyond correctness and goes on to a truth, which means that it arrives at the essential disclosure of what is as such, it is philosophy (G5. 49/61–62).

Truth is here said to have opened up beings. The work of art is mentioned first as one way in which truth thus establishes itself in the midst of beings. But it is only one way; a second way is the act that founds a political state; a third is religious experience; a fourth essential sacrifice; a fifth thinking that confronts Being and what renders it so profoundly questionable.

4. The Happening of Truth in the Founding of a State

The statement "Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state" deserves special attention. It invites us to consider not only the relationship of the work of the statesman to the work of art but also how we are to think the occurrence of truth in such an act. That this is not just a passing observation is made clear by what Heidegger had to say about political leadership in 1933, not just in the *Rectorial Address,* but even more in the many less carefully considered public declarations of that year, such as the frightening: "Not theorems and ideas should provide your being with rules. The leader himself and he alone is today and for the future German reality and its law" (GA 16, 184). In the *Spiegel* interview Heidegger points out that by 1934 he no longer said such things, that compromises were necessary in those days, but he also emphasizes that he then believed that that the only possible way toward a renewal required a willingness to confront, but also to productively engage National Socialism (G16, 657–658).

Heidegger made the quoted statement to conclude some remarks he made in his capacity as rector to mark the beginning of the winter semester 1933/1934. That it expressed what he then thought is shown by these remarks from the lecture course *On the Essence of Truth* that he gave that same semester:

> When today the Führer speaks again and again of the reeducation of the people to the National-Socialist world-view (*Weltanschauung*) this does not mean: to drag in some arbitrary slogans, but to bring about a total change, a world projection, on the basis of which he educates the entire people (*Volk*). National Socialism is not some arbitrary doctrine, but the fundamental change from the bottom of the German, and as we believe, also of the European world.
>
> This beginning of a great history of a people, as we see with the Greeks, extends to all domains of human creation. With it things step into the open and into truth. But in the same moment the human being also steps into untruth. This begins only then (G36/37, 225).

The National Socialist revolution is understood here as the establishment of a new world. How the Führer's words might accomplish this has been documented with frightening power in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, a chronicle of the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg that remains an important work of art. Seeing that film helps one understand better Heidegger's mood in these years. And that would appear to be not so very distant from the fundamental mood of the film, from what with Heidegger we can call its *Grundstimmung*, established both by the style of the events portrayed and by the style of their portrayal. This fundamental mood supports what gets said by Hitler and endows it with a hypnotic power. Hitler here leaves no doubt that his goal is revolution, the establishment of a new world. He wants to put the

Germans into a very different mood and the film suggests that persons and things are already beginning to be seen in a new light. It helps us understand why Heidegger should have said in *On the Essence of Truth* of the work of the creative statesman what in "The Origin of the Work of Art" he will say of the work of the artist. Truth in his sense is said to occur in both cases. That, so understood, truth may come to be, indeed in this case was soon to be called by Heidegger himself, an error, is a consequence of Heidegger's understanding of the establishment of truth as original creation. If what we confront is indeed experienced by us as an original creation, there can be no antecedently given criteria by which to judge it, for it is only such creation that establishes the relevant criteria. A thinker can be in error about such a work only by mistaking for original creation what in fact only mimics such creation and does not effect the profound change promised.

In this sense Heidegger soon came to think he had made a mistake. He mistook what was happening for the revolution he had for so long dreamed and thought of. Was such thinking, too, in error? Given our common sense, there is no difficulty at all saying: yes, Heidegger was in error. But this presupposes that we remain secure in our basic convictions. Like Nietzsche Heidegger had become suspicious of common sense, had lost this sense of security. Such a loss is presupposed by his notorious, already discussed statement: "The nature of truth is untruth" (G5, 41/54–55). Heidegger is quite aware that this statement becomes nonsense when truth is understood as correctness. But he is thinking truth here as the battle between concealment and unconcealing.[2] That battle, Heidegger is convinced, cannot be won. The great thinker, as he understands him, recognizes this, knows that he will be unable to wrest a truth from the concealed that will not be shadowed by error. This helps explain that other notorious statement: "He who thinks greatly must err greatly" (G13, 81/9).

Heidegger returned to his interpretation of the state as a work the following winter semester with lectures on Hölderlin's hymns "Germanien" and "Der Rhein" (G39). There he calls poets, thinkers, and the creators of a state "those who ground and found authentically the historical being of a people. They are the authentic creators." Poets are named first, because their work is said to be presupposed by the work of the thinkers, and the work of both is said to be presupposed by the work of the founders of states (G39, 51).

And he returns to what remains essentially the same thought in his lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics* (SS 1935), where he discusses the Greek polis as the site where history happens:

> To this place and scene of history belong the gods, the temples, the priests, the festivals, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, the council of elders, the assembly of the people, the army, and the fleet. All this does not first belong to the *polis*, does not become political by entering into a relation with a statesman and a general and the business of the state. No, it is political, i.e. at the site of history, provided there be (for example) poets

> *alone*, but then really poets, priests *alone*, but then really priests, rulers *alone*, but then really rulers. *Be*, but this means: as violent men to use power, to become pre-eminent in historical being as creators, as men of action. Pre-eminent in the historical place, they become at the same time *apolis*, without city and place, lonely, strange, and alien, without issue amid what is [*des Seienden*: translation changed] as a whole, at the same time without statute and limit, without structure and order, because they as creators must first of all create all this (G40, 161–162/128).

What Heidegger here has to say about the creator and more especially abut the creative statesman fits all too well with what he had said earlier about Hitler as the leader who will give the Germans their reality and their law. To be sure, by then he had resigned the rectorate and in these lectures he takes care to distance himself from those party ideologues, who, he insists, had completely failed to understand "the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely the encounter between global technology and modern man)" (G40, 208/166).[3] As pointed out earlier, the parenthetical comment, presumably a later addition, despite Heidegger's claim to the contrary (see G40, 232–234), is difficult to reconcile with the preceding sentence in that it suggests that already in 1935 he had come to understand National Socialism as the fitting political expression of our modern age. But perhaps it is possible to read it differently, to understand the encounter between global technology as a battle in Heidegger's sense, a battle in which technology and the need to remain open to the call of the earth collide.

Heidegger never developed the suggestion that the creative statesman be understood on the model of the artist in any detail, but as has been shown convincingly by Alexander Schwan in *Politische Philosophie im Denken Heideggers*, any attempt to understand Heidegger's political thinking in the thirties has to begin with the analysis of the work of the artist and the poet.[4] To be sure, Heidegger soon did recognize how misplaced his faith in Hitler had been. In "Überwindung der Metaphysik" (1936–1946) we meet with an interpretation of Hitler and of leaders in general that makes his opposition to National Socialism as it had evolved unmistakably clear: Leaders are now understood as individuals who are particularly attuned to a world that looks ever more at all that is as material to be understood and organized. Human beings, too, are increasingly reduced to such material, subject to organization and planning. Order becomes an end. Its establishment answers to a need that is born of that nihilism that Heidegger, following Nietzsche, understands as the dismal companion of the progress of metaphysics (G7, 92).

After 1936 Heidegger loses his confidence that our modern world, a world presided over by the progress of metaphysics, might be overcome by a revolution that would put in the place of the modern world picture a new world. In the *Beiträge* we find thus only an echo of the earlier talk of creators: Heidegger now speaks of "*those few single ones*," *jene wenigen Einzelnen*, who in poetry, thinking, act and sacrifice establish in advance the sites and times

that keep open the possibility that some day there may be once again world establishing work (G65, 96). "The Origin of the Work of Art" presents itself to us as the preparatory work of such a solitary thinker.

5. The Happening of Truth in Faith

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger mentions as a third way in which truth establishes itself "the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all." Here Heidegger makes room for faith as a way in which truth happens.

In *Being and Time* he had understood authentic existing as the most primordial happening of truth, where such existing demands resolute self-affirmation in the face of both death and the death of God. Five years earlier he had still been able to write in notes for the lecture course *Augustine and Neoplatonism* (SS 1921) "*Deus dilectio*; authentic existing" (G60, 257). The two conceptions of authenticity are difficult to reconcile. In *Being and Time* any sense of existing in God's love has given way to dread. The mood that presides over this happening is now said to be anxiety, which lets all that is lose its significance and confronts the individual with his own groundless and solitary being-in-the world. The individual here experiences both a loss of direction and his inability to provide that direction himself. Kierkegaard is mentioned as the thinker who advanced furthest towards understanding this phenomenon in his *The Concept of Dread* (G2, 253, fn). But Kierkegaard also recognized that dread demands a further movement. Experiencing "the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all," his faith lets Abraham lose the world in which he had felt at home. For his own sake and for God's sake he is willing to sacrifice Isaac, teleologically suspending the ethical, yet believing, against all reason, that "this will not come to pass, or, if it does come to pass, the Lord will give, a new Isaac, by virtue viz. of he absurd."[5] But similar as he is to Heidegger's authentic actor, Kierkegaard's Abraham possesses a faith that is incompatible with Heideggerian authenticity. Abraham's love of God places him in an absolute relationship to the absolute that lets the self bury itself within itself to discover there what it experiences as God, but losing in the process that openness to the earth that Heidegger came to understand as demanded by authentic resolve.

A better example of what Heidegger may have in mind when he speaks of truth establishing itself in "the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all" might be Moses. Coming down from Mount Sinai, bringing to his people God's law, he did indeed establishing a new world. This law is a gift, received in a specific place, at a specific moment, a gift given not by Being, but by a being, "the being that is most of all." A similar story can be told of every prophet. This leaves us with the question: what sense can Heidegger make of God and of gods, a question Heidegger will continue to wrestle with, taking his cues from Hölderlin.

The importance to Heidegger of the problem of faith, of the nearness of the divine, of God or gods, is hinted at in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, where the priests are placed between poets and rulers, they, too, violent men, who using power, "become pre-eminent in historical being as creators, as men of action." So understood the priest becomes difficult to distinguish from poet and ruler, whose qualities are joined in him.

6. The Happening of Truth in Sacrifice

Yet another way in which truth grounds itself is said to be the essential sacrifice and once again Kierkegaard's Abraham offers an example. His decision to do what God had demanded of him and to sacrifice Isaac does indeed let him become "*apolis*, without city and place, lonely, strange, and alien, without issue amid what is as a whole, at the same time without statute and limit, without structure and order. . ." All that is implicit in what Kierkegaard calls a teleological suspension of the ethical. Impossible to apply to Abraham, however, is Heidegger's explanation of the preceding: "because they as creators must first of all create all this": it is not the requirement of new creation that lets Abraham suspend the ethical, but his unconditional love of God. Kierkegaard's Johannes de Silentio would have us choose Abraham as our hero, fully aware that we are likely to find it impossible to make this choice. Such a choice would indeed radically change our lives and the world we live in. It would, however, not found genuine community, but leave the individual fundamentally alone.

Today all such talk of sacrificing human beings is shadowed by the Holocaust and by the sacrifice of so many millions to what were deemed higher causes. To be sure we may not forget the emphasis that Kierkegaard places on Abraham's love of Isaac. Apart from that love, we are told, the decision to sacrifice Isaac would be a crime. But love of God should not trump love of son; and love of nation and of *Heimat* should not trump love of man.

But Heidegger would seem to have understood the sacrifice in question very differently, not as a sacrifice of some other thing or person, but, in keeping with what he had said in *Being and Time* about being unto death, as a sacrifice of self. This is how sacrifice is glorified in *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germanien" and "Der Rhein"*: Genuine community, Heidegger insists there is established only when the solitary self binds itself to what raises the individual beyond himself. The model is provided by the soldiers, who sacrificed themselves for the Fatherland in World War I. Their cameraderie had its ground "Not in the fact that one had to join together, because other human beings, now faraway, were missing, nor in the fact that one agreed to join in a shared enthusiasm, but most profoundly and alone in this: that the nearness of death understood as a sacrifice placed everyone in advance into the same nothingness, so that this became the source of an unconditioned belonging together" (G39, 72–73). Here it is anxiety that founds community, anxiety understood here as "the

metaphysical proximity to the unconditioned" that is given only to those truly self-sufficient and prepared (G39, 73).

It is the prospect of death that here gathers individuals into a community, just as in *Being and Time* it was the resolute anticipation of death that gathered the individual into a whole. No higher end seems needed to justify such sacrifice. That this invites challenge is hinted at by the way Heidegger concludes this discussion: "If we do not force powers into our Dasein that bind and individuate in a way that is just as unconditioned as the way death as a free sacrifice binds and individuates, that is, powers that seize the very roots of the existence of each individual, that stand equally profoundly and entirely in a genuine knowledge, there can be no 'cameraderie'; we get at best a changed form of society" (G39, 72–73). What are such powers? One is a love strong enough to sacrifice self so that what is loved may live and flourish.

In Plato's *Symposium* Phaedrus offers the example of Alcestis, who "was the only person who was willing to die for her husband... Her heroism in making this sacrifice appeared so noble in the eyes not only of men, but of gods, that they conferred upon her a privilege which has been granted to very few among the many performers of noble deeds. In admiration of her behavior they released her soul from Hades; so highly do even the gods honor the active courage which belongs to love."[6] By opening her- or himself to the beloved, the lover's self and therefore death come to mean less. And just this is said to be rewarded by the gods with true life. There is a suggestion that it is only when we are able to die for what we take to matter more profoundly than our own lives, that we begin to truly live. Such sacrifice can indeed build community as testified to by the blood of countless martyrs.

7. The Happening of Truth in Thought

Last in Heidegger's listing of the ways in which truth establishes itself "is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness." That it should be mentioned last here should not come as a surprise, given the preceding chapters. We may indeed wonder whether it even deserves to be grouped with the others. For by itself, it would seem, questioning does not furnish the kind of bond required to establish genuine community. Questioning individuates, opens the solitary self to the mystery of that never to be mastered ground of our being, to that earth from which we come and to which we shall return: dust to dust. But while sufficient to awaken dread and wonder, is it insufficient to bind individuals together? Does this not require a power such as love or sympathy? But can the naming of Being not found a community? Think of those who have chosen Socrates, the paradigmatic questioner, for their hero?

What Heidegger has to say, in concluding this discussion, about science invites comparison with what he had said in Paragraph 3 of *Being and Time* about scientific revolutions and their relationship to the question of Being.

His claim now that science is "not an original happening of truth, but always the cultivation of a domain of truth already opened, specifically by apprehending and confirming that which shows itself to be possibly and necessarily correct within that field" is called into question by the following sentence: "When and insofar as science passes beyond correctness and goes on to a truth, which means that it arrives at the essential disclosure of what is as such, it is philosophy." This is to say that all original science is philosophy, is indeed philosophy in a creative sense that goes beyond the questioning of the thinker in that it establishes a new way of looking at what is that founds a community of inquirers.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger had thus called attention to the crises that were agitating the different sciences of his day, where mathematics[7] and physics provided the most perspicuous examples. Radical questioning prepared here, too, for revolution. Such revolutions changed our understanding of the being of the entities being investigated. Such an understanding, such an ontology, we can say, is presupposed by the way scientists look at things.

But a similar understanding is presupposed by all our encounters with persons or things. In each case an entity is interpreted in a particular fashion and thus made available. A particular understanding of being provides a particular mode of access to beings. Science here only provides a perspicuous example for something that has a much more far reaching significance. Our way of life inevitably brings with it such an understanding, which does not at all require theoretical articulation. If we link ontology to theory, we may want to call such an understanding pre-ontological.

The question Heidegger raises is: What is the soil in which such understanding has its roots? "The truth of Being" provides an answer that, despite all I have said, remains also a question. Clear, however, is that human creators must let truth emerge. Science, it would seem, can be the site of such emergence. In "The Origin of the Work of Art," however, Heidegger privileges the work of art. "Because it is in the nature of truth to establish itself within that which is, in order thus first to become truth, therefore the *impulse toward the work* lies in the nature of truth as one of truth's distinctive possibilities by which it can itself occur as being in the midst of beings" (G5, 50/62). This only restates what by now has been said a number of times: for truth to be possible open spaces must emerge within what is so that beings can be, i.e. present themselves.

Notes

1. See 110 above.
2. See 46–48 above.
3. As already mentioned, that remark led the young Jürgen Habermas to distance himself from Heidegger. See Christoph Demmerling, "Heidegger und die Frankfurter Schule. Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Jürgen Habermas," *Heidegger-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*, ed. Dieter Thomä (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2003), 361–369.

4. Alexander Schwan, *Politische Philosophie im Denken Heideggers*, 2nd ed. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989). See also my "Heidegger as a Political Thinker," *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1976, 644–669. Reprinted in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy: Critical Essays, ed. Michael Murray* (New Haven: Yale, 1978), pp. 304–328. I was taken to task for adopting Schwan's position by Gregory Shufreider in "Heidegger on Community," *Man and World*, 14 (1981). Shufreider accused me among other things of having confused polis with state, and of having overlooked Heidegger's emphasis on struggle. Heidegger, according to Shufreider, is trying to understand the polis as the unifying site at which the diverse individual fates meet and in their struggle determine the direction of a people's history. This allows for an interpretation of the polis as a collective work. I am charged with having simply assumed that Heidegger's work leads to totalitarianism. But Shufreider's criticism of my article was a bit careless: thus in his summary quote of my position he elided a crucial passage.
5. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Walter Lowrie, *Fear and Trembling and Sickness Unto Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 124.
6. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton (London: Penguin, 1951), 43–44.
7. For an unusually thought provoking discussion of the significance of mathematics in Heidegger's thought see Michael Roubach, *Being and Number in Heidegger's Thought*, trans. Nessa Olshansky-Ashtar (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008).

11

Creators and Preservers

1. The Rift of World and Earth

Heidegger understands art as original creation:

> The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again. The bringing forth places this being in the Open in such a way that what is to be brought forth first clears the openness of the Open into which it comes forth. Where this bringing forth expressly brings the openness of beings, or truth, that which is brought forth is a work. Creation is such a bringing forth. As such a bringing, it is rather a receiving and an incorporating of a relation to unconcealedness. What accordingly does the createdness consist in? It may be elucidated by two essential determinations (G5, 50/62).

The first of these determinations speaks to the creator's need for some sort of material as the vehicle of his or her creation. The second speaks to the way we experience the presence of the creator in the created work. Let us consider each in turn:

The first returns to what in the essay has been called the strife of world and earth:

> Truth establishes itself in the work. Truth is present only as the conflict between lighting and concealing in the opposition of world and earth. Truth wills to be established in the work as this conflict of world and earth. The conflict is not to be resolved in a being brought forth for the purpose, nor is it to be merely housed there; the conflict, on the contrary, is started by it. This being must contain within itself the essential traits of the conflict. In the strife the unity of world and earth is won. As a world opens itself, it submits to the decision of an historical humanity the question of victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery. The dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness (G5, 50/62–63).

Heidegger's talk of the strife of earth and world recalls mythic thinking, for example Hesiod. Perhaps we can say that philosophy is framed by such thinking, which both precedes and follows it, where I am thinking both of the Greek origin of philosophy, say of Parmenides, and of Heidegger's turn away

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 155–167.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_11,

from philosophy as usually understood to what he calls *das andere Denken*, the other thinking.

The key concept in the paragraphs that follow is that of the *Riss* (rift) and we should note how Heidegger here plays with that word and closely associated words, words that may seem more at home in a discussion of architecture than in a philosophical essay. Such wordplay is difficult to capture in English and unfortunately lost in Hofstadter's translation. But consider the German words: *Riss* (which can mean both tear or sketch)—*Grundriss* (floorplan)*, Aufriss* (elevation)*, Durchriss* (section),*Umriss* (outline)—and the verbs*reissen* (tear), *aufreissen* (tear open). What does the word *Riss* mean in the present context? Think of a *Riss* as an ink mark, a line or a sketch that tears the white of the paper, so full of possibilities. Or think of a mark made with paint on a blank canvas as a tearing of its whiteness. Or think of a poet's words as a tearing of silence, where I am thinking of Mallarmé).[1]

Consider this extended pictorial metaphor Wittgenstein offers us in the *Tractatus*:

> 6.341 Newtonian mechanics, for example, brings the description of the universe to a unified form. Let us imagine a white surface with irregular black spots. We now say: Whatever kind of picture these make I can always get as near as I like to its description, if I cover the surface with a sufficiently fine square network and now say of every square that it is white or black. In this way I shall have brought the description of the surface to a unified form. This form is arbitrary, because I could have applied with equal success a net with a triangular or hexagonal mesh. It can happen that the description would have been simpler with the aid of a triangular mesh; that is to say, we might have described the surface more accurately with a triangular, and coarser, than with the finer square mesh, or vice versa, and so on. To the different networks correspond different systems of describing the world. Mechanics determine a form of description by saying: All propositions in the description of the world must be obtained in a given way from a number of given propositions—the mechanical axioms. It thus provides the bricks for the building of the edifice of science, and says: Whatever building thou wouldst erect, thou shalt construct it in some manner with these bricks and these alone.

The empty piece of paper here figures the open, the dark spots figure the earth, the superimposed grid figures the world, where the rigidity of the grid suggests a specific way of relating to what is, which is to be mastered by the representation.

The spots present themselves as such only as figures on the ground provided by the open of the paper. The grid provides the general framework used to represent these spots. In that framework things have to take their place if they are going to be said "to be" in the scientific sense. But so understood, their being both conceals and presupposes what they "are" in another sense.

And no matter how fine the grid, their representation by means of it does violence to what they really "are." There is nothing in these spots that corresponds to the straight lines and right angles of the chosen form of representation. In this sense we can say with Heidegger that no matter how adequate, and in this sense how true a representation may be, its truth will always mingle with untruth.

I pointed out that Heidegger's text in the German original makes the architectural metaphor more perspicuous than the English translation, which fails to preserve Heidegger's wordplay. And yet that wordplay is far from insignificant. Let me return once more to Wittgenstein's picture, which I have generalized so that it figures no longer just the establishment of Newtonian mechanics, but what Heidegger calls the establishment of a world. Consider in the light of the Wittgenstein quote this passage:

> But as a world opens itself the earth comes to rise up. It stands forth as that which bears all, as that which is sheltered in its own law and always wrapped up in itself. World demands its decisiveness and its measure and lets beings attain to the Open of their paths. Earth, bearing and jutting, strives to keep itself closed and to entrust everything to its law. The conflict is not a rift (*Riss*) as a mere cleft is ripped open; rather it is the intimacy with which the opponents belong to each other. This rift carries the opponents into the source of their unity by virtue of their common ground. It is a basic design [*Grundriss*], an outline sketch [*Aufriss*] that draws the basic features of the rise of the lighting of beings. This rift does not let the opponents break apart: it brings the opposition of measure and boundary into their common outline [*Unmriss*] (G5, 50–51, 63).

In thinking of Heidegger's world we may want to think of the world established by the demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus*. He creates his world by imposing on recalcitrant matter a geometric order. The world he creates is informed by this order. But chaos continues to resist the demiurge's forming power and needs to be persuaded to accept the imposed forms.

The world-building the demiurge creates has long provided architects with a model, as it provides a model for the world-buildings constructed by philosophers (think, e.g. of the world constructed by Leibniz in his *Monadology*); it also provides a model that can help us understand the establishment of world in Heidegger's sense. This architectural metaphor should also be kept in mind when considering the function of the Greek temple in the essay.

I pointed out that *Riss* can mean both "tear" and "rift." It is thus understandable that Hofstadter, struggling with the German word, will come to translate it as "rift-design," inviting us once more to consider the significance of the architectural metaphors so prominent in philosophical discourse.

> Truth establishes itself as a strife within a being that is to be brought forth only in such a way that the conflict opens up in this being, that is, this being is itself brought into the rift-design. The rift-design is the drawing together, into a unity of sketch [*Aufriss*] and basic design [*Grundriss*], breach [*Durchriss*] and outline [*Umriss*] (G5, 51/63).

A particular being is to become the site of the strife of earth and world. The rift-design is that site. Such a work requires some material or other. The drawing thus requires paper. Similarly, the temple requires marble, wood, a site, and so on. Shaping this material the temple establishes the rift of world and earth in a particular place, setting its unique figure on the ground of the earth.

> The rift must set itself back into the heavy weight of stone, the dumb hardness of wood, the dark glow of colors. As the earth takes the rift back into itself, the rift is first set forth into the Open and thus placed, that is set, within that which towers up into the Open as self-closing and sheltering.
>
> The strife that is brought into the rift and thus set back into the earth and thus fixed in place is figure, shape, *Gestalt*. Createdness of the work means: truth's being fixed in place in the figure. Figure is the structure in whose shape the rift composes and submits itself. This composed rift is the fitting or joining of the shining of truth. What is here called figure, *Gestalt*, is always to be thought in terms of the particular placing (*Stellen*) and framing of the framework (*Gestell*) as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth (G5, 51/63–64).

Heidegger clarifies the distinction between equipment and work of art by insisting on their different relation to their material. "In the creation of the work, the conflict, as rift, must be set back into the earth, and the earth itself must be set forth and used as the self-closing factor. This use, however, does not use up or misuse the earth as matter, but rather sets it free to be nothing but itself" (G5, 52/64). While the making of equipment uses up the material, so that it become inconspicuous, hardly attended to by those who use the equipment, the artwork reveals its material as the material it is, make us attend to marble as marble, paint as paint, limewood as limewood. Think of a sculpture by Michelangelo or Bernini and of how it lets us experience the marble as marble; or compare a limewood sculpture by Tilman Riemenschneider with one made of oak from the same period, say by Hans Brüggemann. How different is our experience of the material of which our computer is made. This should help us understand what Heidegger has in mind when he writes: "In contrast, the making of equipment is never directly the effecting of the happening of truth. The production of equipment is finished when a material has been formed as to be ready for use. For equipment to be ready means that it is dismissed beyond itself, to be used up

in serviceability" (G5, 52/64). Something analogous can be said of language. In everyday language sentences function somewhat like tools, rendering words inconspicuous, while a strong poem lets us attend to these particular words as these particular words.

2. The Work of Art as Something Created

The second "essential determination" Heidegger offers us to illuminate the "createdness" of the work of art speaks more directly to this createdness. As the work of art, as Heidegger understands it, makes its materiality conspicuous, so it makes conspicuous the fact that it "is," not as things of nature, such as rocks, flowers, or insects are, but that it is something created. To be sure, something like that can be said also of a knife or a fork, a glass or a wine-bottle. But they do not make their having been made conspicuous in the same way:

> The readiness of equipment and the createdness of the work agree in this, that in each case something is produced. But in contrast to all other modes of production the work is distinguished by being created so that its createdness is part of the created work. But does this not hold true for everything brought forth, indeed for anything that has in any way come to be? Everything brought forth surely has this endowment of having been brought forth, if it has any endowment at all. Certainly. But in the work, createdness is expressly created into the created being, so that it stands out from it, from the being thus brought forth, in an expressly particular way. If this is how matters stand, then we must also be able to discover and experience the createdness explicitly in the work (G5, 52/64–65).

Consider once more van Gogh's painting of a pair of shoes. As such a painting makes its materiality conspicuous, presents paint as paint, so it makes its createdness conspicuous: the creator is present in the work, as who—or rather whatever process—produced a wine bottle is not. A painting such as that discussed by Heidegger lets us experience that something unique has been brought into being by human work, here, in this place. It is not the personality of the maker that matters to Heidegger, but the fact that some unique thing has been created, having itself an unmistakable "personality," rather like a person.

> It is not the "N.N. fecit" that is to be made known. Rather the simple "factum est" is to be held forth into the Open by the work: namely this, that unconcealedness of what is has happened here for the first time; or that such a work is at all rather than is not. The thrust that the work as this work is, and the uninterruptedness of this plain thrust, constitute the steadfastness of the work's self-subsistence. Precisely where the artist

> and the process and the circumstances of the genesis of the work remain unknown, this thrust, this "*that* it is" of createdness emerges most purely from the work (G5, 53–53/65).

Here, Heidegger insists, we have a decisive difference between a piece of equipment and a genuine work of art—insistence that invites comparison with what Walter Benjamin has to say about the fate of works of art in the age of their technical reproducibility.[2]

> To be sure, "that" it is made is a property also of all equipment that is available and in use. But this "that" does not become prominent in the equipment; it disappears in usefulnesss. The more handy a piece of equipment, the more inconspicuous it remains that, for example, such a hammer is and the more exclusively does the equipment keep itself in its equipmentality. In general, of everything present to us, we can note that it *is*; but this also, if it is noted at all, is noted only soon to fall into oblivion, as is the wont of everything commonplace (G5, 53/65).

Heidegger sums up his discussion of the createdness of the work of art with these words, which by now should seem almost expected:

> The question of the work's createdness ought to have brought us nearer to its workly character and therewith to its reality. Createdness revealed itself as the conflict's being fixed in place in the figure by means of the rift. Createdness here is itself expressly created into the work and stands as the silent thrust into the Open of the "that." But the work's reality does not exhaust itself even in its createdness. However, this view of the nature of the work's createdness now enables us to take the step towards which everything thus far said tends (G5, 53–54/66).

3. Creators and Preservers

At this point the discussion shifts from the work to those who experience the work—using the language of traditional aesthetics we might say, from the aesthetic object to the aesthetic observer, to the reception of the work, although Heidegger, wanting to keep his distance from aesthetics, would no doubt have resisted such a misleading translation of his words into a perhaps more familiar vocabulary.

According to aesthetics the self-sufficiency of the aesthetic experience corresponds to the self-sufficiency of the aesthetic object. Heidegger would seem to make a similar point: "The more solitarily the work, fixed in the figure, stands on its own and the more cleanly it seems to cut all ties to human beings, the more simply does the thrust come into the Open that such a work *is*. And the

more essentially is the extraordinary thrust to the surface and the long-familiar thrust down" (G5, 54/66). Aesthetics has long emphasized that the aesthetic object displaces us. Such displacement is implicit in Kant's understanding of the beautiful as object of an entirely disinterested satisfaction.[3] So understood the aesthetic experience lets us take leave from everyday reality with its interests and concerns. Essentially the same insight is suggested by Edward Bullough's understanding of psychical or aesthetic distance as constitutive of the aesthetic experience.[4] It is indeed an insight as old as philosophical speculation about the beautiful. We thus meet with it already in Plato's *Symposium*, as we do in the rival *Symposium* written by Xenophon. That the artwork transports us out of the ordinary and familiar is also taken up by Heidegger:

> To submit to this displacement means to transform our accustomed ties to world and to earth and henceforth to restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work. Only the restraint of this staying lets what is created be the work that it is. This letting the work be a work we call the preserving of the work. It is only for such preserving that the work yields itself in its createdness as actual, i.e. now: present in the manner of a work (G5, 54/66).

This adds significantly to the understanding of art developed so far: The work of art requires not only creators, but those who preserve it. Indeed, the latter are said to be just as essential to the work of art as its creators.

This may seem a surprising claim. With it Heidegger looks back to the *Critique of Judgment*, in which Kant insists that genius must be original and not imitative, and yet almost seems to become scared of the emphasis he has placed on genius and thus on the anarchic and private imagination. So Kant pulls back and subjects the creativity of the genius to the controls exerted by good taste. But taste does not belong to the solitary genius creator, but to the community to which he belongs. It constitutes what we can call their aesthetic common sense. Only such a common sense allows the work of the creator to bridge the distance that must separate him from those for whom he creates. Heidegger calls them the preservers of the work:

> Being a work, it always remains tied to preservers, even and particularly when it is still only waiting for preservers and only pleads and waits for them to enter into its truth. Even the oblivion into which the work can sink is not nothing; it is still a preservation. It feeds on the work. Preserving the work means: standing within the openness of beings that happens in the work. This "standing within" of preservation, however, is a knowing. Yet knowing does not consist in mere information and notions about something. He who truly knows what is, knows what he wills to do in the midst of what is (G5, 55/67).

To preserve a work is to know what to do in the midst of what is. In this sense the work tells us what needs to be done. It thus addresses the same problem that Heidegger addressed in *Being and Time* in terms of the choice of a hero. And Heidegger himself immediately reminds us of this connection to the earlier discussion.

> The willing here referred to, which neither merely applies knowledge nor decides beforehand, is thought of in terms of the basic experience of thinking in *Being and Time*. Knowing that remains a willing, and wiling that remains a knowing, is the existing human being's entrance into and compliance with the unconcealedness of Being. The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject, but the opening up of human being, out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being (G5, 55/67).[5]

We should note here once more the rejection of an understanding of freedom as an isolated subject's arbitrary choice. To such a negative conception of freedom, Heidegger insists, we must oppose a positive freedom, an issue already emphasized in the *Rectorial Address*. The positive content is to be offered by the unconcealedness effected by the work of art, although the generality of Heidegger's discussion invites one to think not just of art, but of the other ways in which truth was said to establish itself, especially of the work of the statesman.

> Willing is the sober resolution of that existential self-transcendence which exposes itself to the openness of beings as it is set into the work. In this way, standing-within is brought under law. Preserving the work, as knowing, is a sober standing-within the extraordinary awesomeness [*Ungeheuren*] of the truth that is happening in the work (G5, 55/66–67).

That ethical, political, and religious claims are here being made for art, that Heidegger here rejects any merely aesthetic approach to art, is evident:

> Preserving the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work. Thus it grounds being for and with one another as the historical-standing-out-of-human-existence in reference to unconcealedness. Most of all knowledge in the form of preserving is far removed from the merely aestheticizing connoisseurship of the works formal qualities, its qualities and charms. Knowing as having seen is a being resolved; it is standing within the conflict that the work has fitted into the rift (G5, 55–56/68).

The work of art helps establish a common sense and thus founds genuine community.

That was indeed how Heidegger had discussed the Greek temple. But today the temple lies in ruins; the Greek gods have fled. No longer does the temple place us into its world. This does not mean that it does not have a place in our world. We may indeed go to great lengths to preserve whatever ruins remain and measure our world by our image of the world that was. But such preserving of what remains does not constitute preserving in the sense in which Heidegger here understands it: the temple no longer has the power to place us into the world it once established. That world has perished. And the same goes for Bamberg cathedral. Nor would there seem to be any modern work to which we can point with confidence as an example of the "great art" Heidegger has in mind in this essay. Otherwise, as I pointed out, he could not have written that the truth of Hegel's claim that art "on the side of its highest vocation" is for us moderns "something past: has not yet been decided" (GA5, 68/80).

4. Binding Freedom

Does art still matter? Do the Greek temple, the painting by Van Gogh, the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer still "bring us into affiliation with the truth happening in the work." In the case of the Greek temple the answer, it would seem, has to be no. And what about the painting by van Gogh? The world of Heidegger's peasant woman can hardly be said to be the world established by van Gogh's painting. What world is established by the painting? And is either world our world? What might it mean to preserve the world of this painting? Analogous questions should be raised about the poem. In what sense does the poem establish a world? Is this a world that assigns us our place?[6]

Why Heidegger should take art to matter is suggested by the claim I made already in the introductory chapter: Heidegger's analysis of art, I suggested, supplements the discussion of authenticity found in *Being and Time* in such a way that we can say: Heidegger's understanding of authentic existence demands the human establishment of what can bind freedom, demands creative work.

To recapitulate some of the key considerations:

1. In *Being and Time* Heidegger analyzes authenticity as a human possibility.
2. Not just that, Dasein is said, to be called to that possibility. Dasein demands authenticity of itself. It does so in the call of conscience.
3. Authenticity demands an appropriation of what Heidegger calls guilt: Never will we human beings be fully author of ourselves. Just because of this we are faced with having to make decisions. Genuine decision is possible only in the face of what has not been fully mastered. As Heidegger reminds us in "The Origin of the Work of Art": "Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision" (G5, 42/55).

4. How then is decision possible? Decision needs to be distinguished from groundless, spontaneous doing. It presupposes openness to different possibilities. Why then choose one over the others? Decision requires a measure, requires criteria. I might thus answer: because it is the right, the reasonable thing to do, and appeal to some principle that I take to be supported by reason and accept as valid. Or in answer I might say something of the sort: because I love her. In the first case I am able to give reasons for my decision. My love is not a reason in that sense. We might say of love what Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* has to say of genius: just as Kant says that it is through the genius that nature gives the rule to art, we might say it is through love that nature gives the rule to the person who loves, the rule that lets him or her organize life around this particular individual.
5. Authenticity requires that we give the rule that binds freedom to ourselves? This is also required of Kantian autonomy. Here it is the *nomos* or law provided to the individual by reason that is to bind freedom and render it responsible. But no more than Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, can Heidegger appeal to pure practical reason as the source of this self-given law. He cannot make sense of such a reason. And yet he preserves something of this Kantian understanding when he claims in the *Rectorial Address*: "To give the law to oneself is the highest freedom." But how, given Heidegger's endorsement of the Nietzschean claim that God is dead in that speech, is this statement now to be understood? If the law is to be provided by some creator-genius, be he artist or statesman, how is autonomy to be preserved? If not reason, what else can bind freedom? It would seem that it would have to be something that, like love, more immediately claims us and finds voice or articulation in creative work.
6. How, then, are we to reconcile the need for self-legislation, implicit in the demand for authenticity, and the need for the work of the creator, be he statesman, poet, or prophet? If authenticity is to be preserved, such legislating work must be recognized as an articulation of something that already, if obscurely, claims the preservers. Heidegger gestures towards this something when, following Hölderlin, he speaks of the earth.[7]
7. In this connection we must underscore not only the belonging together of creators and preservers, but also that such belonging together, if authentic, is inescapably marked by tension, by something like a strife, a war.

5. Art as Origin of Creators and Preservers

Earlier we asked about the thingly character of the work. That question receives a by now expected answer: the thingly character of the work is its earthy character.

> But what looks like the thingly element, in the sense of our usual thing-concepts, in the work taken as object, is, seen from the perspective of the work, its earthy character. The earth juts up within the work because the work exists as something in which truth is at work and because truth occurs only by installing itself within a particular being (G5, 56–57/69).

This returns us to and invites a reconsideration, indeed a revision, of the ontological discussion of the thing in the very beginning of the essay, which granted a certain priority to equipment:

> To determine the thing's thingness neither consideration of the bearer of properties is adequate, nor that of the manifold of sense data in their unity, and least of all [I want to underscore this "least of all" which reverses the earlier privileging of equipment] that of the matter-form structure regarded by itself, which is derived from equipment. Anticipating a meaningful and weighty interpretation of the thingly character of things, we must aim at the thing's belonging to the earth. The nature of earth, in its free and unhurried bearing and self-disclosure, reveals itself, however, only in the earth's jutting into a world, in the opposition of the two. This conflict is fixed in the figure of the work and becomes manifest by it. What holds true of equipment—namely that we come to know its equipmental character specifically only through the work itself—also holds of the thingly character of the thing. The fact that we never know thingness directly, and if we know it at all, then only vaguely and thus require the work—this fact proves indirectly that in the work's work-being the happening of truth, the opening up or disclosure of what is, is at work (G5, 57–56/69–70).

Heidegger has already linked earth to the Greek *phusis*, nature. To think art in terms of the earth is thus also to think art in terms of nature. This, however, raises a question: if it is the work that first reveals the thingly character of the thing, how are we to reconcile this with the demand that we think the work in relation to a nature that presumably pre-exists the work of art? As Heidegger puts this question: "But, we might finally object, if the work is indeed to bring thingness cogently into the Open, must it not then itself—and indeed before its own creation and for the sake of its creation—have been brought into relation with the things of the earth, with nature?" (G5, 58/70). How this being "brought into relation with the things of the earth, with nature" is to be thought is left open here. Are we to think of nature as something to be represented in art? Or should this relation be thought in some other way?

Heidegger approaches this question by turning to a statement by Albrecht Dürer:

> Someone who was bound to know what he was talking about, Albrecht Dürer, did after all make the well-known remark: "For in truth, art lies

> hidden within nature: he who can wrest it from her [*wer sie heraus kann reissen*], has it." "Wrest" here means to draw out the rift and to draw the design with the drawing-pen on the drawing board [*Reissen heisst hier Herausholen des Risses und den Riss mit der Reissfeder auf dem Reissbrett*.] But we at once raise the counterquestion: how can the rift-design [*Riss*] be drawn out if it is not brought into the Open by the creative sketch as a rift, which is to say, brought out beforehand as a conflict of measure and unmeasure? True, there lie hidden in nature a rift-design, a measure and a boundary and, tied to it, a capacity for bringing forth—that is art. But it is equally certain that this art hidden in nature becomes manifest only though the work, because it lies originally in the work (G5, 58/70).

Crucial here is the suggestion that art really belongs to nature. Design, measure, and boundary are said to lie hidden in nature. But the art hidden in nature becomes manifest only in the work or rift-design of the artist. His work re-presents and thus reveals what lies hidden by attempting to tear it into the Open, where such re-presentation need not be thought of as representation.

We should note how this passage underscores the significance of Heidegger's play with such words as *Riss* and *reissen* and supports it with the reference to Dürer. To possess art, Dürer suggests, the artist must tear it out of nature, and every successful design is not so much an invention as a tearing of what was hidden out of nature, bringing it into the open.

And once again Heidegger returns to the bond that links creators and preservers:

> The reality of the work has become not only clearer for us in the light of its work-being, but also essentially richer. The preservers of a work belong to its createdness with an essentiality equal to that of the creators. But it is the work that makes the creators possible in their nature, and that by its own nature is in need of preservers. If art is the origin of the work, this means that art lets those who naturally belong together at work, the creator and the preserver, originate, each in its own nature. [A more literal translation would be: "If art is the origin of the work, this means that art lets what essentially belongs together in the work, the creating and the preserving, originate in its essence"] What, however is art itself that we rightly call it an origin? (G5, 58–59/71)

The passage invites us to understand the title of the essay as meaning first of all "art as origin" rather than "the origin of art," understood in a temporal sense. The work is said to be the origin of both creators and preservers. There is a sense in which both become what they are as the result of that emergence of what was hidden in the earth into the open in the work of art. Such emergence is the happening of truth named by the word *Ereignis*.

> *Art then is a* [*ein*: Hofstadter has "the"] *becoming and happening of truth*. Does truth then arise out of nothing? It does indeed if by nothing is meant the mere not of that which is, and if we here think of that which is as an object present in the ordinary way, which thereafter comes to light and is challenged [*erschüttert*] by the existence of the work as only presumptively a true being. Truth is never gathered from objects that are present and ordinary. Rather, the opening up of the Open, and the clearing of what is, happens only as the openness is projected, sketched out, that makes its advent in thrownness (G5, 59/71).

The work of art does presuppose objects that are familiar and ordinary as it does presuppose an aesthetic common sense. But these cannot explain the originality of the artist, cannot do justice to what makes every great work of art an origin that casts an up to then unknown light on all that is, putting the preservers in a new mood (*Stimmung*). Plato was aware and suspicious of the power of art, especially music, to tune (*stimmen*) human beings, fearful that it might undo the work of reason. Having lost faith in the power of reason to lead us to the good life, Heidegger looks to the power of creative work to transform the *Grundstimmung*, the fundamental mood of the age, the ghostly offspring of that optimism that presided over Enlightenment humanism and has now called itself into question.

Notes

1. Cf. Karsten Harries, *The Meaning of Modern Art: A Philosophical Interpretation*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 61–73. "Das befreite Nichts," *Durchblicke: Martin Heidegger zum 80. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1970), 39–62.
2. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 217–251
3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett,1987), par. 5,
4. See Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and as an Esthetic Principle," in *A Modern Book on Aesthetics: An Anthology*, ed. Melvin Rader (New York: Holt and Rinehart, 1952), 404.
5. Here we should keep in mind Heidegger's reading of the German for "resoluteness," *Entschlossenheit,* as *Ent-schlossenheit,* of *entschliessen* as *ent-schliessen*, the hyphen alerting us to the components of the word, the prefix*ent* transforming *schliessen*, "to close or lock something" into "to unlock or open up."
6. Robert Bernasconi is right to insist that the difference between Heidegger's accounts of painting and temple "has been insufficiently appreciated." *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989), 36.
7. In his *Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) Mark Sinclair calls attention to the extent to which Heidegger's thinking of the earth is indebted to Aristotle, even as a critique of Aristotle's hylomorphism is evident in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Hölderlin does not figure in this study.

12

Art Is Poetry

1. Poetry: The Essence of Art

Consider once more Heidegger's claim that that the establishment of truth depends on human work, depends especially on the work of the artist. As the essay draws to a close Heidegger becomes more specific and, notwithstanding the earlier emphasis on the Greek temple, insists that it depends especially on poetry, which is now given a certain primacy.[1] How are we to understand this primacy? To answer that question we must keep in mind that what Heidegger here calls poetry (*Dichtung*) names first of all not what we usually mean by that term, but the essence of all art. "Truth, as the clearing and concealing of what is, happens in being composed, as a poet composes a poem. *All art*, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, *essentially poetry*. The nature of art, on which both the art work and the artist depend, is the setting-itself-into-work of truth" (G5, 59/72).

What then is this essential poetry, which is thought by Heidegger so inclusively that in *Der Spruch des Anaximander* (1946) he will call thinking the truth of Being the original *dictare*, *dichten* (G5, 328), although more often he is concerned to distinguish the task of the poet and the thinker, as in "The Origin of the Work of Art." How are we to think poetry as this setting-itself-into-work or advent of truth?

As we have seen, "truth" is not to be thought here in terms of correspondence or correctness. The setting-itself-into-work of truth does not mean that the entities that surround us suddenly cease to be and new ones come into existence. What changes, is the way human beings relate to these things, or better, the way they present themselves. Illuminated by a new light, they now appear other than they were.

> It is due to art's poetic nature that, in the midst of what is, art breaks open an open place, in whose openness everything is other than usual. By virtue of the projected sketch set into the work of the unconcealedness of what is, which casts itself towards us, everything ordinary and hitherto existing becomes an unbeing. This unbeing has lost the capacity to give and keep being as measure. The curious fact here is that the work in no way affects hitherto existing entities by causal connections. The working of the work does not consist in the taking effect of a cause. It lies in a change, happening from out of the work, of the unconcealedness of what is, and this means of Being (G5, 60/72).

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 169–181.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_12,

How are we to understand this transformation of everything familiar into an unbeing (*wird zum Unseienden*)? Clearly Heidegger does not mean that things suddenly turn into nothing. Indeed in one sense they remain pretty much the same things they were. This is suggested by the claim: "that the work in no way affects hitherto existing entities by causal connections." But they no longer present themselves to us as they did before we came under the spell of the poetic work. What has changed is their being. Such talk makes any sense only if we keep in mind the sense in which beings transcend Being, something asserted already in *Being and Time,* as we have seen. And it becomes clear now that not only is there a sense in which we can talk about beings as transcending some historically established Being: we have to talk that way if we are to make any sense of some particular work of art, say the Greek temple, as a setting-itself-into-work of truth. "Being" always names some historically established way things are present to Dasein. Such a way of presencing, Heidegger, asserts, is established by the poetic work.

> Poetry, however, is not an aimless imagining of whimsicalities and not a flight of mere notions and fancies into the realm of the unreal. What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out. If we fix our vision on the nature of the work and its connection with the happening of the truth of what is, it becomes questionable whether the nature of poetry, and this means at the same time the nature of projection, can be adequately thought of in terms of the power of the imagination (G5, 60/72–73).

The last sentence could be read as an invitation to reconsider the role Kant assigns to the imagination, not just in his discussion of art, but also in his theory of knowledge — and in the end the two, as we shall see, turn out to be inseparably linked.

But if the poetic work is said to cast on perhaps familiar beings a new light that renders them visible as never before, in Heidegger's words that lets them "shine and ring out," how are we to think this? That beauty is like a light that renders things visible is an idea as old as Xenophon's *Symposium*. But how is this simile to be unpacked? How might a work of art function as such an illuminating projection? How does the work transform our understanding of Being?

Perhaps we should think of a painting by Mondrian and of the way it led persons to see buildings and their environment in a different way. A new world was indeed being projected.

2. Poetry and Poesy

Up to this point "poetry" has been understood so generally that this "poetry" has as much to do with painting or architecture as it does with what we usually call poetry, with what Heidegger here calls poesy (*Poesie*). And yet poetry in this narrow sense is given now a certain privilege over the other arts.

> If all art is in essence poetry, then the arts of architecture, painting, sculpture, and music must be traced back to poesy. That is pure arbitrariness. It certainly is, as long as we mean that those arts are varieties of the art of language, if it is permissible to characterize poesy by that easily misinterpretable title. But poesy is only one mode of the lighting projection of truth, i.e. of poetic composition in this wider sense. Nevertheless, the linguistic work, the poem in the narrower sense, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts (G5, 60–61/73).

Its primacy depends on the primacy of language. According to Heidegger there is no disclosure of beings that is not mediated by language, even if that is usually forgotten. Take the proposition, "this room has four windows." The proposition is true if the room does have in fact four windows. I look around and see them. What is presupposed by such a seeing? I see the windows as windows because I am in possession of an intellectual space in which these windows have their place. The concept "window" is like a coordinate of that space. And that concept is inseparably tied to some linguistic expression, be it "window," "*Fenster*," or "*fenestra*," Our conceptual space is inseparably intertwined with some language. To be in a world is to inhabit some language.

This language is given to me first of all and most of the time as something already established and so much with me that I am not even aware of it when I look at the window and see it as a window. And this language is not something I create, is not my work. In this sense we generally understand things in terms of taken for granted frameworks; more specifically we understand things in terms of what Heidegger in *Being and Time* calls *Gerede,* idle talk, referring to the way one speaks in the society to which one belongs. But if language is in this sense first of all always something already established, accepted, and taken for granted, must there not also be an establishing discourse? It is this kind of establishing discourse Heidegger understands as original poetry. A strong metaphor is poetic in this sense. It takes for its material, its earth we can say, some familiar word, but uses it in a way that casts new light on what it names and lets us see it in just this way for the first time. Original poetry is a first naming. "Language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time. Where there is no language, as in the being of stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness of what is, and consequently no openness either of that which is not and of the empty" (G5, 61/73).

In *Being and Time* Heidegger had included discourse (*Rede*, which translates the Greek *logos*) among the existentials that constitute Dasein. With this

he only restated in the language of his fundamental ontology the understanding of human being that finds expression in the Greek understanding of man as the *zoon logon echon*, in the Roman understanding of man as the *animal rationale*. But *Rede*, *logos*, Heidegger insists in *Being and Time*, is existentially, that is to say essentially, language, *Sprache* (G2, 214/204), because human beings are first of all not disembodied intelligences or thinking substances, as Descartes would have it, but can exist only as cast into the world, as beings among beings, joined together by a shared language. Human being is linguistic in its very essence. Only language allows things to be in Heidegger's ontological, not ontic sense.

> Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their being *from out of* their being. Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as*. Projecting is the release of a throw by which unconcealedness submits and infuses itself into what is as such. This projective announcement forthwith becomes a renunciation of all the dim confusion in which what is veils and withdraws itself (G5, 61/73–74).

This is a view often reiterated by Heidegger, e.g. in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" (G4, 38–40). Only language allows us to experience things as this or that, e.g. as windows or trees. Human being is a dwelling in language. In that house Being is at home. Heidegger thus calls language the house of Being.

Problematic is Heidegger's turn in *Being and Time* from *Rede* to *Sprache*, from logos to language, where language is thought as inevitably linked to a *geschichtliches Volk*, a historical people. This historicizes Being and makes it relative to a temporally and spatially bound community.

But are we not able to think beyond language so understood, able to call such language into question? Are human beings not able to open windows in that house, even to step out of its door into the freer space beyond, gaining thus a freer vision? Is this not in fact what the philosopher does when he attempts to lay hold of the Being of beings, to understand what they really are? Think once more of Plato's myth of the cave, in which Heidegger discovers the origin of metaphysics. Or of the Greek beginning of philosophy as discussed, e.g. in the *Rectorial Address*. "Here, for the first time," Heidegger had said, "Western man rises up, from a base in a popular culture [*Volkstum*] and by means of his language, against the totality of what is and questions and comprehends it as the being that it is."

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger privileges dwelling in the house built by poets over such a philosophical rising up and what it reveals, because it preserves the conflict of world and earth that philosophy tends to obscures in an attempt to master what is:

> Projective saying is poetry: the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arena of their conflict and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods. Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of what is. Actual language at any given moment is the happening of this saying, in which a people's world historically arises for it and the earth is preserved as that which remains closed (G5, 61/74).

But first of all and most of the time we tend to take the house of language that has been built for us so much for granted that we forget the effort that went into building it, forget its origin, forget that it is a house with an outside, and forget the earth that supports it.

Heidegger goes on to invite us to reflect on the relationship of the different arts to what he has called poetry. "Poetry is thought here in so broad a sense and at the same time in such intimate unity of being with language and word, that we must leave open whether art, in all its modes from architecture to poesy, exhausts the nature of poetry" (G5, 62/74). But enough has been said to show that, if we follow Heidegger, there is indeed something special about poetry as poesy by virtue of its special relationship to language. Poetry, as we usually understand it, is special because, using ordinary language for its material, it re-enacts that original naming that is the origin of ordinary language.

But is there not perhaps also something special about an art like architecture, that art with which Hegel lets the progress of spirit begin, by virtue of its special relationship to the earth? Heidegger, to be sure insists, on the primacy of language and therefore privileges poesy or poetry in the narrower sense:

> Language itself is poetry in the essential sense. But since language is the happening in which for man beings first disclose themselves to him each time as beings, poesy—or poetry in the narrower sense—is the most original form of poetry in the essential sense. Language is not poetry because it is primal poesy; rather poesy takes place in language because language preserves the original nature of poetry. Building and plastic creation, on the other hand, always happen already, and happen only, in the Open of saying and naming. It is the Open that pervades and guides them. But for this very reason they remain their own ways and modes in which truth orders itself into work. They are an ever special poetizing within the clearing of what is, which has already happened unnoticed in language (G5, 62/74).

How convincing is Heidegger's argument here? What evidence can be cited to support or to challenge the emphasis he places on language? I am thinking among other things of Nadia, a severely autistic girl, who lacked language and yet demonstrated in her drawings an extraordinary mastery of space.[2] When she gradually learned to speak like a young child, she lost

that skill. Nadia's remarkable drawings force us to question whether or to what extent we can really insist, with Heidegger, "that building and plastic creation . . . always happen already, and happen only, in the Open of saying and naming." Have we perhaps overestimated the undoubtedly great power of language?

3. The Creativity of Preserving

Towards the end of the essay Heidegger returns once more to what is indeed a central issue, important especially to those who want to look at what Heidegger has to say about leaders from the perspective of what he has to say about artists:

> Art, as the setting-into-work of truth, is poetry. Not only the creation of the work is poetic, but equally poetic, though in its own way, is the preserving of the work; for a work is in actual effect as a work only when we remove ourselves from our commonplace routine and move into what is disclosed by the work, so as to bring our own nature itself to take a stand in the truth of what is (G5, 62/74–75).

Striking is the emphasis Heidegger here places on the poetic character, not just of creating, but of preserving. Preservation, as Heidegger understands it, demands of the preserver a response to the work of the creator that is itself creative. That should be compared with what Heidegger had said in *Being and Time* about resolve or authentic action as repetition, understood as a creative response to some past heroic paradigm (G2, 509–518/385–391). The preserver, too, needs to be open to the rift of earth and world set into work by the creator. To thus be open, both creator and preserver need to take their leave from the established and accepted, from what Heidegger here calls "commonplace routine."

The importance Heidegger gives to the poetic character of preserving gets underscored in the next paragraph:

> The nature of art is poetry. The nature of poetry, in turn, is the founding of truth. We understand founding here in a triple sense: founding as bestowing, founding as grounding, and founding as beginning. Founding is actual only in preserving. Thus to each mode of founding there corresponds a mode of preserving (G5, 63/75).

Key here is the term "founding," which translates *stiften*, which in turn is understood as *schenken* (bestowing), *gründen* (grounding), and *anfangen* (beginning). To understand the meaning of *stiften*, we may want to think of the religious or educational context, in which the word "foundation," *Stiftung*,

has an obvious home. It is not difficult to make sense here of Heidegger's triple sense of founding: such a foundation depends on a gift, a bestowal of an endowment; this endowment establishes something, say an institution; and this establishment is the beginning of something that has its own history.

This triple characterization is explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

3.1 Founding as Bestowing

> The setting-into-work of truth thrusts up the unfamiliar and extraordinary [*das Ungeheure*] and at the same time thrusts down the ordinary [*das Geheure*] and what we believe to be such. The truth that discloses itself in the work can never be proved and derived from what went before. What went before is refuted in its exclusive reality by the work. What art founds can therefore never be compensated and made up for by what is already present and available (G5, 63/75).

Much that is said here could be said also of the work of art as understood, e.g., in the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant understands the work of art as original creation, which as such "can never be proved and derived from what went before," from "what is already present and available." Kant thus understands the work of art as something some genius bestows on us. What is revealed in such a work Kant calls "an aesthetic idea," which gives us more to think than we can capture with our concepts. It thus resists all attempts to translate it into some already established and accepted idiom.[3] To connect further Kant's account with Heidegger's, we would have to explore how the revelation of what Kant calls an aesthetic idea, not just in the work of art, but also in nature, is related to what Heidegger terms "the setting-into-work of truth." That in turn invites a look at Schopenhauer's understanding of the beautiful as the descent of what he terms the Platonic idea into the visible and at Plato's understanding of the relationship of beauty to truth.

If Kant insists that a genuine work of art is never something created by some solitary genius for himself, but necessarily for others, who will have to appropriate what the genius has created if it is indeed to deserve to be called a work of art,[4] Heidegger insists that the work of art, understood as a *Stiftung*, is always cast towards those who will preserve what here has been begun. That presupposes that the preserves will be able recognize in the work an articulation of something that has already, if only obscurely, touched them. Kant would have invoked in this connection nature, which, through the genius, is said to give the rule to art. Heidegger invokes the earth.

> The poetic projection of truth that sets itself into work as figure is also never carried out in the direction of an indeterminate void. Rather, in the work, truth is thrown toward the coming preservers, that is, toward an historical group of men. What is cast forth is, however, never an arbitrary

> demand. Genuinely poetic projection is the opening up or disclosure of that into which human being as historical is already cast. This is the earth and, for an historical people, its earth, the self-closing ground on which it rests together with everything that it already is, though still hidden from itself (G5, 63/75).

We should note that Heidegger here understands the earth as itself historical. Our earth is thus not that of the Greeks. So understood the earth refers to the pre-given and first of all and most of the time unattended to ground that circumscribes our future possibilities, even if these remain still hidden. That ground, as we have seen, can include ordinary language. Poetic projection opens up this ground in a specific way and thereby invites a specific way of being-in-the world. To accept that invitation is to preserve the work.

3.2 Founding as Grounding

Poetry is thus not an arbitrary establishing, but an articulation of a people's still withheld vocation.

> All creation, because it is such a drawing up, is a drawing as of water from a spring. Modern subjectivism, to be sure, immediately misinterprets creation, taking it as a self-sovereign subject's performance of genius. The founding of truth is a founding not only in the sense of a free bestowal, but at the same time foundation in the sense of this ground-laying grounding. Poetic projection comes from Nothing in this respect, that it never takes its gift from the ordinary and traditional. But it never comes from Nothing in that what is projected is only the withheld vocation of the historical being of man itself (G5, 63–64/76).

That Heidegger here recasts the traditional inspiration theory is evident, as is his related resistance to that modern subjectivism, which soon was to find such striking expression in Sartre's understanding of existentialism as a new humanism. Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* (G9, 313–364) reaffirms a critique of such a subjectivism that, from the beginning to the end of his *Denkweg*, remains a central theme of his thinking. The genuine work of art is a gift, and, as the metaphor of "drawing water from a spring" makes clear, this gift is understood by Heidegger as a gift of the earth. Kant had understood the work of art similarly as a gift of nature, still thought by him as God's creation. God having died for Heidegger, he thinks the earth as linked to a particular, historically situated people.

3.3 Founding as Beginning

Implicit in the preceding is that the founding that is art must also be understood as a new beginning:

> Bestowing and grounding have in themselves the unmediated character of what we call a beginning. Yet this unmediated character of a beginning, the peculiarity of a leap out of the unmediable, does not exclude, but rather includes the fact that the beginning prepares itself for the longest time and wholly inconspicuously. A genuine beginning, as a leap, is always a headstart, in which everything to come is already leaped over, even if as something disguised. The beginning already contains the end latent within itself. A genuine beginning, however, has nothing of the neophyte [*anfängerhafte*] character of the primitive. The primitive, because it lacks the bestowing, grounding leap and head start, is always futureless. It is not capable of releasing anything more from itself because it contains nothing more than that in which it is caught (G5, 64/76).

To approach what Heidegger here has to say we may want to think of an achievement such as Brunelleschi's creation of two panels that helped inaugurate Renaissance painting by convincingly demonstrating the power of the perspectival method soon to be publicized by Alberti. Here we have an event that deserves to be considered a beginning and in which much of the art that was to follow was already "leaped over." And it is possible to say that this beginning already "contains the end latent within itself."[5] In thinking this end one might think of photography. It would not be difficult to come up with comparable epoch making achievements in the history of art, such as Abbot Suger's building of St. Denis.

Of interest is the contrast Heidegger draws between the primitive and the genuine work of art. The later is said to be epoch-making, and that is to say futural, in a way the former is not.

> Always when that which is as a whole demands, as what is, itself a grounding in openness, art attains to its historical nature as a foundation. This foundation happened in the West for the first time in Greece. What was in the future to be called Being was set into work, setting the standard. The realm of beings thus opened up was then transformed into a being in the sense of God's creation. This happened in the Middle Ages. This kind of being was again transformed at the beginning and in the course of the modern age. Beings became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation. At each time a new and essential world arose. At each time the openness of what is, had to be established in beings themselves, by the fixing of the truth in figure. At each time there happens unconcealedness of what is. Unconcealedness sets itself into work, a setting which is accomplished in art (G5, 64–65/76–77).

A number of points here demand attention. Striking is the suggestion that "that which is as a whole" may demand what Heidegger calls "a grounding in openness." There would thus seem to be historical periods that

call for art that will inaugurate a new epoch. Once again we may think of Brunelleschi's systematization of perspective or of Abbot Suger's St. Denis. Or perhaps of Claude Ledoux's spherical shelter, which would seem to possess a comparable epochal significance. Heidegger would seem to suggest that such creations, while original, i.e. an *Urprung* in his sense, yet are demanded by what is as a whole. We might thus ask: what is the relationship between the medieval world, refracted by the special circumstances prevailing in Florence around 1400, and Brunelleschi's achievement? Or, what is the relationship between the disintegration of the baroque world understanding in the 18th century and Ledoux's design, revolutionary in more than one sense.[6]

A question is raised by the way Heidegger here, too, divides in quite expected fashion the history of the West into three periods, the Greek, the medieval, and the modern. But phrases such as "What was in the future to be called Being was set into work" or "Beings became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation" suggest that the work decisive for the inauguration of these epochs was that of thinkers, while the transformation of the world into "a being in the sense of God's creation" points to the importance of religion. How important was art to the inauguration of these epochs? How then are we to understand the conclusion of the cited passage: "Unconcealedness sets itself into work, a setting which is accomplished in art." Does the achievement of, say, a Descartes presuppose an artistic creation? Something of the sort can be argued, e.g. that Cartesian method has its precursor in the perspectival method that originated with Brunelleschi. The case is more difficult to make and would seem to be less compelling in the other two cases.[7]

Heidegger sums up this understanding of art as a new beginning in quite general terms:

> Whenever art happens—that is whenever there is a beginning—a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again. History means here not the sequence in time of events of whatever sort, however important. History is the transporting [*Entrückung*] of a people into its appointed task as entrance [*Einrückung*] into that people's endowment (G5, 65/77).

History, as Heidegger understands it, is epochal. The unity of an epoch is understood by him with reference to its founding. Such a founding transports its preservers out of the old into a new world. And once more Heidegger insists on the importance of art to this epochal process: "Art, as founding, is essentially historical. This means not only that art has a history in the external sense that in the course of time, it, too, appears with many other things, and in the process changes and passes away and offers changing aspects for historiology. Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history" (G5, 65/77).

4. Art as the Origin of Truth

This returns us to the essay's beginning, more especially to its title: As a beginning the work of art is a primordial leap, an *Ursprung*, like the spring that, coming from the earth, is the origin of a river, such as the Rhine, celebrated in a hymn by Hölderlin as both a divinity and as a figure of the poet, a hymn to which Heidegger dedicated the better part of a lecture course he gave in the winter semester of 1934/1935.

> Art lets truth originate. Art, founding preserving, is the spring that leaps to the truth of what is, in the work. To originate something by a leap, to bring something into being from out of the source of its nature in a founding leap—this is what the word origin (*Ursprung:* literally, primal leap) means (G5, 65–66/77–78).

Art is the origin of the work of art because it is in the nature of art to be an origin of both creators and preservers. As such it is essentially historical.

In conclusion Heidegger emphasizes the preparatory character of this essay. This inquiry into art is to allow us to ask more thoughtfully what, if any significance art, genuinely creative art as it has here been discussed, holds for us today: "Such reflection cannot force art and its coming-to-be. But this reflective knowledge is the preliminary and therefore indispensable preparation for the becoming of art. Only such knowledge prepares its space for art, their way for the creators, their location for the preservers" (G5, 68/78). Reflection of this sort is said here to be an indispensable preparation for the becoming of art.

Why indispensable? An answer is suggested by what had just been said about the modern age: the modern epoch was said to be marked by a thinking that understands beings as "objects that can be controlled and seen through by calculation." To the extent that this is so, the modern epoch has lost sight of the earth. That understanding. Heidegger is convinced, needs to be called into question, and once again it becomes clear that what is at issue for Heidegger is not just the future of art, but also, and more importantly, our own future. To call the understanding of Being—with Herbert Marcuse[8] we might say, the reality principle—presiding over our modern world into question is the most fundamental task he has set himself in this essay. To recognize this need we only need to consider that by reducing reality to "objects that can be controlled and seen through by calculation" we lose sight of what makes a person a person. Human beings, too, come to be looked at increasingly as material to be used and abused as those in charge see fit—think of the expression "collateral damage"!

Those convinced, with Heidegger, of the need to turn to poetry to open the thinking that presides over our world to the earth, will also not be surprised by Heidegger's decision to turn to Hölderlin to call Hegel into question. Indeed

the whole metaphysical tradition has to be called into question before the poets can be invited back into the *Republic* to once again name the Holy.[9]

But can art still be an *Ursprung* or origin and as such a *Vorsprung* or head-start, or is it condemned by the shape of our modern world to be no more than a *Nachtrag*, a postscript? (G5, 66/78). The ending of the essay, a rhetorical question given a rhetorical answer is cryptic.

"Are we in our existence historically at the origin?" Heidegger asks. "Do we know, which means do we give heed to, the nature of the origin? Or in our relation to art, do we still merely make appeal to a cultivated acquaintance with the past?" (G5, 66/78). As I have already suggested, this ending invites comparison with the ending of the *Rectorial Address*. Both attempt to recall us to the origin of our existence. To really open ourselves to creative work, as Heidegger understands it, is to open ourselves to the rift between world and earth it reveals. But to be open to that rift means also to be open to the incommensurability of earth and world, which entails the final incommensurability of reason and reality. So understood, great art in Heidegger's sense invites us to take leave from the modern world picture. Should we, dare we, follow that invitation? The questions raised here will be raised more explicitly in the "Epilogue."

We face, Heidegger suggests in conclusion, an either-or. To confront this either-or the Germans need to turn to the poet Hölderlin.

> For this either-or and its decision there is an infallible sign. Hölderlin, the poet—whose work still confronts the German as a test to be stood—named it in saying:
>
> Schwer verlässt
> Was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort.
> Reluctantly
> That which dwells near its origin departs.
>
> — "The Journey," verses 18–19.

What the Germans need to do, Heidegger here claims, a claim that he reaffirms over and over, is to become the preservers of Hölderlin's poetry. Hölderlin is understood here as the poet whom, not just the Germans, but the modern age needs, precisely because it is the needy age, the age that has experienced the death of God and the divine and lost its sense of the holy. Hölderlin's poetry is given by Heidegger a significance comparable to that once possessed by Scripture. But what it names is not some god or God, but the holy in the absence of God and all gods.

The either-or with which Heidegger presents us at the end of his essay would seem to have presented itself to him more specifically as either Hegel or Hölderlin: either the philosopher, convinced of the commensurability of reason and reality, or the dreaming poet who convinced of its incommensurability and dreaming of the holy, like Nietzsche, like Van Gogh, lost his sanity.[10] In "Andenken" Heidegger thus speaks, having chosen Hölderlin, of the *Traum* as

the *unvordichtbare Gedicht des Heiligen. Dieses Gedicht müssen die Dichter sagen. Auf dieses Gedicht hörend Träumen sie den Traum* (GA4, 113–114). The German is difficult to translate. The poets are said to be dreamers. Their dreaming is a listening and what they listen to is a poem of the holy, although the genitive also invites a reading that would make this a poem that has for its author not some person, not even a god, but the holy. The task of the poets is to say this unsayable poem. Being *unvordichtbar*, this is a "poem" that communicates itself in silence, a silence that carries such poets out of their once so familiar world, beyond common sense, into the vicinity of the holy. How are we to understand here the holy? Perhaps we can understand it with Heidegger as Being, experienced as possessing an integrating power. But if it is to really integrate our lives, the holy has to descend into some being, some god, or God. But these Hölderlin cannot name. As we read in "Heimkunft/An die Verwandten": *Es fehlen heilige Namen*, "Holy names are missing." They are missing because our age has no place for God or gods and Heidegger warns us not to respond to the absence of God as Aaron did by fashioning some golden calf. (GA4, 28) We can only ready ourselves for their possible coming by hearing in the words of the poets the silent poem of the holy. But if Heidegger has come to accept that world-establishing work is denied to us by the world we live in, he remains convinced that we still need art in order not to allow this world to become a house without an outside.

Notes

1. We meet with this understanding of all art as essential poetry already in the first version of the essay. See Martin Heidegger, "Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks: Erste Ausarbeitung," ed. Hermann Heidegger, *Heidegger Studies*, vol. 5 (1989), 17–18.
2. Lorna Selfe, *Nadia: A case of extraordinary drawing ability in an autistic child*. (London, New York: Academic Press, 1977).
3. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (trans.) Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett,1987), par. 49.
4. Ibid., par. 50.
5. See Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 64–77.
6. See Anthony Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancièn Regime* (Cambridge; MIT Press, 1990).
7. See, however, such books as Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957) and Robert Hahn, *Anaximander and the Architects: The Contributions of Egyptian and Greek Architectural Technologies to the Origins of Greek Philosophy* (SUNY Series in Ancient Greek Philosophy).
8. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).
9. See "Wie wenn am Feiertage . . ." *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, G4, 68.
10. See Karsten Harries, "The Epochal Threshold and the Classical Ideal: Hölderlin contra Hegel," *The Emergence of German Idealism*, (ed.) Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 147–175.

13

Conclusion: Epilogue and Addendum

1. The Riddle of the Beautiful

As Heidegger himself tells us, what is most fundamentally at issue in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is the question of Being.[1] Challenging the understanding of Being that has presided over the progress of metaphysics, an understanding that would make our ability to comprehend reality the measure of being, Heidegger wants to recall us to the wonder that seizes us whenever we suddenly experience some quite ordinary thing, say a pebble on some beach, as a finally incomprehensible gift. So experienced, the thing in its thingliness is a riddle, for we cannot understand this gift—it leaves us at a loss for words.[2] To be sure, first of all and most of the time we are not open to this gift, this riddle. Art, as Heidegger understands it, has the power to make this riddle conspicuous. It can thus be understood as a repetition of the riddle of Being. This was how Hugo von Hofmannsthal experienced paintings by van Gogh: "how can I bring home to you that here every being (*Wesen*) lifted itself towards me as if newborn, out of the terrible chaos of what lacks life, out of the abyss of what lacks being—*one being* every tree, every strand of yellow or greenish field, every fence, every road sunk into the rocky hill, one being, the tin pitcher, the earthen bowl, the table, the crude armchair."[3] The painting lets the most insignificant things become windows to the nameless, monstrous, incredible miracle of the presencing of things. As such a repetition, such art is itself a riddle.

Consider the very beginning of the Epilogue: "The forgoing reflections are concerned with the riddle of art, the riddle that art itself is. They are far from claiming to solve the riddle. The task is to see the riddle" (GA5, 67/ 79).[4] At the time Heidegger had been lecturing on Hölderlin's hymn *Der Rhein* (WS 1934/1935), where the poet calls the source of that river, its origin or *Ursprung* purely sprung forth and therefore a riddle:

> *Ein Räthsel ist Reinentsprungenes. Auch*
> *Der Gesang kaum darf es enthüllen.*
> A riddle is what has purely sprung forth.
> Song, too, barely may unveil it.

Heidegger's interpretation of these two lines, which begin the poem's fourth stanza (G39, 238–261), may also be read as a commentary on the beginning of the Epilogue: "The only and the authentic task for poetry"— and we can generalize and say for art— is here said to be "the unveiling of the mystery of what has purely sprung forth" (G39, 250).This mystery is said to

K. Harries, *Art Matters*, Contributions To Phenomenology 57, 183–198.
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9989-2_13,

be the mystery of Being itself, Being understood here as *Seyn*. That is to say, the mystery in question is the *Ursprung*, that primordial leap that first lets beings be.

Beings, as we have seen, cannot be without words. This lets Heidegger call poetry, following Hölderlin, "the fundamental happening of Being (*Seyn*) as such. It founds Being (*Seyn*) and must found it, because as founding it is nothing other than the battle sound [*Waffenklang*—see Hölderlin, 'Wie wenn am Feiertage, . . .,' GA39, 253] of nature: Being (*Seyn*) that brings itself in the word to itself" (G39, 257). Only in language does Being really come to be as that battle of earth and world Heidegger will call the *Ereignis*, the event of Being. So understood the task of poetry, as we usually understand it, is to unveil the mystery of this original poetry, which is also the origin of Being, by carrying this origin back into the present, by repeating (*wiederholen*) it in this sense. The riddle of art is the riddle of the origin, the primordial leap that founds Being.

If Being cannot be without language, it also needs human beings. The origin of Being is thus also the origin of human being, which can also be understood as the emergence of something original from the earth and into the light. Originality is demanded by the very meaning of freedom. No free decision can be deduced from what preceded it. We can only guess what someone will freely decide to do. Freedom alone suffices to make every human being a riddle. Were we to insist that every riddle can and should be solved, we would leave no room for what is original and would thus be unable to make sense of freedom, of persons, and of art. We glimpse here why art's repetition of the origin matters: art helps us save our own humanity.

We also glimpse here what kind of preservers or readers Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" demands. They are at bottom the same readers demanded by Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who addresses his words "to you, the bold searchers, researchers, and whoever embarks with cunning sails on terrible seas—to you, drunk with riddles, glad of the twilight, whose souls flutes lure astray to every whirlpool, because you do not want to grope along a thread with cowardly hand; and where you can guess you hate to deduce. . ."[5] Must not anyone who, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, would call us beyond the world we have come to take for granted and its understanding of reality where everything in principle has a reason and thus can be explained, be disdainful of proof? For what does it mean to prove something? To do so we have to be in possession of what we take to be firmly established truths. Someone who hopes to prove something has to stand on what he believes to be firm land. But like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Heidegger thinks himself at sea, uncertain of where he is and where he should go, but convinced of the importance to journey into the unknown.[6] And this he understands as not just his condition, or the condition of those who, after World War One, were left spiritually adrift, but as the human condition.

To call something a riddle is to say more than just: I do not understand it. It is to say also that it engages me, that it invites me to guess the answer. The riddle remains a riddle for me only as long as it keeps me guessing. But

this is to presuppose that buried in the riddle is a sense that eludes me. Kant understood everything beautiful, and especially the beauties of nature, as a riddle in that sense.

But everything original is such a riddle. To say that poetry, as the quoted lines from Hölderlin's poem tell us, "barely may unveil" the riddle of what is original, is not to say that the task of the poet is to unriddle this riddle. With this the riddle would have been solved and cease to be a riddle. The poet's task is rather to so unveil the riddle so that it is more clearly present to us as a riddle. And something like this, Heidegger now tells us, he hoped to accomplish with the present essay.

Kant touched on the riddle of the original when he understood the beautiful as the expression of an aesthetic idea that the genius receives as a gift from nature, and insisted that, while such an idea occasions much thoughts, concepts will never be able to exhaust it. Comprehension would inevitably mean the solution of the riddle and thus unmask what was supposed to be beautiful as only its mechanically produced simulacrum. True beauty is inexhaustible. The kind of understanding that we are granted when we are touched by an aesthetic idea surpasses the reach of our concepts. No matter how clear our understanding may be in one sense, what is understood remains a riddle. To repeat: everything beautiful is a riddle.

2. Art and Boredom

Aesthetics is concerned first of all with the pleasurable experience occasioned by the work of art. But when we look at art in this way we are in danger of losing sight of what it is that makes for great art: that it makes us think. Thus aesthetic enjoyment obscures the riddle that is art.[7]

Let me return once more to a passage I cited already in the Introduction.

> Almost from the time when specialized thinking about art and the artist began, this thought was called aesthetic. Aesthetics takes the work of art as an object, the object of *aesthesis*, of sensuous apprehension in the wide sense. Today we call this apprehension experience. The way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its nature. Experience is the source that is standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment, but also for artistic creation. Everything is an experience. Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. This dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries (G5, 67/79).

As pointed out, Heidegger links the rise of the aesthetic approach to art to the dying of what he and Hegel take to be great art. To such an aesthetic approach he opposes his own Being-centered approach, which would have us understand the work of art as "a distinctive way in which truth comes into

being." Truth, as we have seen, may not be understood here as we usually do when we understand it as correspondence or correctness and assume that the facts are what they are, whatever we may think of them, and that our thoughts or propositions must agree with these facts if they deserve to be called true. If that is our understanding of truth, we have to consider art at best an ineffective way of pursuing truth. But that, someone committed to the aesthetic approach might well add, is not its point. Its point is not to represent reality. Its point is to occasion experiences that we appreciate for being what they are. It is with reference to such experiences that we call works of art beautiful, sublime, or interesting. What does truth matter to art?

When Heidegger links the aesthetic approach to the death of art he presupposes a very different understanding of the task of art. The point of art, he insists, is neither to describe, nor to occasion aesthetic pleasure, but to place us in our world in such a way that our understanding of reality is no longer shadowed by a sense of what Milan Kundera called the unbearable lightness of being. Heidegger points to the same phenomenon when, having learned from Kierkegaard's analysis of boredom in the first volume of *Either/Or*, he would have us understand boredom as the *Grundstimmung*, the fundamental mood ruling modern life (G29/30, 117–249). Someone bored experiences things as of equal value, as *gleichgültig*. He no longer knows what to do.

Heidegger looks to art to put us in a different mood. To be in a different mood is to see things differently—recall Wittgenstein's observation that the happy and the unhappy person live in different worlds. Heidegger dreams of an art, strong enough to transform our world. To do so, it must replace the *Grundstimmmung* of boredom with a mood that lets us experience not only works of art, but persons and things as thought provoking riddles that demand our care and attention. To bring this about it must replace the deep boredom that seeks refuge in entertainment not just with a different mood, but with a mood that can be said to be more fundamental in that it carries us back into the vicinity of the very origin of our being in the world, where "origin" once again should not be thought temporally or genetically, but more essentially as that event of Being Heidegger came to call he *Ereignis*.[8]

Mood according to Heidegger is constitutive of our being in the world (G2, 178–186/172–179). We are always in some mood or other. This mood determines how beings present themselves to us, the mode of their presencing, or the way they become unconcealed and disclose themselves. When Heidegger understands the work of art as "a way in which truth comes into being," he understands it as a thing where such disclosure happens. If art is indeed able to establish truth understood as the disclosure of the Being of things, it must have the power to transform the *Grundstimmung* of our being. Such transformation would mean a spiritual revolution. —Plato already recognized that art has the power to tune (*stimmen*) human beings.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger insists that no amount of willing can endow art with such power. As the painter Max Liebermann is supposed to have said: "*Kunst kommt von können, käme sie von wollen, würde sie Wulst heißen*," Much that we today call art is indeed such *Wulst*,

a difficult to translate word, meaning bulge, but in this context suggesting an ugly excrescence. Genuine artists know about the impotence of willing, know that to succeed they have to allow something of which they are not master to work through them. Heidegger understands such *können*, the mastery that issues in *Kunst*, as also a gift of the earth, of that never fully comprehended ground of our existence. Open to the earth, the great artist is able to establish with his work a world that places us and the things around us, even as it opens us to that ground, in which we must remain rooted if our existence is not to be rendered unbearably light.

3. Hegel or Hölderlin?

Heidegger understands the aesthetic approach to art as a corollary of our modern understanding of the being of what is, an understanding supported, if we accept his diagnosis, by the entire history of metaphysics. Metaphysics and aesthetics belong together. As far as philosophy is concerned, Heidegger has the history of metaphysics culminate with Hegel and it is quite in keeping with this interpretation that Hegel should have proclaimed the death of art in its highest sense. Heidegger continues to demand truth of art, demands thus what Hegel, what metaphysics, and that means also our modern age, would deny it, knowing full well how untimely such a demand is and how much argues against it. "The Origin of the Work of Art" is indeed another "Untimely Meditation." Like Nietzsche and challenging Hegel, Heidegger would have us understand art once again as "the highest manner in which truth may obtain existence for itself" (GA5, 68/79–80). "The Origin of the Work of Art" can thus invites us to understand it as Heidegger's much less confident *Birth of Tragedy*."[9]

More obvious and more to the point, to be sure, is Heidegger's contest with Hegel[10] and we should keep in mind that the second, 1935 version of the essay had concluded, not with the Hölderlin quote, but with the observation, in the final version relegated to the Epilogue, that the truth of Hegel's judgment had not yet been decided, that it is supported by the whole history of Western thought, and that it remains true in that sense. Unless we can step beyond our modern world, Heidegger here is saying, we have to agree with Hegel. And for art that would mean that the aesthetic approach would have the last word. Heidegger expressed the same conviction in almost identical words in his lecture course Nietzsche "Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst (WS36/37, GA43, 99).

And yet Heidegger also insists that the question: "is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character?" remains open. Similarly open therefore must remain the question whether the history of Western metaphysics does indeed determine the shape of the world we actually live in or, to put what remains essentially the same question somewhat differently, whether

Heidegger's characterization of the age as the age of the world picture offers more than an illuminating caricature, that captures some, but not all of its important features.

How we answer that question, Heidegger insists, will help to decide *who we are*.[11] What is at stake here is not just or even primarily the future and more especially the significance of art, but our future; and that future, Heidegger insists, is bound up with the meaning of truth and its significance. Challenging Hegel, Heidegger would like to count art once more "as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself." And he looks for help to Hegel's former roommate in the Tübinger Stift, Friedrich Hölderlin, who at the time of his great hymns was descending into madness. For Heidegger the question thus becomes: Hegel or Hölderlin. And the lines from Hölderlin's *Die Wanderung* that, as we saw, conclude the essay, as they had already concluded the first version, suggest that by 1931 Heidegger had already found in Hölderlin the poet he thought able to carry him and us into the vicinity of that origin which, in "The Origin of the Work of Art" and in later works Heidegger struggled to put into words, where I am thinking especially of the *Beiträge*. There is a sense in which Heidegger understands Hölderlin as the poet who reveals the riddle of our modern world, reveals it by letting us understand our age as *die dürftige Zeit*, the needy age, needy because, while the poet is still able to say the holy, he is unable to name gods or God. In the language of Rudolf Otto[12] we can perhaps say: the poet is able to say the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the numinous, but openness to this *mysterium*, unless mediated by some divinity, cannot transform the world of the poet into a place he can call home, leaving him only to nostalgically dream of home. And must we not say the same of the thinker who found his hero in Hölderlin? And what of us?

The conclusion of the essay called Hölderlin's work "a test to be stood" by the Germans. This leaves the question whether the Germans will stand or even be willing to stand this test. Should they be? Hitler taught them at least this much, to be suspicious of all tests to be stood by Germans as Germans rather than as human beings. And they have also learned to be on guard before the bestial violence that so readily springs from the Dionysian earth.

4. Truth and Beauty

Important is the conclusion of the Epilogue. Heidegger here links his reflections on truth and Being to beauty in what may strike some readers as a quite traditional way.

> Truth is the unconcealedness of that which is as something that it is. Truth is the truth of Being. Beauty does not occur alongside and apart from this truth. When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance—as this being of truth in the work and as work—is beauty. Thus the beautiful belongs to the advent of truth, truth's taking of its place (GA5, 69/81).

Much of this should by now seem familiar. Truth here refers to the way entities disclose themselves and can thus be said to be. In that sense Heidegger can appropriate the medieval understanding of every *ens* as *verum*, every being as true, with the difference that "being" and "true" are now no longer given a theocentric interpretation.

Beauty is said to be part of the disclosure of something in its being, and that is to say, part of the experience of something as both established by human work and at the same time as a gift, which is to say also, part of the experience of the riddle Heidegger points to when he speaks of the battle of world and earth. When Heidegger says "the beautiful belongs to the advent of truth," a medieval thinker might have said: "beauty is a transcendental,"[13] constitutive of every being just in so far as it is. Heidegger could have agreed with this, but once again he would have wanted to free such an understanding from what was its theological foundation. Beauty now comes to be understood as "one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness" (G5, 43/56). Something very much like that could have been said by any number of medieval thinkers. The question is of course: what sort of way? According to Heidegger we experience something as beautiful when we experience it as illuminated by "the light of its work-being" (G5, 71), that is to say, when we experience it as something created. The distance between Thomas Aquinas is not as great as might at first appear.

Kant had claimed that the beautiful pleases solely by its form, which is said to occasion an entirely disinterested satisfaction, although he was to greatly deepen that understanding when he went on to understand the beautiful as "the expression of aesthetic ideas," and that is to say also that the beautiful is the expression of something unknown that gathers it together, endows it with its unique aura, but surpasses our understanding.[14] Heidegger challenges the first formulation when he insists that the beautiful "does not exist merely relative to pleasure and purely as its object." But Kant's second formulation calls this "merely" into question, leaving us wondering how we are to think this strange aesthetic idea supposed to gather something into a beautifully formed whole?

Addressing what is fundamentally the same question Heidegger once again looks to the Greeks:

> The beautiful lies in form, but only because the *forma* once took its light from Being as the isness of what is. Being at that time made its advent as *eidos*. The idea fits itself into the *morphe*, The *sunolon*, the unitary whole of *morphe* and *hyle*, namely the *ergon*, is in the manner of *energeia*. This mode of presence becomes the *actualitas* of the *ens actu*. The *actualitas* becomes reality. Reality becomes *objectivity*. Objectivity becomes experience (G5, 69/81).[15]

Heidegger here chronicles once again that by now familiar three stage process that on his interpretation transformed the Greek understanding of the thing into the medieval and this in turn into the modern.[16] The Greeks, he

points out, also understood the beauty of a thing as residing in its form, but this form was understood as itself an expression of the *eidos* of the thing, understood as its true being. To experience something as beautiful was to experience it as illuminated by the light of its *eidos*. This formulation is not so very distant from Kant's understanding of the beautiful as the expression of the aesthetic idea, inviting the question: how are *eidos* and aesthetic idea related?[17]

That Platonic understanding of the beautiful is brought down to earth when the beautiful comes to be understood as shaped matter, in the image of a piece of equipment, such as a pair of shoes, i.e. as a work (cf. G45, 93–94). The being of such a work Aristotle came to think as *energeia*, a difficult to translate term that, as Heidegger points out, became the medieval *actualitas*, in which we can still hear the divine actor to whom everything owes its being. Kant still experienced in the beauty of nature the presence of the creator. But we lose sight of this presence when we understand the world as the totality of what is the case, of what really is. *Actualitas* now becomes reality, and reality comes to be as objectivity, as presence to an ideal observer.

The history sketched here is the history of a progressive loosening of the bond between the true and the beautiful. In the beginning the two were inseparably linked. Something of that link is preserved by the medieval understanding of beauty as a transcendental. When the world comes to be understood as the totality of facts the divorce is complete. And yet the origin of this development, in which beauty and truth were joined, is not really left behind, as is demonstrated by Kant, when, wrestling with the question: how is experience possible? he is forced turn to the aesthetic judgment in an attempt to complete what would otherwise remain an incomplete account; and by Heidegger when, wrestling with what remains fundamentally the same question, he turns to art in his struggle with the question of Being. Rigorous investigation into the origin of knowledge will in the end always lead a thinker into the vicinity of art. As Heidegger puts is: "In the way in which, for the world determined by the West, that which is, is as the real, there is concealed a peculiar confluence of beauty with truth" (G5, 69/81).

The little sketch Heidegger here offers us of the history of Being, is easily recast so that it becomes a sketch of the history of beauty. And that history in turn invites a sketch of the history of art. As Heidegger here puts it: "The history of Western art corresponds to the changes of the nature of truth. This is no more intelligible in terms of beauty taken for itself than it is in terms of experience, supposing that the metaphysical concept of art reaches to art's nature" (GA5, 69/81).

5. Three Final Thoughts

The "Addendum" betrays that it was written long after the essay, in 1956. It offers some afterthoughts, footnotes if you wish, and could easily be skipped, since much of it relates to texts that follow "The Origin of the Work of Art." But these afterthoughts point to a number of difficulties that merit attention.

1. The first difficulty points to the tension I have noted between passages that suggest that truth is something established by human beings, and others that suggest that truth is something that in some sense arrives of its own accord. Heidegger calls our attention especially to the way his remark about the "fixing in place of truth" (G5, 51/64), suggesting human production, would seem to point us in a different direction than talk of the "letting happen of the advent of truth" (G5, 59/72), suggesting an inspiration theory, where the artist is little more than a channel for some higher power (G5, 70/82).

At issue is the much discussed *Kehre* or reversal in the development of Heidegger's thought, often understood or misunderstood as a turn away from a more subject-centered toward a more Being (*Seyn*) -centered thinking. Many passages can be cited to support claims of such a reversal. But I agree with Heidegger that this supposed *Kehre* is not really one. There is development, but no radical reversal in Heidegger's *Denkweg*, his path of thinking, which can be described as showing an ever clearer awareness of the need for some transcendent logos to descend into the visible, awareness that finds expression in the much quoted pronouncement from the Spiegel interview: *Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*, "Only a god can still save us" (G16, 671).[18]

At issue is once more the problem of humanism: are human beings, relying only on their reason, able to discover what will bind their freedom and allow them to live meaningful lives? That problem is inescapably also the problem of religion: must what will bind freedom and render it positive be received as the gift of some transcendent power, be it God, gods, or nature? Heidegger insists on the latter, even as he is aware of all that today threatens to render even talk of such a power meaningless.

In the "Addendum" Heidegger suggests that this first difficulty disappears once we think "to place," *stellen,* in the sense of the Greek *thesis*, as he had already insisted we must do in the essay itself (G5, 48/61): "The Greek 'setting' means placing, as for instance, letting a statue be set up. It means, laying down an oblation. Placing or laying have the sense of bringing *here* into the unconcealed, bringing *forth* into what is present, that is, letting or causing to lie forth" (G5, 70/82). Heidegger is concerned here to oppose an interpretation of *stellen* as the positing of a subject, which places before itself some object. Fixing in place and letting happen, i.e. allowing to emerge, must be thought together. That this is necessary should be apparent to anyone who has asked himself, what account would Kant give of our experience of some thing, say a rose. As a phenomenon it is something constituted by our understanding, and yet it is experienced as something given, given as this unique thing.

According to Heidegger the creation of a work of art should be thought in similar fashion. The artist brings something forth, but this bringing forth, this placing, should be thought of at the same time as "a receiving and an incorporating of a relation to unconcealedness" (GA5, 50, 72/62, 84). The work of the artist lets the power of the earth descend into the visible, gain definite shape and thus show itself. The relationship of art so understood and prophecy is apparent.

2. A second confusion is invited by Heidegger's use of the word *Ge-Stell*, which in ordinary German names an open construction or framework. The confusion is created by Heidegger's later use of the term, when it is given a meaning quite different from the one it has in this essay and names the essence of technology. Consider once more the relevant passage in "The Origin of the Work of Art":

> Figure is the structure in whose shape the rift composes and submits itself. This composed rift is the fitting or joining of the shining of truth. What is here called figure, *Gestalt*, is always to be thought in terms of the particular placing (*Stellen*) and framing of the framework (*Ge-stell*) as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth (G5, 51/64).

As Heidegger explains, though very different, the later use is still related:

> Now the word *Ge-Stell*, frame, which we used in later writings as the explicit key expression for the nature of modern technology, was indeed conceived in reference to that sense of frame (not in reference to such other senses as bookshelf or montage, which it also has). That context is essential because related to the destiny of Being. Framing as the nature of modern technology, derives from the Greek way of experiencing letting-lie-forth, logos, from the Greek *poiesis* and *thesis*. In setting up the frame, the framework—which now means in commandeering everything into assured availability—there sounds the claim of the *ratio reddenda*, i.e. of the *logon didonai*. But in such a way that today this claim that is made in framing takes control of the absolute, and the process of representation—of *Vor-stellen* or putting forth—takes form, on the basis of the Greek perception, as making something secure, fixing in place (G5, 72/84).

"Takes control of the absolute" is an inadequate translation of "die *Herrschaft des Absoluten übernimmt*." What Heidegger suggests here is that the constructing human subject, relying on method, now replaces the absolute, replaces God. Descartes comes to mind, where, as already suggested, it is interesting to explore the relationship between Alberti's understanding of painting and the role played already here by a particular mathematical method and Descartes' understanding of the science of nature and the part played here by his method. Descartes himself, to be sure insisted on the need for God and would have resisted the suggestion that the constructing human subject relying on his reason could possibly replace God.

Once again "The Age of the World Picture" helps us to unpack what is here only suggested. Heidegger himself refers the reader to two pages in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*: the first, from "Die Frage nach der Technik" (G7, 25), points out that it is our fate to have been born into an age where objectifying reason determines ever more decisively our understanding of the being of

things. Ours is the age of technology. The *Ge-Stell*, now a name for the essence of technology, determines the way we encounter things and persons. But just to be able to think the essence of technology is already to gain some distance from it, to return in thought at least to the origin of that essence. Consideration of the relationship of the *Ge-stell* of "The Origin of the Work of Art" and the *Ge-Stell* of "The Question of Technology" can open the latter to a more original understanding of Being.

The second passage, from "Wissenschaft und Besinnung" contrasts the modern understanding of theory—Heidegger mentions the theory of relativity, the theory of evolution, the theory of natural law—with the Greek *theoria*, which is now said to name the *hütende Schauen der Wahrheit.* (G7, 47). *Hüten* means to take care of something, as a shepherd takes care of his flock. So understood *theoria* is ever concerned not to do violence to the truth that shows itself to its caring eyes. Modern theory does not return to its forgotten Greek origin, sees no need for such a return, and yet in its concern with what really is we still sense a trace of that care for the truth that marked he Greek *theoria*.

3. The third point returns to what is said to remain a difficult problem, at bottom the same problem raised already by the first point: "It is still our burden (*schwer bleibt*) to discuss the specifications given briefly on pages 61 f. about the 'establishing' and 'self-establishing of truth in that which is, in beings"' (G5, 72–73/85). Consider once more the following passage, which we considered earlier: "Truth happens only by establishing itself in the conflict and sphere opened up by truth itself. Because truth is the opposition of clearing and concealing, there belongs to it what is here to be called establishing" (G5, 49/61). The difficulty is one that Heidegger has already raised: truth is understood on one hand as the result of a human establishing, on the other it is said to establish itself. How do the two go together and why are they both necessary? We would seem to be confronted with something rather like an antinomy. Heidegger, to be sure, does not speak of an antinomy but of an essential ambiguity. As he had put it in the essay: "Art is the setting-into-work of truth. In this proposition an essential ambiguity is hidden, in which truth is as once the subject and the object of the setting" (GA5, 65/77).[19]

One of the ways in which truth happens, Heidegger had said earlier, is art. As such the happening of truth is the product of human work. But this product, as we have seen, is at the same time a gift. I spoke earlier of Heidegger's proximity to the traditional understanding of the artist as inspired by some higher power. In this sense truth can be said to both set itself into work (subject) and to be established by the work (object). And the work of art can be said to be both a human product and the site of the descent of truth into the visible.

Heidegger to be sure calls both formulations "unsuitable":

> If truth is the "subject," then the definition, "the setting-into-work of truth" means: "truth's setting itself into work"—compare pages 71 and 36. Art is then conceived in terms of disclosive appropriation. Being, however, is a call to man and is not without man. Accordingly art is at

> the same time defined as the setting-into work of truth, where truth now is "object" and art is human creating and preserving (G2, 73–74/86).

I trust that what Heidegger here calls difficult to think has become a bit clearer, or rather, what should have become clearer is the riddle that any attempt to think the truth of Being inevitably confronts. But this is also the riddle of art.

The concluding paragraph speaks to what makes the kind of philosophy represented by this essay difficult for both reader and author, a difficulty that parallels a difficulty faced by any original artist: "There is an unavoidable necessity for the reader, who naturally comes to the essay from without, to refrain at first and for a long time from perceiving and interpreting the facts of the case in terms of the reticent domain that is the source of what has to be thought" (GA5, 74/87). The translation seems unnecessarily cryptic: what Heidegger is saying is that the reader cannot help approach the essay bringing to it expectations formed by his own training and background. He will inevitably attempt to make sense of it by fitting what the essay has to say into some pre-established framework. This commentary certainly rests on such a reading.

"Of the reticent domain that is the source of what has to be thought" translates "*aus dem verschwiegenen Quellbereich des zu Denkenden*." Once more Heidegger draws on the metaphor of a spring rising from some hidden depth. To really understand what is being said, that wordless depth in which what was to be thought in this essay, the origin of the work of art, has its ground, must somehow have touched the reader. Access to the truth is gained only by what we can call, mindful of the Platonic connotation, recollection; recollection, to be sure, not of Plato's forms, but of something hidden in he depth of the earth.

An inverse difficulty is faced by the author: "For the author himself, however, there remains the pressing need of speaking each time in the language most opportune for each of the stations on his way" (GA5, 74/87). He faces the difficult task of building a bridge from the wordless depth in which what has to be thought has its source to the common sense of his expected audience, to find words that will grant readers, willing to give what he has written the time it demands, understanding. Plato thematized this difficulty in the *Phaedo*, which presents us with a Socrates very much aware of the need to build bridges from that domain where what is to be thought has its home to his different interlocutors. Heidegger, too, is very much aware of this need.

6. Coda: A Chinese Tale

Does art still matter? Why does It Matter? "The Origin of the Work of Art" has given us an uncertain answer to both questions. Clear is that Heidegger thinks that art, as he understands it, should matter. It should matter

because authentic dwelling needs to be responsive to the manifold call of the earth. At stake, he is convinced, is finally nothing less than our own humanity.

This made me think an old story told by Chuang Tzu. I first encountered that story long ago in Werner Heisenberg's *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik*.[20] Heisenberg, who, it is worth noting, contributed an essay on the presuppositions of the physics of elementary particles to the Festschrift for Heidegger's 70th birthday,[21] cites this story to express his concern that our technology, instead of helping us live more fully human lives, might become second nature in a way that would rob us of our humanity. "The Origin of the Work of Art" communicates a similar concern. As we have seen, what concerns Heidegger is finally not so much art, but the understanding of reality that is a presupposition of our science and technology, and thus of our modern culture. Heidegger turns to art to recall us to a more original, more archaic understanding of Being.

It was Heidegger's concern with both art and technology, his nostalgic celebration of the peasant woman, that reminded me of this story told two and a half millennia ago by Chuang Tzu:

> Tzu-kung traveled south to Ch'u, and on his way back through Chin, as he passed along the south bank of the Han, he saw an old man preparing his fields for planting. He had hollowed out an opening by which he entered the well and from which he emerged, lugging a pitcher, which he carried out to water the fields. Grunting and puffing, he used up a great deal of energy and produced very little result.
>
> "There is a machine for this sort of thing," said Tzu-kung. "In one day it can water a hundred fields, demanding very little effort, and producing excellent results. Wouldn't you like one?"
>
> The gardener raised his head and looked at Tzu-kung. "How does it work?"
>
> "It's a contraption made by shaping a piece of wood. The back end is heavy and the front end light and it raises the water as though it were pouring it out, so fast that it seems to boil right over! It's called a well sweep." The gardener flushed with anger and then said with a laugh, "I've heard my teacher say, where there are machines, there are bound to be machine worries; where there are machine worries, there are bound to be machine hearts. With a machine heart in your breast, you've spoiled what was pure and simple; and without the pure and simple, the life of the spirit knows no rest. Where the life of the spirit knows no rest, the Way (Tao) will cease to buoy you up. It's not that I don't know about your machine—I would be ashamed to use it!"[22]

For Heisenberg the story had lost nothing of its relevance: restlessness of the spirit, he suggested "is perhaps one of the most fitting descriptions we can give of the state of human beings in our present crisis"[23]—where we should consider the way such restlessness is related to that boredom Heidegger

considered the fundamental mood of our age. Today's world makes it impossible for us not to have "machine worries." And the old gardener was right: "where there are machine worries, there are bound to be machine hearts."

It is such worries that gave rise to this critical commentary. Heidegger's inquiry into the origin of the work art can perhaps help prevent the objectifying reason that rules the world of machines from ruling us human beings, too, in a way that would transform hearts into machines.

This is, to be sure, a very old story reflecting a very different way of life. As Heisenberg observes, "Technology, the machine has spread over the world to an extent of which the Chinese sage could have no idea. But notwithstanding that development, even two thousand years later the most beautiful works of art were still being created and that simplicity of soul, of which the philosopher speaks, was never quite lost, but in the course of the centuries manifested itself, sometimes more weakly, sometimes more strongly, and bore fruit."[24] And is Heisenberg not right: must we not learn to let the wisdom of the Chinese sage coexist with the machine? We would be altogether irresponsible were we to follow the example of Chuang Tzu's old gardener today: countless problems demand that we embrace what he would have us reject. To suggest that we should turn our back on technology is to refuse to face the problems of our day. We need more and still better technology. To be sure, we must use it responsibly.

But, as the fact that Heisenberg thinks it important for us to listen to this story suggests, the more deeply we understand the presuppositions of the scientific world picture and the more we recognize that it would be irresponsible not to affirm technology, the more difficult it becomes to simply dismiss the old gardener's concerns. Nor should we take comfort in and give no further thought to the millennia-old coexistence of simplicity of thought and machine technology invoked by the physicist. Our task is to do justice both to the legitimacy of science and to its limits. Art matters because it can open windows in the house metaphysics has built, windows to an outside for which we lack adequate words.

Notes

1. Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, trans. Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1987, 167.
2. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "The Letter of Lord Chandos" (1902), *Selected Prose*, trans. Mary Hottinger and Tania and James Stern (New York: Pantheon, 1952), 134–135.
3. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten" (1907), *Erzählungen und Aufsätze*, *Ausgewählte Werke in Zwei Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1961), vol. 2, 496.
4. See the helpful discussion of this passage in Jacques Taminiaux, "The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger's Overcoming of Metaphysics," *Poetics, Speculation and Judgment. The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, trans. and ed. Michael Gendre (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), 127–128.

5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 267–268.
6. See Karsten Harries, "The Philosopher at Sea," *Nietzsche's New Seas. Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Politics*, (ed.) Michael Allen Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 21–44.
7. Cf. Taminiaux, "The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger's Overcoming of Metaphysics," 128.
8. See pp. 109–112 above.
9. See Eric Bolle, *Die Kunst der Differenz* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1966), 401. Bolle suggests that Hölderlin in *The Death of Empedocles,* Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Heidegger in the *Rectorial Address* and in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, wishfully attempted to found "a new tragic culture." All three are said to have suffered shipwreck: "the Swabian revolution, as Hölderlin envisioned it, did not take place. Wagner proved to be different than what Nietzsche meant. And Heidegger was shattered by that National Socialism on which he had falsely placed his hope. But all three transformed their disillusionment on the level of insight into a new ontology of art."—We must however keep in mind that the first version of the "The Origin of the Work of Art" antedates the failure of the rectorate!
10. See Jacques Taminiaux, "The Hegelian Legacy in Heidegger's Overcoming of Metaphysics,"125–152.
11. See the second (1935) version of "The Origin of the Work of Art," *De l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art*, texte allemand inédit et traduction française par Emmanuel Martineau (Paris: Authentica, 1987).
12. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958). See Heidegger's preliminary notes for a review of the book, 1918/1919, GA60, 332–333.
13. See Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (New York: Scribner's, 1954), 24; Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Midle Ages,* trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 17–27.
14. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* trans. Werner S. Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987, par. 51.
15. See the helpful discussion in Mark Sinclair, *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art, Poiesis in Being* (Houndmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 30–35.
16. See pp. 109–112 above.
17. When considering how the Platonic idea relates to Kant's aesthetic idea, a look at Schopenhauer's understanding of the Platonic idea proves helpful.
18. In "Heidegger's Grand (Pascalian) Strategy: On the Problem of Reinterpreting the Existentialia," *Metaphysics: The Proceedings of the XXth World Congree of Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999), 49–64, Herman Philipse proposes as the "key to understanding Heidegger's problematic understanding of a *Kehre* (turn)" what he terms a "Pascalian strategy": a "religious quest was always the core of the question of Being" (61). That is said to be true even of *Being and Time*. "The purely secular and 'atheist' nature of the hermeneutics of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit* is now interpreted as an ingenious religious ploy" (60). See also Philipse, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being. A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 239–246. While impossible to reconcile with the available texts and with what we know of Heidegger's biography, this ingenious interpretation does deserve to be taken seriously as an illuminating caricature. Heidegger wrestled with his religious origin all his life, could not leave it behind. Having experienced what Nietzsche called the death of God and having lost the Enlightenment's faith in reason, what was now to bind freedom and provide the orientation necessary for authentic dwelling? "The Origin of the Work of Art" poses and leaves us with this question, as do all the works that follow. I see no reason to search behind the texts for a hidden religiously motivated "ploy."

19. See Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Heideggers Philosophie der Kunst*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), pp. 386–392, 414–416. Von Herrmann suggests that such talk of ambiguity remains meaningful only as long as the *Ereignis* remains buried in silence, but that such ambiguity will disappear once we have articulated the way the truth of Being and Da-sein belong together in the *Ereignis*. But while they do indeed belong together, to recognize this does not remove the ambiguity. Any attempt to clearly articulate the nature of the *Ereignis* will find itself entangled in the antinomy Heidegger touched on already in *Being and Time*, when he recognized that there is a sense in which beings transcend Being, another in which Being transcends beings. It is indeed possible to trace this antinomy back to his early writings. Michael Roubach thus draws a thought provoking analogy between the transcendental one of the *Habilitations-schrift* and Dasein, which "is part of the world and in this sense is part of the whole that encompasses all regions, yet this whole is, essentially, encompassed by Dasein" (Michael Roubach, *Being and Number in Heidegger's Thought*, trans. Nessa Olshansky-Ashtar. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 38. I agree. All attempts, following the example of Parmenides, to think the identity of thought and being get entangled in antinomies.
20. Werner Heisenberg, *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1955), 15–16.
21. "Werner Heisenberg, Grundlegende Vorausetzungen in der Physik der Elementarteilchen," Martin Heidegger zum siebzigsten Geburtstag, ed. Günther Neske (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 291–297.
22. "Heaven and Earth," *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia Press, 1968), 134.
23. Heisenberg, *Naturbild*, 16.
24. Ibid.

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