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## Heidegger's Late Address on Art

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Heidegger delivered an address on art in Athens on April 4th of 1967 to the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Athens.<sup>1</sup> An enigma created by its theme concerns the time of delivery. It is obviously a very late address, when Heidegger was 78 years old. It is also late because Heidegger speaks again on art. Why does Heidegger return to this theme at so late an hour, especially after works such as the *Holzwege essay* "Origin of the work of art", which involved the destruction of the history of the ontology in relation to aesthetics? In what work, by raising the question of the aim and the density of art, one was immediately led to Hegel's claim that for us art is, on the side of its highest vocation, something past. Heidegger saw Hegel's lectures on Aesthetics as the most comprehensive reflection on the essence of art that western thought possesses. To recognize that the governance of subjectivity over art is not an invention of aesthetics but merely its expression of the principle that reigns over our entire modern era is to confirm Hegel's aesthetics, which is aesthetics in its most metaphysical form. Given the increasing skepticism on Heidegger's part of their being any emancipatory role for art within technological metaphysics, why return to art? After the Nietzsche and Holderlin lectures, and the remarks Heidegger gives regarding art in its relation to language in his later works, what does Heidegger say in relation to the claim that art is something past?

One typically comes to such a work as Heidegger's Athens address with such questions. What does the address add to the existing Heidegger's thinking on art? And is it too late for Heideggerian view of art? Or is it in some sense too late for art? I have already characterized the Athens address as late. What temporality do I have in mind when I speak of "late" here? Perhaps the first formulation of the question is simplistic. It opposes quantity and quality as if a quantitative transformation—the crossing of certain thresholds within the general machinery of culture, with all its techniques for handling and recording. As if our every reading had to add something measurable to the store of knowledge and information, and speed up the process of acceleration in the hope of avoiding the consequences of being too late, or being able to arrive on time for whatever we are late for. But what does saying this amount to? Why is the hour getting so late with Heidegger regarding art, such that it merits returning to in a thoughtful manner at this time? I am wondering at what speed we have to deal with the problem of art. In this paper I only have time to make basic conclusions. I will

spell out what the issue is for Heidegger regarding art at this time, and what the Athens address has to say in regard to the basic project of Heidegger's thought.

### The Background of Heidegger's View of Art

In *Being and Time* Heidegger asked about the meaning of being in a new way.<sup>2</sup> He reproaches the philosophical tradition with having understood being from a single mode of time, the present. Being was thought as a constant presence, hence, thought from the onesided perspective of presence. But with that the true meaning of being, the question of being itself, was already forgotten. In contrast to the tradition, Heidegger attempted to think being from all three modes of time and thus to think being in the horizon of the temporalization of time as historically. Towards this "ground" all the different kinds of beings -ready-to-hand, present-at-hand, Dasein- are oriented by analogy. But soon after the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger recognized that this enterprise was aporetic: he criticized the tradition for having sought a last principle and ground in the conceptions of *ousia* and substance. Yet he himself established with the concept of historicity something like a principle that, since it was historical, could not serve as a principle or foundation of being in the former sense.

The attempt to come to an adequate understanding of history drove Heidegger's thinking further. He now saw that the essence of being cannot be grasped by thinking it through a leading meaning. Truth is, rather, of such an essence (*Wesen*) that it conceals some meanings while opening up others. Truth is not only the realm of pure disclosedness; to the truth of being belongs essentially what Heidegger calls the *mysterium*. Truth discloses only on the abyss of its concealing: truth is *Un-verborgenheit*, its essence is also untruth. Truth is characterized by its *wesen* (in the verbal sense). That means that truth itself is an inexhaustible history and as such is posited by Heidegger as the truth of a people. Truth happens in history as great art does. As Heidegger now formulates the matter, following Herder and Holderlin, it is poetry, thinking, and acting that put the historical truth- each in its specific way- into works as the truth of a people.

It is in his lectures in 1934/35 on Holderlin's "Germanien" and "Der Rhein" that the shift begins to take place, where he takes poetry as the leading force in the happening of truth, as the truth of a people. Poetry here becomes a kind of disclosing in an exclusive way, for it is determined as a showing in which the gods manifest themselves. Thus one can speak of the poet as founding the truth of being. In the present metaphysical crisis of the Occident, the poet, the thinker and the founder of a state are to give a ground to the historical

dasein of a people. Poetry is the original discourse and thus the origin of language by which man is set out into being.

In particular Heidegger sets out these thoughts in the course of his lecture - following Holderlin - with regard to the historical role of "Germanien." Can Germanien again become a priestess, the counter of a new day of the gods? To gain this possibility again, it is necessary that the godless situation be experienced and borne out. In this situation temple, picture, and custom are unable to take over the historical sending of a people. "There will be no priests if the lightnings of the gods do not lighten, and they will not lighten, unless the native earth and its whole people as such do come to stay in the realm of the thunderstorm."<sup>3</sup> It will, however, never enter this realm, as long as it, as a whole, in its historical dasein as such, does not bring the innermost crisis of the gods to an essential and sustained experience.

To have this experience means nothing less than to decide for the actual time of poetry. In the metaphysical crisis it is the poet who can transform the history of the people by guiding it into the sacred mourning, but prepared affliction. For in this basic mood the opening of being as such first happens, and that means for Heidegger that the truth of a people occurs. Poetry originally founds this basic mood, and with the truth of dasein of a people. In so doing poetry is the preliminary stage to the thinking and founding of the state. By way of Holderlin's hymn "Der Rhein," Heidegger now asks the question about the half-gods who, placed between gods and me, can make the country habitable, as does the river: Heidegger interprets Holderlin's thinking of the half-gods as the thinking of destiny, destiny in its uniqueness. In thinking the being of the half-gods, however, the poet discovers being as a whole. In this his task finds its fulfillment. By founding being poetry renders it possible, first of all, for man to become historical, and this means ultimately to be a people. Again, as in his interpretation of "Germanien," Heidegger sees a unique relationship between Holderlin's poetry and its task. For Heidegger regards Holderlin not only as the greatest poet, but in particular as the poet of the Germans. Holderlin is the founder of the German being, who finds in such a founding of being his metaphysical place. This role of poetry provides the necessary preparation for the leading thoughts of Heidegger's major work on art, "Origin of the Work of Art."<sup>4</sup>

In this work, Heidegger takes the basic conceptions he developed through his encounter with Holderlin: art has little to do with aesthetics but instead is to be thought as the setting-into-work of truth which happens in an exclusive way in poetry. The essence of art is poetry, according to Heidegger. And this

opening up of the realm of truth as *aletheia*, unconcealedness, is preliminary to the setting -into- work that takes place in the act of founding a state and in thinking. When Heidegger determines art as the setting-into-work of truth, the historical dimension of art is already implied. Art is a becoming and happening of truth, of the up of this openness which breaks through as great art in certain epochs of world history. Art is historical not only in the sense that it takes place in history but also in this original sense that only it founds history. Thus art as it happens in the work of art is the origin of the historical *dasein* of a people. Poetry is the exclusive way in which truth happens in the work of art perhaps in its being the essence of a historical people, and this means their belonging to world history. The work of art establishes by its saying a new *mythos* which first of all reveals the historical essence of being, whether this be truth of things, equipment, or of a people.

For Heidegger, the history of the nature of western art will correspond to the changes in the nature of truth, since within any given social formation what art is will be governed by the concept of an object of that formation's center. It is thus a matter of understanding how the art is for us now where the center is determined by the essence of technology, for it is that which is the center of the present world.

When Heidegger says in that essay that "Art is truth setting itself to work," what does this mean? It is in the sense of truth as unconcealment, as an openness, an opening up so as to make visible. It is neither a property which attaches to the work of art nor is it the contribution of an apprehending and appreciating aesthetic consciousness. It is resident within the work itself. The work of art provides its own self-disclosure. Heidegger's conception of truth in art as bringing into unconcealment is perhaps analogous to a productive conception of truth in science. A work of art reveals a world in a way analogous to the way in which a paradigm or research program institutes an object domain, providing a concept of an object in general, and hence unifying scientific practice by providing guidelines for inquiry, criteria, for the evolution, and so on. A work of great art can reveal the horizons of a world in just the same way that a scientific framework institutes the horizons of a scientific world. Great art transports human beings out of their ordinary realm, in a negative way.

For Heidegger, *techne* must be understood not as producing something, in the manner of an agent using force to push material together into a specific form: it must instead be understood in terms of the deeper meaning hidden in its Greek understanding, the disclosure of something for its own sake, like giving birth. The great work of art is the disclosure or letting-be which enables people

to relate to entities in a way which respected their self-disclosive capacities (*physis*). Art today is peripheral, its significance limited to pointing to or gesturing at the normative center without being able to invade it. Art is at the periphery and technology is at the center because the human understanding of *techne* has now constricted and calcified into a mere instrumentalism. A nature poem by Holderlin, the painting of a pair of peasant shoes by Van Gogh; these works claim and solicit us to a mode of revealing that we cannot validate or sustain. The value of art for Heidegger seems to be just this distance, the gap between solicitation and validation. He is not merely archaizing, merely pining for a return to worlds that works of art can still present. Rather, art enacts a world disclosure it cannot deliver; it lives in its failure to attain its ownmost possibility of revealing. *Art's essential impossibility within technological metaphysics reveals the totality of that metaphysics.* Through its failure we come to experience the sense of the periphery, and thus the meaning of the sway of the center. In other words, art's present distance reveals metaphysical closure in that we experience art as a mode of understanding unavailable to us. This unavailability itself signifies and is meaningful to us.

Heidegger's later reflections on art, poetry and language point already in different directions. Holderlin is still the partner of his thinking, yet in a constellation which is much different from his lectures on Holderlin's hymns and the "Origin of the Work of Art" essay: the place of art in the technological world now becomes dominant in Heidegger's thinking. He had come to see that it is not the great individual artists or a people who establish truth in the modern times, but that this epoch, on the contrary, is characterized by a limitless kind of totalitarianism and by the self-assertive humanity as the functionary of technology. Poetry is for Heidegger in the destitute age of fled gods just this creative activity that can bring mankind to a turning. Poets are the mortals who sense the trace of the fled gods. In the unhealing and unholy modern technological world, it is the poets who by their saying are the only ones who are able to bring salvation, to reveal the lost trace of the holy; poets alone are supposed to initiate a countermovement to the age of technology in which man sets himself in opposition to the openness. Poets can achieve the conversion of the parting from and against the openness which is organized by the world-night of technological production.

Heidegger's thinking on art is directly related to the poetic. At the end of the *Holzwege* essay, he makes the claim that all art is essentially *poetic*. This *poetic* is to be understood not in the narrower sense of poetry, the poem as a particular linguistic work. Rather, the *poetic* is now to be thought of as just that

form of thought which thinks non-technologically. As commemorative and responsive, it is a "letting-be" of a primal reality. It neither objectifies nor manipulates the primal reality. *Techne* understood as the disclosive occasioning that makes presencing possible corresponds to the nature of *poiesis* as art and producing. Thinking the "poetic" antedates the split between subject and object and the increasing technification of thought. It is neither localized in an epistemological subject nor is it geared to an objectification of its thought. Such a thinking furrows an opening to the encountered realities and keeps these realities from being congealed into scientific objects. Nor is it to be thought of as a kind of couch-potato passivity, but rather a difficult posturing or comportment that makes possible a disclosure other than that of godless technology.

A final theme to be brought forth to complete this explication of the later Heideggerian liturgy on technology is the role of language. In the *Holzwege* essay, we are told that to comprehend the essentially poetic character of all art we need the "right concept of language". This "right concept" will demand of us a surmounting of the traditional functional and linguistic approaches to language. Language understood as a vehicle of communication, or as an object of linguistic science, although containing its own legitimacy, is not the language of the poetic. Language as communication is the verbal and written exchange designed for the imparting of information. This is language approached in terms of its function and viewed as an instrument for defining, explaining, deducing, and drawing inferences pertinent to objectifiable matters of fact. The linguistic and metalinguistic approaches to language are of the same cloth as in the instrumental approaches to language. In the science of linguistics, language becomes an object with a complex of morphemes, parts of speech, and syntactical and semantic rules. Language understood in this way is an especially complicated and powerful tool, making possible the improvement of numerous cooperative practices that constitute human culture.

A further transformation is made in the still-later Heidegger's thinking about language and poetry. Here Heidegger maintains the sequence of poetry and thinking, but mere things now garner the world-opening capacity. In the essay *Language* this development in the direction of Heidegger's thought occurs for the first time. In his interpretation of Trakl's poem "A Winter Evening" Heidegger asks how and where the speaking of language occurs. The speaking of language which lets thing-world and world-thing come to the between of the difference is expressly what is spoken in the poem. Thus the speaking of the poem brings things and world into their own and calls them into the simple onefold of their intimacy. Following Stefan George, Heidegger states the word of the poet lets

the thing appear(*anwesen*) as thing; in its saying the word "bethings"(*be-dingt*) the thing to the thing. Thus the belonging together of world and thing is now the new subject. Meditating on language can give insight into poiesis such that not only pre-eminent things like artworks, but everyday things like bridges can provide insight into the non- technological mode of disclosure.

### Technological Metaphysics

We have already made many references to Heidegger's views on technology as a metaphysical crisis. What is meant by this, and how is it related to his views on art? In many respects, the extremity of his thinking along these lines regarding technology serves as a skeleton key by which to unlock his views on art in general. For Heidegger, our age is the one at the end of metaphysics; it is marked by the planetary and universal reign of technology, which is the metaphysics of our time. Its domain neither limits itself to the production of more and more sophisticated machines, nor to the science that this production presupposes and never ceases to re-introduce. It englobes in totality the environment, culture, the fine arts, politics, all of our discourse, learned or otherwise, all of our relations to things, and all human interaction. According to Heidegger, this reign no longer offers to thought any path than the one of the calculation, in regards to which it has exhausted itself in its responsibility to all types of manipulations and plans. Rather than fulfilling its claim to ameliorate the human condition, technology has delivered us over into a different form of captivity. The seamless extremity of technology thus provides for Heidegger a vivid testimony for a peculiar kind of paralysis of thought, and is one of Heidegger's strongest arguments against metaphysics.

The "essence" of technology, its demanding, extracting, setting up in advance to promote something else, in an economy of regulation and security control, entails not so much a process of protection and preservation, but for Heidegger almost the opposite: a loss of shelter, an abandonment, a disclosure. For such a securing movement to be able to take place, there must already be insecurity. As the military connotation suggests, where there is shelter, a harbor, a securing, it is always in response to or in anticipation of a danger, a threat. Heidegger will come to see that the essential movement of technology, the obsession with securing, with placing him to safety, is a response to the unsecuring in which technology as such as well continues to take part. This unsecuring foregrounds the decisive question that emerges from Heidegger's thoughts on technology: how a movement of unsecuring comes to evoke as a response its diametrical opposite, the frantic effort to establish control. The effort is all the more furious because it is constantly goaded on by the unsecuring tendency of

technology as such. That such movement, involving the effort to control and secure, should at the same time be a way of unsecuring, is what must be accounted for.

Later, Heidegger uses this conception of both science and technology as his launching point to describe modernity as the technological age which sees everything as materials for use, ready to order. To say that something is real is to say that it is available for that subject. To be an independent object means that a thing has the kind of reality that allows it to be proposed in objective fashion to the subject. Its whole reality can be made open to objective inspection, lying as it does in a field of entities able to support a set of objective facts. It is constantly available to be represented in a vigorous way. This is not to say that things will be easy to find, or that tough research is not needed; the point has to do with the meaning of reality the object is projected to have whether it is discovered or not. Heidegger eventually understands this ordering to have no focus, no will by which it is imposed, no subject before which it stands. Users themselves belong to the field of resources available for ordering and ready for use. this is modernity as universal imposition.<sup>5</sup>

There is a peculiar completeness to the leveling accomplished in the age of universal imposition. Even the dominant subjectivity Heidegger talked about earlier disappears into the general availability of things to be ordered. There is no first being that grounds all the rest. Everything is functional. This for Heidegger is the culmination of the west's metaphysical drive: the meaning of reality is pure available presence. Everything is in plain view, humans included. There are no hidden dimensions that are anything more than a lack of information.

Universal imposition appears to be the stable mutual availability of all things for ordering. But under the seeming calm is the constant shaking urge to enlarge the reach of order. In a context of subjectivity Heidegger would have attributed this to humanity's need for selfcertainty and then gone to ask where this need comes from. In discussing the situation he is more direct: humanity just belongs within it and is not its source. Humanity acts within possibilities and mode of temporality that solicits and challenges it to further activity.

What is at stake in technology is not simply an order, in the sense of a disembodied command or demand. Rather, it is driving forth out of which a different kind of topology emerges. To name this distinctive topology of modern technology Heidegger uses the word *Gestell* which points to a strange mixture of movement and stasis that distinguishes the goings-on of modern technology and upon which Heidegger places considerable emphasis. *Gestell* is installation, emplacement, imposition, the assigning or appointing of a definite place.



The notion of imposition, of emplacement, collects and assembles the various ways in everything, human beings included, is cornered and set in place. But since the places thus set up are the results of emplacement, they can never be taken for granted, once and for all. As imposition, the goings-on of modern technology thus display a markedly ambivalent character: they arrest, bring to a halt by setting in a place; but this placement itself gives way to a new setting, that of an incessant re-placing of orders, through which new places are set up. The name that Heidegger assigns to the result of this incessant, long-standing placing of orders is: *Bestand*, a "standing-reserve" or "stockpiling". Under the pressure of the standing order, objects lose their distinguishing traits and become stockpiled in the business of ordering.

The irony of the goings-on of emplacement is that there are no secure places. Imposition itself remains tributary of that movement of unsecuring that it ostensibly seeks to escape or ignore. The danger involves forgetting entirely the dependence of imposition upon the displacement of a kind of "poetic ground-breaking". What is dangerous is not technology, but the secret of its going-on, and they are secret inasmuch as they inevitably tend to efface their own heterogeneity: they set in place, but the fixity of such place-setting turns into a placing of orders that can never stop. The more it seeks to place into safety, the less safe it becomes. And since it is a way of emplacement, it really goes nowhere, neither forward, nor backward, but simply on in its machinations and plans, total, repetitive, aimless, circular, and frantic.

### The Event

At times Heidegger is unremittingly pessimistic about this state of affairs. Universal imposition is thought to be a nihilism so dark that it lacks the light even to see itself as darkness and instead conceives itself as Enlightenment. His thinking is quite clear on the negative point about human incapacity in this regard, that any such effort produces a new form of objectification. And his thinking is quite unclear about how we might escape from the interlocking systems of technological thought and practice in which our lives are enclosed. In places, the only hope he offers lies in the possibility that the danger by which man is threatened may come to be understood as danger.

Universal imposition affects us immediately and overall, but it is not the last word. There is a possibility that our experience of being challenged within technology could turn us toward something more basic. Heidegger wants to locate this imposition in the place where it is made possible. the universal imposition of technology is not ultimate; something more primal speaks through it. What Heidegger is getting at is perhaps the most obscure idea in all of his

later thinking, but with the preliminary sketch given of what is at stake, Heidegger's views on art, poetry, and language can be seen as attempts to "get at" this obscure idea.

For Heidegger, the epoch of technology is complete in itself. There is no dialectical tension to be resolved by a move to a larger world. There is no ultimate realm, no place beyond technology that we can investigate purely on its own. There is to be no romantic return to some pretechnological skin of this world. In contrast with Hegel there is no final coming together, no logic of an absolute form that is its own content. Still there must be something more to say than just describing universal imposition. Heidegger says: "what we experience in universal imposition as the constellation of man and being through the modern world of technology is a prelude to what is called the event.. In the event the possibility opens for us overcoming the simple dominance of universal imposition in a more original happening."<sup>6</sup>

Because the modern world presents everything as open to view and available to understanding, because it takes nothing to be hidden that cannot be revealed by getting more facts, we are ironically in a better position to recognize the conditions that make any world possible. We find ourselves already in a world that presents reality and ourselves in a certain way. Our possibilities are limited to this world. How does this world come to be? What makes it possible? If we think everything has been made present and available, then nothing remains hidden or beyond our world to account for it. In this situation, we can recognize that there is nothing to ground our world but its happening, the happening of a world. There is only the emerging, the event, the coming into unconcealment, the clearing that opens a space for humans to live a certain way of being human. Recognizing this is "emancipatory" - we can know the limits of our world and can refuse to accept as ultimate any of the grounds or measures of principles it offers. there is no future age in which the deeper way things are will be revealed. The event shows the limits of the present world, and any future one will be so limited. The event is that from which the furious movement of technological modernity can be confronted.

In other words, because of the dominance of universal, which plays out and levels out the metaphysical impulse to search for causes and grounds, we are especially situated to experience the event on its own. But this is the most dangerous of situations, for that which most threatens is also the necessary key to overcome that threat. What is troubling is that it is not far from this view to a view which holds that the greater the threat, the better chance there is of recognizing it. It is the very extremity which allows the possibility of its own

recognition as such. Universal imposition can lead us to the event as an effect leads to its cause nor as a content leads to its form. Instead, just how we are led to an understanding of the event is the motor for Heidegger's thinking taking the form of a kind of negative theology on this issue. Art and poetry are always through which the event is intimated.

The most important thing to say about the event, taken on its own, is that there is almost nothing to report about it. Heidegger speaks of it as "withdrawing" and as the "photographic negative of the *Gestell*." The opening of this free space for the appearance of things is not some event that happens elsewhere. It happens not beyond or behind being but, as it were, in front of them. Yet that happening is not obvious. The forgetfulness of the event that Heidegger finds throughout the western tradition is not due to inadvertence on man's part. The very nature of that event is to make beings open and available but not to intrude itself. The event is hiddenness itself. It is therefore not surprising that the event has nothing to show for itself. This is so in several senses. As an opening of the space for the encounter with beings, the event allows things to rise out of the darkness of universal imposition. If the event had qualities of its own, they would need to be made available, unconcealed. It would be some kind of entity among other entities, and the event of unconcealment would be missed. The event itself cannot be an entity or relation among other entities. To think it as an entity is to perform the metaphysical transposition of the wonder of unconcealedness into the question about grounds and causes.

If it is not an entity in its own right, the event does not have a structure, inner necessity, or law, or anything about it that could come to presence on its own. This means there is nothing in it or related to it that serves as a foundation for its occurrence. Therefore there is nothing about it to understand, as the word "understand" is commonly used. There is nothing hidden in it to be ferreted out, nothing to be analyzed, nothing to be used as a first principle or ground or as basis for explanation.

### The Athens Address

Heidegger in places indicates that art may yet hold out the possibility of extricating civilization from the extreme danger inherent in the technicity that characterizes our world—historical situation. The extreme danger is that of an oblivion where the poetic nature of our existence is, in effect, paralyzed by the measurable and the calculative in such a way that we can no longer avail ourselves of the dynamic of the poetic nature of our existence. The mode of world-apprehension characteristic of the modern epoch accelerates this extreme debilitation in so far as it seizes and submits any and every entity to a systematic

order that is thoroughly accessible to measure and calculation. Technicity establishes a network within which any and every entity is already integrated into the measurable and the calculative. This supports the research methodology characteristic of modern science. This also results in the relegation of art to the status of the "merely aesthetic." Thus Heidegger is giving his spin to the Hegelian thesis of the "end of art." According to Hegle's philosophy of the evolutionary advance of human spiritual life, in the modern era art has forfeited its former role as the pre-eminent vehicle for the sensuous expression of spirit, the role it enjoyed in ancient Greece. The ideal balance between the moments of sensuousness and truth, represented in Greek sculpture, has been surpassed in the modern world in which the higher, more non-sensuous intellectual expression of truth, the concept, has come to prominence. The death of art for Hegel refers not to the literal disappearance of art, but rather to the fact that the classical symmetry of the "Ideal" has been irretrievably lost, that the old guidelines or artistic creation have entered into a state of crisis, and thus the superior form of spiritual expression represented by the philosophical concept. Heidegger agrees that art is something past, but for different reasons. In order that art may succeed in providing a possibility for extricating civilization from the extreme danger of our world-historical situation, the relegation of art to the status of the merely aesthetic must be brought to an end.

With this, we can look again at the Athens address. Heidegger begins his address to the members of the academy by stating that he wishes to think with his audience about the ancient Greek world, the world which once constituted the beginning of our western art and science. Historically this world has obviously passed. Yet from the viewpoint of the destiny of being one can say that this world, provided we make an effort to experience it as our destiny, is still present and continues to come-to-presence. As such this world is something that still waits for us (*Gegenwart*) so that we think towards it. For that beginning is the greatest which has the character of a destiny that flows from being's sending. For such a beginning governs over all that will come later.

This world is certainly, for the historian, a world of the past. But for history, if we experience it as that which is destined to us, it still remains and it will always remain a present existing new one: something which expects from us that while thinking we move towards recognizing it, and that we thereby place on trial our own thought and our own artistic creation. Because the beginning of a destiny is what is greater. In advance it holds all that comes before it in its power.

We are meditating on the origin of art in Greece. We are trying to glance into domain which before any art already is exercising its power which alone accords to art that which makes of it what it is.[p.360]

Thus we must try to reflect on the origin of art in Hellas. In Heidegger's view, we must do this by making an effort to look into that domain which governs before all art and grants to art what is proper to it. In so doing we are obviously not concerned with just giving a definition of art: nor are we interested in a scientifically historical description of the origin of art in Greece. What can we learn from the manner in which the Greeks conceived of Athena, the goddess of the sciences and the arts? What are we to say about contemporary art in light of its origin in the Greek world? What determines our thinking which tries to reflect on the origin of art? Heidegger in many ways replays in miniature his entire thinking on art.

...let us bring before us the sacred relief from the museum of the Acropolis. On it Athena appears as the *skeptomenoi*, the one who meditates. Towards what is the meditative glance of the goddess turned? Towards the edge, the limit. The limit is certainly not only the limit but the frame, not only the place where something stops. The limit means that by which something is brought together into what it has of its own, to appear thereby together into its full plenitude, to come into presence. Meditating on the limit Athena already has in sight that towards which human action must be directed in order to be able to carry what she has been in the visibility of a work. Still more, the meditative glance of the goddess not only penetrates the invisible from the possible works of men. Athena's look lands above all on what by itself allows to appear in the seal of their presence the things which do not have to be produced by man. That the Greeks call from all antiquity the *physis*. The Roman translation of the word *physis* by *natura* and finally, being with it the concept of nature become dominant in the thought of western Europe completely hides the sense of what *physis* designates: what appears by itself in the limit which each time is its own and which has in this limit its stay.[p. 368]

For the Greeks Athena was the daughter of Zeus. Homer calls her *polumetis*, the one who gives counsel in many ways: she is the goddess of many counsels. In the temple of Zeus in Olympia she is portrayed as the goddess who makes pottery and utensils, as the goddess of the *technites*. *Techne* refers to a form of knowing that one encounters in the philosopher, the scientist, the artist, and the orator. Athena is also *glaukopsis*, the one with gleaming eyes, the one

with eyes of a night owl. She is equally called *skeptomene*, the one who looks carefully, who looks at the boundaries, but also at all that is, at *physis*, at that which emerges and as emerging abides. According to Heraclitus, *physis* likes to hide (*kruptesthai philei*): it is the mysterious. All art originates from *physis*, but this does not at all entail that art just imitates nature.

Finally, *techne* and *physis* belong together. The Greeks were convinced of this. Yet the element of the domain in which these two belong together, i.e., the coming-to-pass of the truth of being and the ontological difference itself, the Greeks did not yet think explicitly. The same is true for the domain with which the arts concern themselves, i.e., being as the holy. Yet in classical Greece both the thinkers and the poets have often touched on this domain and this mystery. Heraclitus is said to have stated that everything is steered by the lightning flash (*ta da panta oiakizei keraunos*). According to Aeschylus only Athena has the key to the house in which the lightning flash is sealed and rests.

But what about today, now that all the old gods have fled? Is there today, after 2.000 years, still an art which stands under the same demand as once the arts did in Greece? And if this is not so, from where then does this demand come to which all arts today try to respond? The modern art works no longer originate from the form-giving boundaries of a world which is the world of people and of a nation. Today they all belong to the university of a world-civilization which is governed and dominated by science and technology.

One is thus inclined to think that the domain from which today for the arts this demand has to come, is the scientific and technological world. Heidegger hesitates to affirm this. For what does the expression "scientific world" mean? Heidegger cites Nietzsche's claim regarding the victory of the scientific method over the sciences. What is meant here by method is not just the methodical procedures that can be determined by principles and rules; rather it is the entire process of projection and thematization which implies the staking out the relevant domain, the establishing of the aspect under which things will be viewed henceforth, the typical objectification, the methods taken in the limited sense of the term, the adequate language, the relevant conceptual framework, the proper conception of truth, etc. From such a thematization it follows that for each science only that truly is, that can be scientifically measured and experienced. One finds the extreme form of this scientific method in modern cybernetics and information and communication theory.<sup>7</sup>

The method is the project which in advance has a hold on the world, establishes that in which only it can be submitted to research. And what is this project? Answer: that anything which is accessible to experimentation

and controllable by it be subjected to calculation. To this project of a world the individual sciences remain subject in their pace. That is why the method thus understood is the victory over science. Victory in itself comprises a decision. It affirms: only that which is scientifically demonstrable, that is to say, calculable, is worthy of being truly real. Thanks to calculability, the world becomes, always and especially, subject to the mastery of man. The method is victorious provocation thrown at the world in order that it might be in general at the full disposition of man. The victory of the method over science took its departure in the 17th century, thanks to Galileo and to Newton, in Europe and nowhere else on this earth. [p. 371-72]

Heidegger then gives a brief summary of the basic ideas proposed by cybernetics and futurology. He also explains how it is possible today to develop a self-regulating and self—correcting mechanism, which makes use of information input, feedback, and autoregulation. He then shows how these ideas are now used in microbiology and genetics and how it is argued there that in principle man in his interaction with his environment, on the basis of gene-coding(DNA), can be understood in cybernetic terms, even though one admits at the same time that today man is still considered to be an element of disturbance in the overall environment system.

The victory of the method is developed today in its most extreme possibilities as cybernetics. The Greek word *cybernetics* is the name of that which holds control. The scientific world is becoming a cybernetic world. The cybernetic project of the world supports in its preliminary foreclosure that the fundamental characteristic of all the calculable processes of the world is control. The control of one process by another is made possible by the transmission of a piece of information. To the degree where the control process sends messages back to one in control thusly informs him, the control has the character of acting as feedback of the information. The regulation in both directions of the process in mutual contact therefore brings about a circular movement. That is why the circularity of regulation is the fundamental character of the world which cybernetics projects. On it rests the possibility of autoregulation, the automation of the system motor. In the cybernetic representation of the world, the difference between living beings and automated machines is abolished. It is neutralized by the information process, which makes no difference. The cybernetic project of the world, the victory of the method over science makes it possible for the animate and inanimate world to

be submitted to a generally equivalent calculation and in this universal sense, to a calculation, that is to say a mastery. Man also has his assigned spot in this uniformity of the cybernetic world. To such a degree that this place of man's is completely individual. Actually, on the horizon of the cybernetic representation, man has his place in the widest possible circuit...The penetration of the genetic structure of human sex-cells by biochemistry and the tissue of the atom by nuclear physics both rest on the same path, that of the victory of the method over science. [p.372-73]

As we earlier spelled out, for Heidegger the being of entities in the technological age knows nothing other than the goal of its own totality, a presencing which compels humanity to organize everything in an endless quest for power for its own sake. That the technological system is not under human control can be determined in the self-referential, cybernetic systems. The cybernetic character of the modern technology distinguishes it from the Machine Age. The great iron works and mills of the Industrial Revolution were still owned and controlled by self-interested human subjects striving for power. In the twentieth century, however, the technological disclosure of entities mobilizes everything, humans included, into the project of increasing the power of the technological system itself, all under the guise of improving the human estate. In his *Spiegel* interview in 1966, when asked what has taken the place of philosophy, Heidegger replied "cybernetics." Earlier in that interview, when asked why he thought modern technology should be overcome when in fact everything was functioning: power plants were being built, production was at a peak, and people in the industrialized world have a higher standard of living. "What is missing here?" Heidegger replied, "Everything is functioning. That is exactly what is so uncanny, that everything is functioning, and that technology tears men loose from the earth and uproots them".<sup>8</sup> He says as much again here: "We only measure the total extent of the cybernetic futurological science of man if we take into consideration the presupposition on which it is based... The anonymous authority of science is considered untouchable." [p.374-375]

In the third section of his Athens address Heidegger turns to the question about the domain from which the demand comes to the arts today. Is this the cybernetic world and the futurologically planned industrial society? As Heidegger sees it the basic trait of the entire cybernetic projection of the world is to be found in the *Regelkreis*, in that circular process in which the information flows back to its source via some feedback mechanism. In the final analysis this circular process also includes man and his world. But this means that all relations of



man to his world, and thus man's entire social existence, are included in the domain of domination determined by the cybernetic sciences.

One finds the same enslavement and imprisonment in futurology. It appears that the future which futurology is able to bring to light is no more than a present that it just prolonged indefinitely. Thus here, too, man remains included in the domain of possibilities which has been so made available. As for our industrial society, it has made itself the measure of all objectivity. Thus our industrial society exists today only and exclusively on the ground that it itself is included in the "things" which it itself has made.

In the art address, Heidegger expands on the cybernetic character of modern technology. The victory of method over science means the way in which the sphere of the objects to be investigated gets demarcated in advance. Scientific method is a projection of the world which determines that the real is what can be calculated in mathematical terms. This victory of method achieves its utmost possibility in cybernetics. The word derives from the Greek word meaning helmsman. According to the cybernetic world projection, the basic trait of all calculable world processes is steering.<sup>9</sup> Information provides the meditation necessary for one process to be steered through another. To the extent that the steered process provides information which affects the steering process, steering has the character of informational feedback. Cybernetic processes thus have a circular dimension, an ordering circuit. And humanity gets taken into the cybernetic project in a particularly powerful way. Having become the subject for whom the entire world is its object, technological humanity becomes an element in the gigantic feedback circuit in which information about the object alters humanity. As science discovers more about the genetic structure of the human organism, this information can alter the way in which humanity treats its own organic body. Humanity becomes its own object: biochemical engineers define human life in terms of the genetic structure of the germ cell. Learning the alphabet of the genetic code may eventually enable scientists and engineers to produce and breed humans. Heidegger says as much in the Athens address, suggesting that technological man has been inspired by Nietzsche's remark that "man is the yet uncompleted animal." Guided by the technological principle of total self-control, man will be the only animal capable of steering its own evolution. While humanity cannot yet manufacture itself in factories, it is moving in that direction. Certainly "futures" represents the impulse to planning and control which foresees a totally micro-managed world.

How does art stand in the heart of the industrial society whose world is beginning to become cybernetic? Are the expressions of art becoming

