

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORK OF ART

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Abstract

The following was presented at the Fourth Collegium in the Humanities held at Thammasat University on January 4 and 5, 2001. The paper is intended as an introduction to Heidegger's important essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art". In the course of the paper, I discuss the following themes: Heidegger's questioning of the concept of truth in terms of *Aletheia*, the self disclosing and concealing of Being, as the setting for a radical revaluation of *techne*, (the Greek word for art, as a practical, productive knowledge (Wissen)), in which *techne* will now be conceived as not only a way of knowing that stands alongside *theoria*, but even more, as a decisive site for the disclosure of Being. The actuality of art, its "thingly" character, will not be seen as a static object, therefore, but as *energeia*, activity or "being-at-work". *Techne* will be thought as event, an event of Being, the site for the happening of Truth (*Aletheia*). This culminates in Heidegger's delimitation, or definition, of art as the site or place (*topos*, *Orter*, in the German word Heidegger uses) of truth's setting-itself-to-work. This is art's "activity", its "actuality". Finally, the significance of this is in the way it opens a new questioning of the European experience of nihilism as the "death of God", or withdrawal of

gods, and the related triumph of knowledge in the form of scientific technicity, the calculative thinking of a *techne* that demands, challenges, provokes, and sets up Being as an object and conceives of earth, for example, as a "natural resource" to be exploited. The work of art, as the *techne* in which "truth (*Aletheia*) sets itself to work", what Heidegger might call "great art", is then to be seen as a possible way of overcoming (*Verwindung*) of nihilism and of questioning the essence of technology and calculative thinking. Through a questioning of the origin of the work of art, philosophical thinking will go beyond a mere "aesthetics" toward the more fundamental questioning of the "end of metaphysics". Through a return to an archaic Greek world opened in and by the temple, and through a thinking of all that is still yet to be thought, or that is still held in reserve in that experience, Heidegger seeks the possibility of a new beginning for the European, especially the Germanic, historical destiny. No doubt the revaluation of *techne*, not only in terms of the work of art, but in terms of the political and the founding of a nation and the opening of the destiny of a people, which is Heidegger's way of thinking the actuality of the work of *techne*, are all crucial and deeply related themes. But, due to limitations of time and space in this paper, both the links of this with Heidegger's meditations on the poetry of Holderlin, and the political dimensions of this work and Heidegger's relation to National socialism during the 1930s, are not considered.

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Especially in late twentieth century phi-

losophy in Europe, we have seen an explosion of interest in images and works of art. The field of aesthetics has been a major 'growth area' in philosophical studies. It would be hard to assign a date to the beginnings of this renewed interest, but it would seem indeed that 1936 was a very good year for writings that took their starting point and guiding questions from images and works of art. Heidegger's lecture on "The Origin of the Work of Art" dates from 1936, and so does Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and Jacques Lacan's "The Mirror Stage" (*Le Stade du Miroir*). All three texts, in different but no doubt related ways, brought to the fore an important new revaluation, if not a promotion, of the status and actuality of images and works of art. This could thus be seen as decisive turn of events because in the context of European philosophy, expressly in Hegel's *Vorlesungen uber die Asthetik*, it was said that "art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself...", and that "art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past." Heidegger quotes these passages in the "Epilogue" to his "The Origin of the Work of Art", and they can be seen as important to the philosophical context for his, (and perhaps for Benjamin's), reflections on art. (See "The Origin of the Work of Art", translated by Albert Hofstadter, as published in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, abbreviated PLT, pp 79-81.) This revaluation of the roles and importance of works of art meant, especially the texts by Benjamin and Heidegger, a decisive confrontation with the prevailing traditions of European

aesthetics, putting that tradition in question so as to alter it, surpass it, or to question its limits. Perhaps, as Rodophe Gasche has shown, this takes a Kantian direction in Benjamin. But for Heidegger, the pathways would lead back to the Greeks, especially to Heraclitus, Parmenides, Aeschylus, Plato, (the *Republic* Book X most centrally), and Aristotle (especially the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6) It would also involve a confrontation with, not only Kant and Hegel, but with Nietzsche, who also strongly promoted creation, creativity and a new understanding of the relation between art and truth. Heidegger's lectures on Nietzsche are roughly contemporary with his lecture "The Origin of the Work of Art" and they engage precisely these questions. Thus, Heidegger's pathways of thoughts on the work of art would lead, in the age of the end and 'past-ness' of art, to the beginnings of philosophy, to the beginnings of its end, as Heidegger phrases it in his 1936 *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The reason for this seems to be that we cannot see the work of art any longer, so sedimented and covered over it is by the traditional ways of determining the work of art. A degradation of art has occurred precisely in an age in which the end of art must be paradoxically seen in its very proliferation and sudden new all pervasive visibility. Art no longer provokes any questioning as to its essence. It seems drained of actuality and has become mere appearance. As Heidegger phrases it in the opening paragraphs of his lecture, "Where and how does art occur? Art – this is nothing more than a word to which nothing real any longer corresponds." The work of art has become

an everyday thing, a commercial entity, a thing bought and sold, collected, stored and restored, studied, commented upon and enjoyed: "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 are "shipped like coal," or they "lie in the storerooms ...like potatoes in a cellar." (PTL 19)

But, if art has fallen into decay, if it has fallen into error and errance, it is a productive error, for it is precisely this theme of the end of art, it is this way of interpreting the present situation of art as one of the decay and degradation of art to the status of a mere appearance or a 'thing', that so provokes Heidegger's questioning of art. Thus, rather than being a hopeless situation, the end of art is a thought provoking situation for Heidegger. In the "withdrawal" and decay of art, thinking is provoked so as to question the essence, the "origin" and "end" of art anew, seeing them in a new, renewed, historical and philosophical relationship. The "end of art" evoked by Heidegger's analysis is, thus, a thought provoking end, an end that, once questioned and reflected upon, will perhaps bring into view a new future of art, something — a task, a thinking — yet to come, something reflectively, provisionally retrieved from art's very pastness that could well transform humanity. So, we can read Heidegger's essay as asking anew about the "actuality" of art 'today'. We can read it as posing in a new way the question, "what is happening in a work of art?"

In the following, I should like to pursue

these questions, especially the latter, in the following stages: First, a short presentation of the history of the text and its relation to other Heideggerian texts contemporary with "The Origin of the Work of Art"; second, a very brief and very schematic presentation of Heidegger's overall project as the search for origins in the sense of the questioning of the meaning of Being; and third, a schematic reading of "The Origin of the Work of Art" as the questioning of Being as truth, *aletheia* (un-concealment), and as set to work in the work of art.

There are three texts about the origin of the work of art, dating from November 1935 until December 1936. A first version, evidently never presented as a lecture, as been discovered and published in *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 5-22. A second version, presented on November 13, 1935 to the Kunstwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft in Freiburg, has been published and translated into French as *De l'origine de l'oeuvre d'art. Première version inédite* (1935), Authentica, (1987). Then, in January of 1936, Heidegger repeated that lecture in Zurich. Finally, on November 17th and 24th, and on December 4, he presented a tripartite lecture using the Frankfurt title *Der Ursprung des Kuntswerkes*. This lecture series was published in the first edition of the *Holzwege* in 1950. This is the text upon which the English translation by Albert Hofstadter in *Poetry, Language and Thought* in 1971. A Reclam edition, with an introduction by H.G. Gadamer, published in 1982, is a slightly reworked version. I will be referring to this edition in what follows. (See John Sallis, *Stone*, 1994, footnote

17, p 98, and Krell, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, 1977, p 144).

The Origin of the Work of Art, (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*), is the culmination of several years of work and marks, at the same time, a major turning on Heidegger's part toward new orientations. That Heidegger's lectures on art were a decisive turning point for him is confirmed in an essay by Jacques Taminiaux "The Origin of *The Origin of the Work of Art*" (published in *Reading Heidegger, Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis, pp 392-404,) where Taminiaux notes that Heidegger himself referred to it as such in a seminar given in September of 1973. I shall be returning to this momentarily.

During the 1930s, Heidegger also produced his famous "Rectoral Address" (1933), the lecture course on Holderlin, (given in the winter of 1934-35), the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (English translation by Ralph Manheim, 1959), which dates from the summer of 1935, and the lecture course on Nietzsche, *The Will to Power as Art*, which was taught in the winter of 1936-37 (English translation by David F. Krell, 1979). More recently, the important second major book after *Being and Time* that Heidegger was working in the 1930s, the *Beitrage*, or *Contributions to Philosophy*, has been published (English translation, 1999). A proper understanding of "The Origin of the Work of Art" can best be achieved by consulting all of these lectures and texts.

Heidegger referred to the lectures on art as a "turning" point in his thought. I would like to dwell on this for a mo-

ment before turning to the second section of my presentation. Even before his 1927 *Being and Time*, Heidegger was already concerned with the question of the meaning of Being ("Ontology", the science of Being). But how this questioning was pursued, and in relation to what ontological dimensions it was focused, tended to change over the years. By 1936, it had changed significantly. Whereby in the earlier "Fundamental Ontology", as it is called, (the Marburg lectures offered before *Being and Time*), the focus for the understanding of the various meanings of Being was, according to Jacques Taminiaux ("The Origin of *The Origin of the Work of Art*", p 393) "the finite time of the being that we ourselves are, the Dasein," for the 1936 lectures on art, it was the work of art that would be the site for the happening of truth, for the strife between the disclosure and concealment of Being. Thus, the art lectures evidence a new status for *techne*, (the Greek word for producing and for art as the art of production). The philosophical context is Aristotle's Ethics, Book 6, where, in the distinctions he makes between the intellectual virtues, he distinguishes the theoretical from the practical virtues. Here, *techne* is delegated to the lower level of the practical, deliberative intellectual virtues, the higher being *phronesis*, "practical wisdom". Although *techne*, (which would include the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, music and tragic drama) is indeed a form of knowledge — it is a way of discovering and revealing being — it is concerned only with the production of artifacts and effects. It thus has its end beyond or outside itself, in the thing or in the emotion it produces (as in tragic drama, for ex-

ample). So, as Taminiaux shows, before the 1935 lectures, *techne* and above all, art, had a lower status for Heidegger, influenced as he was by this Aristotelian context. Art was delegated to the realm of "everydayness", a way of being that is "preoccupied by ends to be obtained by utensils." (Ibid. p 394) Because they were in no way seen as capable of the highest forms of the knowledge of the Beings of beings, the poets could not be on an equal footing with the thinker, the one who practices *theoria*. Works of art were not therefore regarded as originary, or as important in the questioning of the meaning of Being. Only Dasein, "the finite time of the being that we ourselves are" (Taminiaux), was regarded as the focus or as the site for the questioning of the meaning of Being and for Being's disclosure. But, by 1936, it was in the work of art that what Heidegger calls the "happening of the truth of Being" occurs – and "in the manner of a work." No longer, then, shall *techne* and *poiesis* be reduced or subjugated to thought. No longer shall the thing or the thingly character of the work of art be ignored or reduced to inauthenticity. Now, art will be given its due. But no longer shall we listen to people speaking "of immortal works of art and of art as an eternal value". Rather we shall listen attentively to what a work of art has to say. We shall look and ask, not for meanings or fixed truths and noble aspirations, but for something deeper and more primeval than this. We shall ask, "what is happening in a work of art?" Art shall be seen as an event of the highest order and authenticity. Not simply something familiar and either "present at hand" (*Vorhandenheit*), or, like a utensil,

"ready to hand" (*Zuhandenheit*), art shall be regarded as an enigma, a riddle that provokes our thinking and questioning. For Heidegger, it is always the questioning that is emphasized in these contexts, not the answers or the solutions to the "riddle that art itself is." (PLT, p. 79)

Accompanying this change in the status of *techne* is a change in "resoluteness". Truth is no longer a matter of human decision. Creation no longer has the Promethean, heroic and violent tone Heidegger had derived from his reading of Aeschylus. By 1936, much of that has changed and, as Heidegger now phrases it, the essential of a thing as created is "this 'that it is' of createdness". (Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," quoted by Taminiaux, p. 404) A willful, resolute Dasein, with its projects to be a Self, falls away; the Promethean is replaced in the 1936 lectures by more passive constructions. The artist-creator is no longer a struggler, with the violence of his creation being the only authentic response to the violence of Being (*physis*) itself. The creator of a work of art, Van Gogh's painting of a "Peasant's Shoes", for example, may set into work the struggle of earth and world, but, as Taminiaux shows, the creator him/herself is no struggler. Rather, he/she is seen instead as one "receiving and borrowing within the relation to Unconcealment." (Heidegger, quoted by Taminiaux, p 404). Mention should also be made in this context of Heidegger's "Addendum" (which dates from 1956, PLT, p. 82) to "The Origin of the Work of Art", where, in a clarification of the "key specification" of "setting-into-work" of truth, (which is how he will

conceive of creativity and of art as the origin of the work of art), he writes of an accord between a “fixing in place of truth” and a “letting happen of the advent of truth. “Fixing in place,” he writes, “implies a willing which blocks and thus prevents the advent of truth. In *letting-happen* (Heidegger’s emphasis) on the other hand, there is manifested a compliance and thus, as it were, a nonwilling, which clears the way for the advent of truth.” These new ways of questioning the artist as creator and Heidegger’s withdrawal from the subjective, willful dimension as an originary dimension are furthermore reflected in the opening pages to “The Origin of the Work of Art”, where Heidegger denies, (in a preliminary answer to the question “what is the origin of the work of art?”), that the artist is the origin of the work just as he will also deny that the work is the origin of the artist. Both artist and work, and the circularity between them, are contained within art, understood as the site for the happening of truth, truth’s standing forth, or putting itself to work in the work. This is the shining of truth, the *energeia* (“energy”, actuality, Being as activity, being-at-work) of the work — the “work of the work”, or, in other words, the being-at-work (*energeia*) of the work — its activity, its radiance. The work (*ergon*, Greek for work), rather than Dasein, is now brought to the fore as the site for the setting forth of truth, a setting forth that occurs in the repose of a boundary (*peras*, in Greek). Thus the work of art, authentically seen is not an object standing over and against a subject, spectator who judges and/or enjoys or consumes the work, but is site for the unconcealment of Being and the shin-

ing radiance of truth. It is a putting to work, a setting forth of truth in a repose that is at the same time the “fullness of motion”. This appropriation of the Aristotelian tradition is at the same time critical of it. So, as one should expect, Heidegger’s use of the term “*energeia*” will be both a Greek concept he adopts and a critical tool important to Heidegger’s deconstruction or desedimentation of the Western metaphysical tradition.

We shall return to these themes in the following section. For now, let me conclude this section by saying once again how important this period was to the development of Heidegger’s thought toward a new way of articulating not only the work of art, but, more broadly, the relations between poetry, language, and thought, which in Heidegger’s later texts, were conceived not as opposites or as in a hierarchy in which poetry (*techne* and *poiesis*) is subordinated to thinking (as *theoria* and *sophia*, wisdom) but shown as belonging together, as inter-dependent ways of questioning Being; they are the work, the site whereby Being gives itself; they are site for the happening of truth (*aletheia*), for the shining radiance of truth, where truth sets itself to work as the strife between the unconcealment and concealment, the giving and withdrawal of Being. Art, as a *techne* and as *poiesis*, bringing-forth, is now on the same level as thinking. As Heidegger phrases this in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, (p. 133) “art is what most immediately brings being (the appearing) to stand; it stabilizes it in something present (the work). The work of art is a work because art is what brings about (*er-wirkt*) Being in

an essent (a being); it brings about the phenomenon in which the emerging power (*physis*, Being) comes to shine (*scheinen*). Not because it is wrought (*gewirkt*) but because it is *er-wirkt* is art a work."

Perhaps these events can be better understood if we turn now to the second part of my presentation, which will draw especially upon Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* and discuss the overall concerns of Heidegger's project as it was being developed in the 1930s.

If there is any one question that predominates in Heidegger's work in this period, it is the question of Being as truth, *aletheia*. This question places Heidegger's thought in a profound dialogue with the history of Western metaphysics dating back to the generation of thinkers and tragedians before Plato. The question is also the key to another of Heidegger's concerns in this period, especially in his work on Nietzsche, and that is the question of nihilism in terms of the death or withdrawal of the gods, the defining of Being as a Nothing, or nothingness, and the seeming triumph of willful, calculative, instrumental and cybernetic modes of thinking. These latter modes of thinking would seem to Heidegger as attempts — violent, willful, provoking attempts — to fill in the emptiness, the nothingness, the *nihil* experienced with the death, absence or withdrawal of the gods. For this section, therefore, I will mainly draw upon Heidegger's 1936 *Introduction to Metaphysics* for a few brief indicators of his overall project and its bearing on the questioning of the work of art as it developed in the middle 1930s.

I shall begin by citing a passage from the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (henceforth abbreviated *IM*, translation by Ralph Manheim, 1959, based on the 1953 German edition, a re-working of the 1935 lectures given at the University of Freiburg in Breisgau), page 111, where Heidegger marks the difference between traditional aesthetics and his own position. For traditional aesthetics, he writes, art "is representation of the beautiful in the sense of the pleasing, the pleasant." Art, as Heidegger now understands it (and here Heidegger does not designate his own position as an "aesthetics" at all,) "is the disclosure of the Being of beings. On the strength of a recaptured, pristine relation to Being we must provide the word 'art' with a new content." What is this "recaptured, pristine relation to Being," and what are these "new contents" for the word art? Such were Heidegger's tasks in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The critique of traditional aesthetics, and of the familiar positions it offers regarding the work of art can only be confronted and altered, and the word "art", (art which has become nothing but a "word") given new contents, thereby, only through a necessary engagement with the history of metaphysics as the history of the questioning and determining of the meaning Being.

It would seem this has, in a sense, always been Heidegger's concern. As early as 1907, he writes in "My Way to Phenomenology", (*Time and Being*, p.74) that he had been given a copy of Brentano's *Manifold Meaning of Being in Aristotle*, (published in 1862). There, in a quotation from Aristotle's *Meta-*

physics (VI 1 1026a), Heidegger read the passage that was to have a crucial influence on his thinking: "The question that was raised in earliest time that we raise today, *and that will always be raised* — as a matter of perplexity — is the question 'What is Being?' (*ti to on*)."

For Aristotle, among the many ways of saying Being are these four ways: Being as essence, Being as true, or the true, Being as potentiality and actuality, and Being as said in the ways that derive from the categories. Elsewhere, we find Being as substance (*ousia*), property, as *pros hen*, (or 'the way to') and so on. For Plato, Being was delimited as Idea (*Eidos*), and as the Good, (*Agathon*) the Idea of the ideas, source of all reality and intelligibility and of the light of truth in which the essents stand forth clearly in unconcealment.

Now what is unusual in Heidegger's case is that when his philosophical studies began, philosophy in Germany was dominated by a Kantian philosophy of epistemology and logic. The question of the meaning of Being, the history of the question was not studied. In the Introduction to *Metaphysics* (p. 70), Heidegger wrote that his earlier *Sein und Zeit*, (*Being and Time*) had "raised the question of the meaning of Being — *as a question* — for the first time in the history of metaphysics." Thus, in its given academic context, there was indeed something new and radical about Heidegger's approach. The questions he asked and even the language he used, archaic, spare, and increasingly poetic, were completely new. In the setting of the German universities, dominated in those days by the philosophy of Kant,

by epistemology and logic, Heidegger said he wanted to go back to the beginnings of Western philosophy and to uncover a tradition of thought that had seemingly been long forgotten or sedimented over by received ideas and prevailing, all too familiar concepts and ideas. He wanted to prevail against what he called the increasing barbarization of language and thought in twentieth century European culture. He wanted to restore an authentic mode of thinking and saying that Being is. This was the "ontological tradition", which had begun in the ancients Greeks and has continued, although in an ignored or unheeded way, until today. Ontology, in a definition that can only be taken as faulty and provisional, is the "science of Being." So, Heidegger's task was not to question the conditions for the possibility of science, but to un-cover, or to dis-cover the history of the meanings of Being, a history he would think as so many epochs of Being, as so many ways in which Being has both given itself to human apprehension and has withdrawn in the very event of its giving of itself. Thus, Heidegger's approach to the question of Being is historical. Not that being is given *in* history, as an empirical series of facts or data, or that Being somehow floats *above* or outside of history as the creator, but that the question of the meaning of Being is the questioning of the primordial, ontological basis or grounds for history. History opens, humanity becomes "human" in its relation, its questioning relation, with Being.

For Heidegger, then, the primary sense of Being will not be as a thing, or entity, an object opposed to thought, a substrate

bearing sense properties and in turn determined by concepts and by thought. One would have to say Being is neither a thing nor a concept but that "indeterminable" existence without which there would not be either things or concepts. Being is truth. Truth is the truth of Being. (IM p. 81) Nothing revolutionary in saying that. As Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*, (Section 44, translated by Macquarrie and Robinson, 1962, p. 256) "From time immemorial, philosophy has associated truth with Being." But what it is the sense of truth that is here profoundly associated with Being that is radical. Heidegger's is not a correspondence theory of truth, a propositional truth, a truth subject to empirical conditions of verifiability and merely distinguished, through laws of thought, from its opposite, the false. No. For Heidegger truth must be thought in a more ancient, primordial and historical way. It must be thought in terms of a notion of truth that Heidegger claims dates from the words of Parmenides, Heraclitus, the tragic poets, and even Plato, who, for Heidegger marks the beginning, the beginning of the end, of European philosophy. The word for truth for these thinkers was *Aletheia*. *Aletheia*, in the Heideggerian translation, is an ancient Greek word for truth that has been covered over — forgotten — in the history of metaphysics, beginning with Plato, covered over by the determination of truth as *homoiosis*, or adequation, as in the formula, *veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus* (truth is the adequation of, or correspondence between, things and intellect). This is a propositional definition of truth in which truth is a function of language and especially of propositions or statements

which themselves are defined as the sorts of things that have a *truth value* (i.e., they can be said to be true or false according to the way they do or do not accord with "what is the case".) Assumed, but covered over in this determination of truth is a deeper sense of truth as *aletheia*, which means *lethe*, covering, hiddenness, forgotten, concealed, and the prefix *a*, which means "not"; hence, truth is what is not concealed, or what is brought forth into unconcealment from concealment. It is important to keep in mind that the term *aletheia* means both concealment and unconcealment, the hidden and the revealed, the presencing of Being and the withdrawal of Being into non-presence. There is a tension, a strife here that is fundamental for Heidegger.

This notion of truth is, of course, the key to the essay on "The Origin of the Work of Art" where art is the said to be site where truth sets itself to work in and as unconcealment, as the shining of Being in appearance.

Now the reason the propositional delimitation of truth assumes *aletheia* in that in order for there to be an object and a thought or statement that is adequate to it or in correct correspondence with it, there first must be something given to see, to think and to say. There must be language, and, for Heidegger, "to speak of an essent, a being, as such includes: to understand it in advance as an essent, a being, that is, to understand being." (IM, p 69) Without being, without the giving of being in and as *aletheia*, Heidegger will argue, "*there would be no language at all*. No essent as such would disclose itself in words, it would

no longer be possible to invoke it and speak about it in words." (*IM*, p 69, Heidegger's emphases) So, there must be unconcealment, and unconcealment always stands out against the background of concealment. All this, Heidegger argues is assumed and forgotten in the metaphysical determination of truth as *homoiosis*.

This is important to our study of "The Origin of the Work of Art" because in that lecture, Heidegger would like to question the work of art in terms of its relation to Being and to truth, and to show a profound relation between art, Being and truth, and to thereby counter Hegel's claim, quoted earlier, that "art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence of itself." But this does not mean that Heidegger will simply insist that art does indeed *still count* in this manner of being one of the appearances, (*An-wesen*, presence, *Gestalt*, form, or *parousia*, in Greek, of truth), in and through which truth reveals itself to itself in and as history, but that the whole notion of truth active and prevailing, the whole determination of Being in and as Spirit, and the determination of truth as the unity of the whole of Spirit, will all be put in question. Heidegger: "The truth of Hegel's judgement has not yet been decided; for behind the verdict there stands Western thought since the Greeks, which thought corresponds to a truth of beings that has already happened. Decision upon the judgement will be made, when it is made, from and about this truth of what is." (*PTL* p. 80)

Much of this can be seen in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

Heidegger opens the Introduction to Metaphysics by quoting a fundamental question from the Western metaphysical tradition: "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Why are there beings rather than nothing? Perhaps because there is Being. But, the word "Being" seems the emptiest and most indeterminate word in the history of metaphysics, a mere vapour. Science and theology have answered the question in differing ways, positing the origin of what is as nature, as atomic physics, or as God the creator. Heidegger is satisfied with none of these because they remain secondary and always thinking of Being (*Sein*) in terms of beings (*seindes*). They have forgotten the difference, the ontological difference between Being and beings (which Mannheim translates as "essents"). But, once again, the word "Being" seems indeterminate not despite its ready, daily use in European languages. We say "It is raining" or "The lecture is in the auditorium" and we raise and seemingly understand the question "To be or not to be". What is the "is" in these phrases? A mere word? The word Being seems somehow worn out, used up, spent. Perhaps this is why it seems to lack determination. Its 'currency' is exhausted. Or is Being the "isness of the is", as a metaphysical, Platonistic formulation might have it? Something perhaps somehow outside of language, a signified for every signifier but one that itself is not a signifier? Once we begin thinking about the word Being, we discover many determinations of Being. We discover that we distinguish between "being-so" and "being-otherwise". We make judgements about being and

nonbeing. We distinguish being from one 'thing' and one 'thing' only: we distinguish Being from Nothing. Thus, far from having no understanding of Being, we already seem to have a pre-comprehensive understanding of Being. (See *IM*, p. 65) In this way, Being seems self-contradictory: both the most indeterminate and most determined of thoughts. But, "something that contradicts itself cannot be," Heidegger writes, there can be no "square circles." Yet, he continues, "if we decline to delude ourselves, and if we have a moment's time to spare amid all the activities and diversions of the day, we find ourselves standing in the very middle of this contradiction. And this 'stand' of ours is more real than just about anything else we call real; it is more real than dogs and cats, automobiles and newspapers." (*IM* p 66)

Over the course of his reflections, Heidegger shows, especially in a return to the thought of the Greeks, (Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle), that Being is determined in terms of especially four relations, "delimitations", determinations or distinctions regarding Being: First, Being is distinguished from Becoming; second, Being is distinguished from Appearance; third, Being is distinguished from Thought, and fourth, Being is distinguished from Ought. As Heidegger writes, "these distinctions are by no means accidental. What is held apart in them belonged originally together and tends to merge. The distinctions therefore have an inner necessity....(these) oppositions, which look at first sight like formulas, did not arise fortuitously and find their way into language as figures of speech. They arose in close connec-

tion with the development of the concept of Being, a process crucial for the history of the West. They began with the beginning of philosophical questioning....they permeate all knowledge, action, and discourse...and the order in which they have been listed provides an indication of the order in which they are internally linked and of the historical order in which they were shaped...." and finally, "if one is to ask the question of Being radically, one must understand the task of unfolding the truth of the essence of Being; one must come to a decision regarding the powers hidden in these distinction in order to restore them to their own truth." (*IM* p. 80) This speaks much of the overall tasks of Heidegger's work not only in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, but in "The Origin of the Work of Art," as well.

What does it mean "to restore them to their own truth"? This would return us to the question of truth as *aletheia*, the concealment and disclosure of Being. *Aletheia*, the truth of Being and the Being of truth, is linked to a chain of other terms: *physis*, an ancient Greek word for Being as elemental power of emerging and related for Heidegger to *Scheinen*, seeming, radiance, *noein*, thinking, *logos*, in the sense of "gathering or binding-together", *polemos*, conflict, and ultimately, *techne*, art, and *poiesis*, producing, bringing forth (*Hervorbringen*) or "letting-come-about (*Ver-an-lassen*). As *aletheia*, as unconcealment and concealment, Being must first, (for the Heidegger of the *Introduction to Metaphysics*,) be thought as *conflict*, as *polemos*, a word Heidegger finds in Heraclitus, Fragment 53, and translated by Heidegger as: "Conflict is for all (that

is present) the creator that causes to emerge, but (also) for all the dominant preserver. For it makes some to appear as gods, others as men; it creates (shows) some as slaves, some as freemen.” (quoted, *IM*, p. 51) Heidegger writes, “the *polemos* named here is a conflict that prevailed prior to everything divine and human, not war in the human sense. This conflict, as Heraclitus thought, first caused the realm of being to separate into opposites....In the conflict (*Auseinandersetzung*, setting apart) a world comes into being. *Conflict does not split, much less destroy unity. It constitutes unity; it is the binding-together, logos. Polemos and logos are the same.*” (Ibid. p 51, emphasis mine) These thoughts are essential to understanding the strife that is at the heart of the distinction not only between revealing and concealing, but between world and earth, that is at the heart of Heidegger’s lecture “The Origin of the Work of Art”. This conflictual unity of *polemos* and *logos* is the origin that Heidegger seeks. The work of art sets this conflict to work in the work of art. (*IM* p143) For Heidegger, Being “dominates”, it is “overpowering, “creative self-assertion” (*Selbstbehauptung*), and insofar as it dominates, appearing and *with it* apprehension must also occur. But if man is to participate in this appearing apprehension, he must be, he must belong to being.” Appearing belongs to Being as *physis* and man is a being that belongs to this appearing. (*IM* p. 117) Being requires human apprehension. But apprehension is the human act of violence by which overpowering Being – Being as “creative self assertion” is gathered in its togetherness. Human being “collects itself”, as

Heidegger writes, “amid dispersion into the impermanent, recaptures itself out of confusion in appearance.” This is a turning away from dispersion and confusion that is also a “turning to”, or turning towards Being, towards what draws the essent, being, into the togetherness of Being (*physis*). “It” (apprehension, the apprehension in which Being appears) is an ingathering,... man’s (sic) collecting himself (sic) toward fitness (*Fug*), (toward Being), that first brings being-human into its essence, (and) so thrusting it (human-being) into homelessness, insofar as the home is dominated by the appearance of the ordinary, customary and commonplace.” (*IM* p. 142) So, the apprehension that apprehends the truth of Being is a turning away from the familiar and the everyday involvement in things. As Heidegger writes, in a passage also quoted by J. Taminiaux (op.cit.), “being human determines itself from out of a relation to beings as a whole. The human essence shows itself here to be the relation which first open up Being to man. Being-human, as the need (*Not*) for apprehending and gathering, is a being-driven (*Notigung*) into the freedom of undertaking *techne*, of the setting-into-work of Being, a setting-into work which is itself knowing. This is History (*Geschichte*) (*IM*, p. 142) But, here, the *techne* undertaken will not be the fallen, inauthentic versions, the petty business of the many or the They, but is a “great *techne*,” (the phrase is Taminiaux’s), the *techne* achieved by the work of art, as in the work of poetry, the work of stone in temple and statue, the work of word in thought, the work of logos as historical gathering in which all these are grounded and preserved.

(IM 144-145)

To schematically summarize matters as expressed in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Being, for Heidegger, is concealing and appearing, disclosure and withdrawal from present presence. It is polemical, overpowering, creative self-assertion. Man is here placed before a decision, which means the "separation in the togetherness of Being between unconcealment and appearance. Thus, man responds to this surging violence of Being (*physis*) by being the creative, disruptive, violent and strange one (a term derived from Heidegger's study of Sophocles' "There is much that is strange, but nothing that surpasses man in strangeness." Quoted IM p. 125) This is why, then, the essence of man is "never an answer but essentially a question". (IM p. 120) Heidegger writes: "We do not learn who man is by learned definitions; we learn it only when man contends with the essent, striving to bring it into its being, i.e., into limit and form, that is to say when he projects something new (not yet present), when he creates original poetry, when he builds poetically." (Ibid.) *Technē* is a knowledge and a power, a persistent looking out beyond what is given, and "the ability to put into work the being of any particular being or essent. But *technē* is also violent: it is the violent way man responds to the overpowering destiny and violence of Being, it is violent in the way violence is the use of power against the overpowering; through knowledge it wrests being from unconcealment into the manifest as being, or essent. This is the knowledge and violent power of *technē*. Art is *technē*. "Art is what most immediately

brings Being (the appearing) to stand; it stabilizes it in something present (the work). The work of art is a work because it brings about Being in an essent. And this is what makes it *poiesis*. It brings about the phenomenon in which the emerging power (*physis*) comes to shine (*Scheinen*)." This is the work of art. This is the art, the *technē* and *poiesis* that is at the origin of the work of art. (see IM p. 133 ff.) Art, thought as *poiesis* and in terms of language, the *legein* of the *logos*, is, in Greek, *apophainesthai*, a bringing-forth of Being to show itself. (See also *Being and Time*, sections 7 and 44) Thus, the work of art is the setting into work of truth (*aletheia*, the *polemos* of appearing and concealing), or the site in which truth happens, sets itself to work in the manner of a work. With these summaries behind us, we now turn to "The Origin of the Work of Art."

"The Origin of the Work of Art" will continue the task, stated in the Introduction to Metaphysics, of determining a new content for the word and for the work of art." Art has become just a word among others, and the work has become just another object among others, with its "contents" or its purposes being increasingly defined in terms of the art market. Art decorates. Art shocks, art continues to please and to question. But not in the highest way. Not in the manner of a great *technē* or a "grand style". Art has become an empty word. The "new contents" will not involve filling in this emptiness, but will consist in giving art a new "de-limitation". Art will stand in a new way, not just as an object that pleases the eye or that is the object of judgements about art; art will be the

standing forth of truth in the constancy of the showing or shining. (see PTL p. 81) The beauty of art will be thought in a new way as the shining of truth, not as what pleases or enraptures or has the form of a judgement. The de-limiting of art will set boundaries for art, but not the kind of boundaries that limit art, but the kind of boundary which would set art free. Art will be the site, art will be the boundary in which Being as *aletheia*, truth, is set free into the unconcealed. As the site for the setting free or setting forth or setting to work of truth, which Heidegger also refers to as the happening of truth, art will be accorded a new status, placing it on a level equivalent with *theoria* and *sophia*. This will be an 'overturning' of the Platonic delimitation of art as the mimesis of a mimesis, the copy of a copy, and something, an artifact re-presenting other artifacts in the way a mirror reflects objects, a production, in other words, thus 'third removed' from the true (i.e., the "idea" of a couch, the "essence" of a couch, its "what-ness" as a universal, eternal being is 'first', then the couch as produced by the craftsman, itself modelled after the essence or pattern of the 'idea', or 'couch-ness', is 'second', a mimesis, or copy of the pattern, 'couch-ness', and then the work of art, the painting of a couch, is 'third', a mere representation of the couch as entity, as a being, or thing – the work of art is thus a mere appearance, a reflection far removed, 'third removed' from the true). As a great *techne*, art will be the site for the beginning of the questioning of the modern epoch of metaphysics as the epoch of technology and of the fallen, everyday, product oriented modalities of *techne*.

Without rehearsing the whole course of the lecture, "The Origin of the Work of Art", let me to point out a few boundary markers along the way in this three part lecture.

First, the essay begins with the questioning of beginnings or origins, the *Ursprung* of art, its primal or original leaping. It is not the empirical, historical origin of art that is in question, but its ontological origins in a leap that could be said to be a leaping away or turning away from the familiar delimitations or definitions of art.

Thus, the origin will not be found in the artist, or in the work. There is a circularity here that is exceeded by saying that the origin of the work of art is art, yet another circularity. So, what is "art" and how is "art" the origin of the work of art?

Heidegger's reflections on the work of art take their beginnings, then, from the work rather than from the feelings of the spectator. In this, he diverges not only from Kant, but from Nietzsche, who proceeds from the point of view of the subjective rapture of the artist (see Volume One of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures, English title, *The Will to Power as Art*). Thus, Heidegger first notes the 'thingly' character of the work of art. In this sense, he echoes the old phenomenological battle cry, to "return to the things themselves!"

There is a materiality to art that cannot be denied: the stone of the temple, the paint of the painting, the marble of the statue, the sound of the spoken poetic word, and so on. We will be returning to this in a moment when we consider

Heidegger's conception of "earth" and its polemical relation to "world". But art is first a thing; that is to say, it is present, or experienced as a "being in the sense of presence". "What is a thing insofar as it is a thing?" This is Heidegger's question. (C.f. "The Origin of the Work of Art," Translated by Albert Hofstadter, edited version from *Basic Writings*, p. 151. *Henceforth abbreviated as OWA*) How has this "thingly" (*Dingheit*) character of the thing been defined by the history of European philosophy? For Heidegger, there are especially four philosophical determinations of the presence and experience of the work of art: First, the 'thingly' character of art can be determined in terms of the metaphysical distinction between the substrate, or substance (literally, "what stands under" as a support or ground), and the accidents, or properties, (color, for example), carried or supported by substance. Heidegger objects that this is but a propositional way of conceiving the thing, one carried over, or "transposed," into "the structure of the thing itself." It thus fails to see the thingly character of the thing. If the first definition seems too remote from the work, then there is a second determination: a thing is a unity of sense impressions. This definition claims to bring us closer to what a thing is, but it, too, is an artificial abstraction for we never experience a thing as a mere unity of sense impressions. We experience them as things. So, let's get back to the things themselves! (see *OWA*, 156-57)

Thirdly, then, the thing can be determined in terms of the distinction between the matter and the form. This

returns us to the materiality of a thing, "its mode of sensuous pressure". But, this distinction is not original, but derived. It is derived from an analysis of equipment (*Zeug*, what is ready-to-hand, *Zuhandenheit*, see *Being and Time*, section 71)) and guided by a pre-determination of the usefulness, utility, as essential to the thing. Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes is helpful to understand this: to know a thing is to know its cause. There are four such causes that cause a thing to be what it is as a thing: its material, or matter (the stone of the building, the glass of the bottle), its form (its shape and definition), its purpose, the "final" or teleological cause (what a thing is for, its use, its utility, which in determines the form (a temple is to house the god, the bottle to hold water), and the efficient or motor cause, which in this case is the artisan who builds the temple or blows the glass, thus uniting form and matter. Equipment takes "an intermediate place between mere thing and work." (*OWA*, p. 159) Moreover, it is the reliability of equipment that is definitive for Heidegger, and he considers usefulness as a consequence of reliability. Reliability is the essential being of equipment. It is the "equipmentality of equipment" (*OWA*, p. 162-6). It is here that Heidegger has written some extraordinary passages concerned with the reliability of the shoes of an anonymous peasant woman. (I refer the reader to p. 163ff) But this essential being of equipment hides itself. There is a repose to reliability: so long as equipment is reliable, it goes unnoticed. When it loses this, it loses its usefulness and becomes a "mere thing". It is also in this section, (p. 163-4) that the distinction between *earth* and

world appears. "World and earth exist for her" (the peasant woman who wears the shoes in the field as she toils to earn her daily bread, "trembles before the impending childbed and shivers at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman." (OWA p. 163)

Now comes a crucial stage in the lecture, one fraught with difficulties and one that is, for this reader, most puzzling. Derrida refers to these passages in Heidegger's text as a major disappointment, and as laughable. (See his "Restitutions of the truth in pointing (*pointure*)", in *The Truth in Painting*, translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, pp.257-382) I refer to the passages in which the reader is invited to make a leap from the analysis of a pair of peasant shoes, worn by an imaginary woman in an imaginary field, to the analysis of a painting by Van Gogh depicting a pair of shoes, which, for reasons not so much explained and examined as they are assumed, Heidegger identifies as painting representing a pair of peasant shoes worn by a woman (the same woman?) in a field (the same field?) There is a famous, also unsatisfactory renunciation of these passages in an essay by Meyer Schapiro, "The Still Life as Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh", which is also discussed in Derrida's *Pointure*, cited above. (Schapiro's essay has been reprinted, together with the essays by Heidegger and Derrida in *The Art of Art History, A Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi, Oxford, 1998. I recommend this to the interested reader.) For now, let's return to the text itself!

As Heidegger writes (pp. 162-65), although everyone is acquainted with such useful articles as shoes, and insofar as they are a part of everyday life, there is still a need for a "direct description", and for this, "a pictorial representation suffices". So, the analysis of a work of art, in this case a painting by Van Gogh that Heidegger saw at an exhibition, is introduced along the way or in the course of an analysis of the essential being of equipment. It is not introduced for itself, but as something that will "suffice" in order to advance an analysis already underway. But, he warns further on, "as long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of the equipment in truth is. From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand..." and so on. (OWA, p. 163) "And yet—" (ibid.) there is more, much more. There is an entire, mostly hallucinated, as it would seem, vision of the "slow trudge of the woman" and of "far-spreading furrows" and the "loneliness of the field", "wintry desolations", "worries about bread", and the "joy of having withstood want." There is an enormous surplus, an overflow of pathos Heidegger sees in the painting of a pair of shoes. Moreover, "It is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes." (Ibid.) So, what is happening in Van Gogh's painting as far as Heidegger is concerned? "What is at work in the work?" as he asks? (OWA, p. 164)

First, it is indeed a question of representation, but not in the sense of imita-

tion, or of being a mere copy, but of a true representation, that is to say, one that presents Being (Aletheia), that is a disclosure of truth. "The painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, *is* in truth. This entity emerges into the unconcealedness (Unverborgenheit) of its being. The Greeks called the unconcealedness of beings aletheia" (ibid. PTL, p 36) (Heidegger's emphasis) The painting is the happening of truth as truth sets itself to work in the work of art, where "to set" (*Setzen*) means "to bring to stand" (*zum Stehen bringens*) and to stand is to stabilize the appearing of truth in something present, i.e. a thing. I should mention parenthetically the important texts by Lacoue-Labarthe, especially his *Typographies*, (pp. 63ff) which show the role of the root of the German word active in related passages from Heidegger's texts from the 1930s: namely, that of the *stelle*, which forms a "semantic lacework" of derivatives in Heidegger: *Stellen*, to summon, to challenge, to stand, hence, *Gestell*, a gathering framework and, provocation; *Bestellen*, to cultivate; *Vorstellen*, to represent; *Verstellen*, to dissimulate; *Darstellen*, to portray or re-present; *Herstellen*, to produce; and *Aufstellen*, to erect, in the sense of erecting a building, also related by Heidegger to the *Hervorbringend*, production, of *poiesis*, bringing forth. *Herstellen* and *Aufstellen* are thus ways of dis-covering (*Entbergen*) *aletheia*. Finally, there is yet another key word in play in these contexts, *Feststellen*, to institute or constitute, which, in the "Origin of the Work of Art," will be phrased as *Festgestellstein der Wahrheit in die Gestalt*, "truth's being fixed in place in the

figure." (See "The Origin of the Work of Art," p. 64, also cited by Lacoue-Labarthe in his *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, translated by Chris Turner, Oxford, Basil Balckwell, 1990, p. 85) We will return to this in a moment. Hence, in the work of art, a particular being "comes ...to stand in the light of its Being (*das Lichte seines Seins zu stehen*). The Being of beings comes into the steadiness (*Standige*) of its shining (*Scheinens*). The essence of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work. (*das Wesen der Kunst dieses: das Sich-ins-Werke Setzen der Wahrheit des Seienden*)" (OWA, p. 165, German Reclam edition, *Der Ursprung des Kuntswerkes*, p 30)

What are the results so far of Heidegger's discussion? His study of the matter-form distinction shows that the essential being of equipment is originary, ontologically fundamental, to that distinction and shows that the essential being of equipment cannot be brought into view through by looking at a piece of equipment, taken as an object or something ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*), ready for use, an instrument, in other words, but only through looking at a painting – of a piece of equipment, a pair of shoes, for example — where, a work of art is seen not as the mere imitation of a pair of shoes, but as a site for the happening, the *Festgestellstein*, of truth, the unconcealment of Being, putting itself to work in the work of art. Thus, Heidegger writes that "what matters is a first opening of our vision to the fact that what is workly in the work, equipmental in equipment, and thingly in the thing comes closer to us only when

we think the Being of beings.” (OWA, p.166) This seems to alter or to step outside the Platonic conception of art as representation, a *mimesis*, of an object third removed from the true. Heidegger alters or goes beyond the Platonic distinction between the sensible (particular) and the intelligible (the idea, the universal, true standing of Being), for he puts into question Plato’s determination of the truth of Being as Idea (*Eidos*) and his conception of the Being of truth as *homoiosis*, adequation, between the particular thing and the universal Idea, on which grounds art was reduced or delimited to a lowly, ‘third-removed’ status. His will be an ontological reading of art – not an aesthetics concerned with what stimulates, shocks, or pleases. Art will be oriented in new directions, given “new contents”, contents that, as matters turn out, have been there from the beginning. The art work, the “work-being of the work”, will be situated between that of a thing (*Das Ding*), present to hand (*Vorhandenheit*) and a piece of equipment (*Zeug*). Art works have a “self-subsistence” in that they are not defined by use values, like tools, nor are they ‘mere things’, simply there. Moreover, “the art work,” he writes, “opens up in its own way the Being of beings. Art is truth setting itself to work.” (ibid.) He will thus turn away from the traditions of aesthetics and turn toward Being in new, more thoughtful ways. But the question remains, “what is truth?”

The second section of Heidegger’s essay takes up this question in terms of the distinction not only between concealing and revealing, but to that of earth and world, which stands within the hap-

pening of truth as concealment and unconcealment of Being. This can be approached through a return to the work of art, whereby a renewed relation with the work of art will be brought into view and the truth of Being shown as the shining, the radiance, the beauty of the work. Thus, the experience of the work of art will certainly be a sensuous experience, but in a Heideggerian sense of “sense”. That is to say, it will not be given in a traditional, subjective sense, meaning the subjective delight in the radiance of color or the inter-play of textures and volumes. Rather, as Heidegger shows in the third section of his lecture, entitled “Truth and Art”, it will be an experience of the disclosure of Being — of truth — in the work as strife (*Streit*). Sensuousness is given in and as the disclosedness of Being (*aletheia*). This is first of all “strife” (*Streit*). Truth is the *Urstreit*, the strife between the light and the darkness, the clearing and concealing — the *Lichtung*, as Heidegger writes in these pages (see p. 60 - 63, the Reclam edition). This is the work of truth: the revealing and withdrawal of Being. The strife of earth and world, meanwhile, must be seen in this ‘setting’ as the setting forth, or bringing forth of truth, drawing it together in the “outline” (the *peras*) and the “breach” of the “rift-design” of the work. The work, as we shall see, is, thus, a “rift-design”. This will be its radiance, its shining. It will be the radiance and shining of the strife of world and earth, of revealing and concealing (*PTL*, p 63, Reclam, p. 64ff.) But how is the work of art of art confronted in the everydayness of the technological epoch or in the technological way of framing (*Gestell*) Being whereby Being is challenged

forth or summoned forth as object? This is what Heidegger will bring into view and put into question, especially in the third section of the lecture.

Works of art are typically uprooted from their settings. The sculpture of the god is now in the museum or in the hands of a collector, not in the temple. Art works thus stand over and against us, *confronting us as objects*, or object-beings, not in terms of their "work-being". "Their self-subsistence has fled....We must make visible once more the happening of truth in the work." (OWA, p. 168) In the third section of the lecture, Heidegger attempts to reverse or overturn this sense of the object as confronting and to see the work of art as the "fixing into place of truth" (*Ferstgestelltsein der Wahrheit in die Gestalt*) and the "letting-happen of the advent of truth" (*Geschehenlassen der Ankunft von Wahrheit*). Far from being contradictory, the "fixing" and the "letting happen" will be Heidegger's way of conceiving the work of art as the happening of truth or setting to work, or the setting into place of truth, in which truth is brought forth in the creative act. We will return to this shortly. For now, let us say that Heidegger's concern in these pages (section three of the lecture) is to overturn the notion of the work as something that confronts a subject or that a subject, the artist, produces as an object, and to bring into view a notion of the work as *energeia*, as the setting-to-work or being-at-work of truth. There will be a new orientation toward the work, one that challenges the technological way of provoking or summoning Being or regarding Being as an object. All this will be developed through a new relation

with the being of the work of art.

For this, Heidegger turns to the example of a Greek temple because it is non-representational; "it portrays nothing." (ibid.) It is here that truth is brought to view in and as the strife between earth and world. What first comes to view in the temple-work is the way it "fits together and ...gathers round itself a unity of 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." (ibid.) The world is, then, not the world of universal humanism, "everybody's world", but is for a people *its* world, the tasks assigned to it, the decisions and distinctions that comprise its destiny: childbed and grave, disaster and blessing, and so on. The world is an "open relational context", the "governing expanse" (*die Waltende Weite der offenen Bezüge*), the expanse of connections and relations that hold sway for a historical people. The world is the sheltering of the law. Thus, the "world worlds" (see OWA, p. 170). The world is that in which a people comes to itself and a "nation first returns to itself for the fulfilment of its vocation." (Ibid.) (This determination of *Dasein* (the "there-being" of Being) as a people rather than an individual, and time as historical time, is one of the changes that can be seen in Heidegger's work in the mid-1930s. See Taminiaux, op.cit.) But the world opens in another, deeper, ontological way. It opens, and in the opening, the earth comes to rise up, bearing itself up (*kommt die Erde zum Ragen*, Reclam edition, p.63), in an *Aufstellen*, the "erecting" of a world in which earth both reveals itself and withdraws into

concealment.

The earth, in one sense, is what the Greeks designated as *physis*, an elemental power, “emerging and rising in itself and in all things.” (OWA, p. 169) Not just matter, material, stone or earth taken in a material sense, although this is certainly not denied, either, earth is “that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises as such.” (ibid) Now “to be a work means to set up a world,” while the earth “is that into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back.” So, the setting up of a world, the work of art, is set back into the earth while earth is what both withdraws into self seclusion and what comes forth in the work in and as ‘earth’. Thus, the stone (of the temple) “comes to bear and rest and so first becomes (stone). All comes forth as the work set itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone.” Earth is thus in the glitter of metal, set forth in the work of equipment; it is in the “firmness and pliancy of wood, the light and dark of color and the clang of a tone or the naming power of the word....The work lets the earth be an earth.” (OWA, p. 171)

The setting up of a world (the *Aufstellen*) and the setting forth of earth (the *Herstellen*, see my note on Lacoue-Labarthe, above) are, for Heidegger, “two essential features of the work-being of the work.” (OWA, p. 172) But, there is strife between them. World and earth are different. Earth is sheltering and concealing, the world is revealing and disclosure. “World thus always strives to surmount earth, to bring it forth.” (ibid) Strife is a *Riss*, a rift, not

a matter of opposition but of a belonging together of opponents in an almost Heraclitean vision of the *Logos* of opposites. It is a struggle (*Streit*) between earth and world that emerges in the *ur-Streit* of *aletheia*, the original struggle between the clearing and withdrawal of Being. From this, there is the *riss* and “rending stroke” or the conflictual unity of the two, and from this, the *Gestalt(en)* or configuration of art. (This interpretation can be found in Michel Haar’s *The Song of the Earth*, translated by R. Lilly, p. 98)

Again, earth and world, the *Herstellen* and the *Aufstellen*, must be thought in their reciprocity. Without the opening of a world, earth would not be ‘earth’, would not show itself in the shining of the stone of the temple, would not “jut forth” into unconcealment. Without earth, the world would not be, for world is set back into the earth. But their relationship must be conceived in terms of a strife that flows from the primal strife of the revealing and concealing of Being itself. This is what “happens” in the work of art. This is the event of the work. Thus, Heidegger writes (OWA, p. 63-4, *PTL*) that truth establishes itself as strife, establishes itself in a being, a work, to be brought forth only in such a way that the conflict opens up into this being. This is the “rift-design” of the work. The work is the drawing together into a unity, into the sketch and basic design of the work, of the rift between earth and world, the concealment and disclosure of Being. The work is conceived as *breach and outline* in which the strife of truth is brought together or gathered together into a unity”. Again, “the rift does not let the oppo-

nents break apart; it brings the opposition into their common outline.” (ibid) The reciprocal “*stellen*” of the opposition between the *Herstellen* and the *Aufstellen* comprises, then, a *Gestalt*, a figure understood by Heidegger in the sense of *activity*, rather than *static form* or mere *shape*. “The rift *sets itself back*” — this is its activity — “into the stone and as earth takes the rift back into itself, the rift is set forth into the Open and thus placed, set, within that which towers up into the Open as self-disclosing and sheltering.” OWA, in *PTL*, 64) This is evidently connected not only to the notion of the *Gestalt* but to that of the *Feststellen*, the ‘instituting’ thesis, which, as a *techne*, is fundamentally language, a *Dichtung, Sprache, Sage*; it is, thus, a form of *poiesis*. In the “Origin of the Work of Art”, *Fest* means fixed, “outlined, admitted into the boundary (*peras*), the limit, the “contour,” that gathers in such a way as to let something be brought forth, to let it shine. World sets forth and fixes earth, which at the same time, withdraws into concealment. Heidegger, in the Addendum to “The Origin of the Work of Art”, which I am now quoting, (*PTL*, p. 83) thinks of the boundary as what sets free into unconcealment, fixing and consolidating Being (thought in terms of *physis* and *aletheia*) in its repose, whereby repose is the fullness of motion. This is the *ergon*, the work, the *energeia*, the being or ‘actuality’ of the work. The work is effective, actual, (*energeia*), in the way it gathers Being, gathers the strife of Earth and World, concealment and disclosure, and brings it into unconcealment. Thus, the work is the locus or the place for the “happening” of Being, i.e., for the revealing and con-

cealing of truth (*aletheia*). In relation to the *Ge-Stell*, the frame, framing, framework of the work of art (p. 64, *PTL*), we see it as “the gathering of the bringing-forth (*Her-vor-bringen*), of the letting-come-forth-here (*Her-vor-ankommen-lassens*) into the ‘rift-design’, the *Gestalt*, the ‘rift-figure’, so to speak, (*in den Riss als Umriss – peras*, limit) of earth and world. Hence, the createdness of the work of art means, “truth set in outline (*Festgestelltsein*) in the figure (*Gestalt*).” (ibid) This figure of truth is also the shining of truth, the shining of the beautiful that shines forth in the strife of earth and world as set to work in the work of art. (see Michel Haar, *The Song of the Earth*, p. 98 ff., see OWA, p. 173 ff. And the “Addendum”, *PTL*, p. 83-5. See the German Reclam edition, p 88-89)

In order to understand the phrase “truth setting itself to work in the work”, in the outline, or limit of the work, we must see how Heidegger speaks of an impulse of truth towards the work, the *Zug zum werke*, (see OWA p. 180, where *Zug* is translated as the “impulse of truth toward a work grounded in its very essence.”) The answer seems to be that openness, the disclosure of Being, establishes itself in the openness that opens in the struggle between clearing and withdrawal. This is the open space of emergence. Truth (*aletheia*) needs a site, a locus. Truth is not first, followed by its being established in a being. Truth and its establishment belong together. The work of art is a site, a being created, a being brought forth so as to establish truth. Creativity is, thus, “bringing-forth”, (*Hervorbringen*). But, as Heidegger writes, all creativity is also

mere productivity of an object. It is the receiving within a relation to unconcealment. It is not so utterly passive, as suggested earlier, but is a 'doing' of the highest order. It is a great *techne*. The strife of earth and world is, thus, not merely housed or situated in the work of art. Art is the site for this, and that means that the strife is opened and instigated in the work. So, strife, the *polemos* of Being discussed in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, must be set into a being, must be set to work or brought forth as a work of art. We could say, in other words, that the impulse or impetus of truth toward the work is the "poetic project of truth, where truth is *Dichtung*, which Michel Haar affirms and Lacoue-Labarthe denies is related in some way to the word *Dichten*, to condense or thicken. The setting itself to work in the work is the thickening or condensing or concentration of Being, the coming to itself of appearance. Or, as Merleau-Ponty stated, in a way that may help us understand Heidegger, "The world no longer stands before the painter, a thing to be represented. The world gives birth to the painter by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself and the visible." ("Eye and Mind", from *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 141)

But for Heidegger, it is poetry that shall have the first and last word, not painting. "All art is in essence poetry", even architecture, sculpture, painting, and music, are poetic in the sense of being modes of *poiesis*. It is language that is fundamental, for "language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time. Where there is no language, there is no openness of beings. (OWA, p 185) And as for language, it is especially naming that is fundamental. Nam-

ing names beings; it "first brings beings to word and appearance. Only this naming nominates beings to their Being from out of their Being. Such saying is a projective of lighting," the "release of a throw by which unconcealedness submits and infuses itself into beings as such." (ibid) Moreover, this "projective saying is poetry." Poetry (*poiesis*) is the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arena of their strife and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods, Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of beings" (ibid) So, the work of art is essentially the work of *poiesis*, poetry, taken in this broad sense. It not only prepares the sayable but brings the unsayable into a world in such a way that the essence of a historical people, its belonging to a world, "are performed for that people". (ibid)

In conclusion, has Heidegger succeeded in purposes of seeing the riddle of art and of giving the word art new contents? Two responses come to mind. First, he has succeeded in re-opening the question of the work of art in thought provoking new directions. It has shown important ways to begin thinking and questioning the history of not only Western aesthetics but Western metaphysics and ontology, as well. He has connected his analysis of the work of art to his analysis of technology and Western nihilism in the form of the calculative, technological thinking that today engulfs the planet, meeting little or no resistance. But, perhaps he has done so in a way that goes back to the Greeks and to a Greek experience or thought that is not ours today. Perhaps Western culture already no longer belongs to this

tradition. Perhaps that is over, in some sense yet to be understood. Heidegger would acknowledge all of this. But what Heidegger offers on the basis of his return to the Greeks can seem as obscure and inaccessible and certainly as difficult to think as those ancient Greeks to whose thought we no longer belong. (I refer the reader to Walter Biemel's "Elucidations of Heidegger's Lecture *The Origin of Art and the Destination of Thinking*, English translation published in *Reading Heidegger, A Commemoration*, pp. 370-381) Yet, perhaps there is much in Heidegger that will have to be read again, that will have to be taken up and questioned again. The question of *mimesis* in his work, for example, and the question of how or whether he has indeed succeeded in extracting himself from the traditions of metaphysics and aesthetics. Such a critical reading of Heidegger might question, for example, the lingering presence in his work of the Greek, particularly Platonic notion of *mimesis*. Or it might question what is unsaid in his work, the assumptions it makes, for example, regarding the owner or "subject" of the shoes he discusses in the Van Gogh painting, or the way these shoes are laced and inter-laced with other themes and questions that mark the frames, borders and the margins of Heidegger's lectures on art. These are questions that have been taken up by others, J. Derrida and Lacoue-Labarthe, for example. But for us, they must still await another time and another occasion.

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