

Unconstrained Favor and the Post-Metaphysical Sublime

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Heidegger stresses that aesthetics, the offspring of the modern metaphysics of subjectivity, turns the work of art into an object of private experience. Precisely because art has now moved into the horizon of aesthetics thus circumscribed, it is destined to a decline in its essence. Yet Heidegger himself suggests that one aesthetics escapes such a characterization: Kant's in the *Critique of Judgement*. When Kant characterizes the attitude by which we receive the beautiful thing as a favor, (*Gunst*), in a sense he causes the collapse of the modern correlation of subject and object, because, such a favor stands beyond any possible conceptualization, purposefulness, or subjective complacency, and is rather the pure openness to the unconcealed as such. What state of affairs reveals itself here, when Heidegger informs us that, had Nietzsche inquired of Kant himself, Nietzsche would have "had to recognize that Kant alone grasped the essence of what Nietzsche in his own way wanted to comprehend" regarding art? Or that Schiller alone grasped the essentials of Kant's doctrine of the beautiful? That Kant's insight "make it possible for a comportment toward the beautiful to be all the more pure and more intimate"?¹ The hypothesis I put to the test here can be simply formulated as follows: that Heidegger curiously fails to pursue these threads, that he neglects Kant's third *Critique* and follows Hegel's aesthetics instead: and had Heidegger inquired of Kant himself (in the third *Critique*) he would have perhaps recognized what *he* in *his* own way wanted to comprehend. When Kant calls upon the word favor to capture the specificity of the properly aesthetic freedom, favoring the free manifestation of what it welcomes, aesthetic freedom lets the phenomenon be within itself, for its own sake, without subjecting it to our concepts or desires. The fact that Kant grants an ultimate status to freedom suggests to us that, deeper than the correlation of subject and object, freedom consists in being open to the very unconcealing of the world, an unconcealing that precedes and exceeds the theoretical and practical powers of the ego, prefiguring Heidegger's own treatment of the artwork in terms of some post-metaphysical sublime.

Kant's Aesthetics

Both Schelling and Hegel were convinced of the importance of Kant's reflections on aesthetics. Hegel even wrote that "Kant spoke the first rational words on aesthetics." Others of course have claimed that in this aesthetics Kant owes nearly everything to English writers; he merely systematized the main ideas which had been developed in England and Scotland during the first quarters of the 18th century. It is now generally accepted that Kant did indeed make a careful study of English (and German) works on aesthetics and that he did indeed borrow many ideas developed in these works. Yet Kant gave a systematic framework which was totally original on his part and which gave them a significance and meaning which they had never had before.

Kant did not turn to a critical reflection upon our judgements of taste before he had first completed his *Critique of Pure Reason*, his *Critique of Practical Reason*, and the greater part of his *metaphysica specialis*, namely the metaphysics of morals and the metaphysics of the principles of the natural sciences. In the first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* (1790). Kant tried to explain why the methods of earlier writers on taste seemed to be unsatisfactory. He criticized the rationalist approach of Baumgarten on the ground that Baumgarten conceived of taste as a form of confused knowledge of perfection; in Kant's own opinion this approach to aesthetic phenomena had nothing to do with the basic concern of aesthetics, because confused knowledge is not intrinsically related to pleasing forms, whereas perfection too, is as such not necessarily related to what is beautiful; that a thing is beautiful either. On the other hand, the empirical approaches of Burke, Kames, and Addison equally fail in that they cannot account for the typical universality and "necessity" of our judgements of taste. Judgements of taste are aesthetic judgements of reflection which, as such, do not say how people actually do, not with what they should do, because the latter necessarily implies some principle *a priori*.

In his introduction to his *Critique of Judgment* Kant mentioned the fact that in his philosophy as a whole there is a need for some principle of connection, at least on the part of the human mind, between the world of natural necessity and the world of freedom. The gulf between the domain of the concept of nature and that the concept of freedom cannot be bridged by the theoretical use of reason. Thus there are indeed two separate worlds of which the one can have no influence on the other. Yet the world must have an influence on the world of nature, if the principles of practical reason are to be materialized in action. Thus it must be possible to think nature in such a way that it is compatible with the possibility of the attainment in nature of ends in accordance with the principal laws of

freedom. Kant sees the connecting link between theoretical and practical philosophy in a critique of judgement which is a means to unite in one whole the two parts of his philosophy.

Kant was the first to propose that in the general economy of the faculties and of the activities of the human mind, manifesting themselves, generally speaking, in a capacity for cognition on the one hand and for desire on the other, there is room for a capacity and activity irreducible to either knowings or desiring: that is the aesthetic attitude, or in Kant's words, the faculty of judging aesthetically. This faculty is exercised by each of us when in front of the thing of nature or the products of art, we stand to acknowledge their beauty, to hail them as beautiful.

The specific and irreducible traits of this attitude are brought forth in the *Critique of Judgement*. The word "critique" found in the title obviously has no negative connotation. It simply means an examination aiming at discerning the specificity of something. But from the outset perhaps we are entitled to deem it significant and meaningful that Kant inscribes his inquiry within the framework of an examination of the faculty of judgements. In what sense is this significant? The reason is that art, considered by Kant, falls within the competence of the activity of one individual who raised himself to be its judge. This means that the products of art fall under the rightful jurisdiction of a self, an ego, an individual who appreciates them and turns them into a matter for his own judgement. This approach, referring artworks to a subject who judges them, presupposes undoubtedly the emergence of the ego and its self-positing as the absolutely privileged point of reference.

For Kant, genius, is "a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given."² The productions of genius have this as their characterizing mark: that no amount of learning, acquired skill, or imitative talent can possibly suffice for their creation. Aesthetic perception is therefore distinguished from theoretical understandings - from the kind of knowledge that mainly preoccupied Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason* - by its not conforming to the cardinal rule that every intuition be brought under an adequate or corresponding concept. It is precisely this incommensurable nature of artistic genius that sets it apart from science, theory, and the labors of enlightened (epistemological) critique. Thus 'the concept of beautiful' in art does not permit the judgements upon the beauty of a product to be derived from any rule which has a concept as its determining ground, and therefore has as its basis a concept of the way in which the product is possible."³ This is why Kant rejects any form of phenomenalist aesthetics that would treat art as possessing the power to reconcile concepts with sensuous intuitions. Such thinking fails to register what is distinctive in the nature of aesthetic experience: namely, the capacity of genius to create new forms, ideas, and images that exceed all the bounds of theoretical (or rule-governed)

understanding. The author of such works "does not himself know how he has come by his Ideas," and certainly lacks the kind of knowledge that would allow him to "devise the like at pleasure or in accordance with a plan."⁴ Whence the basic difference between art and all other forms of cognitive activity: that in art there is no question of intellectual progress, of collective advance through a shared application of the truths discovered by previous thinkers.

His great model here is Newton, a figure whose intellect indeed took his voyaging into strange seas of thought, but whose findings, once established, opened up the trade routed of received, communal knowledge. Such scientific truth-claims are warranted precisely by their power of bringing intuitions under concepts, or showing that determine rules can be given for the understanding of natural phenomena. Thus "Newton could make all his steps, from the first elements of geometry to his own great and profound discoveries, intuitively plain and definite as regards their consequence, not only to himself but to everyone else."⁵ But this is not the case with those whose genius lies in the production of beautiful artworks. Theirs is a strictly incommunicable gift which cannot be taught, reduced, to precepts, or in any way handed on. Such genius produces individual creation for which the mold is broken with each new endeavor and allows of no progressive buildings on previous achievements. Or more exactly, if artists can indeed learn from their great precursors, the lesson is more by way of general inspiration than anything pertaining to form, style, or technique. For genius, according to Kant, is "imparted to every artist immediately by the end hand of nature; and so it dies with him, until nature endows another in the same way, so that he only needs an example in order to put in operation in a similar fashion the talent of which is conscious." So art exists at the furthest possible remove from that spirit of enlightened, cooperative enterprise that for Kant belongs to both science and philosophy in its aspect of rational critique. Art may be said to "stand still" in the sense that its productions exhibit no signs of advancing toward an enlightened consensus on the "rules" of judgement or taste.

That is why Kant rejects the idea that beauty resides in the object of aesthetic contemplation. If this were the case, then there could be no clear distinction between theoretical knowledge (that which applies concepts to the realm of sensible intuitions) and aesthetic understandings (that which allows us a privileged grasp of our own appreciative faculties at work). Kant is very firm about this need to resist any form of phenomenalist reduction. Aesthetic judgements contributed nothing to our knowledge of the objects that solicit its regard. Of course those objects must possess certain attributes, qualities that mark them out in the first place as capable of arousing such response. Otherwise art would be an empty concept and aesthetics would lack any claim to exist as a self-respecting discipline of thought. But we are equally mistaken, on Kant's

view, if we assimilate whatever is distinctive in the act of aesthetic judgement to those properties supposedly inherent in the object itself. For beauty is not determined by any concepts (or rules) that would find adequate exemplification in the features - or objective characteristics -- of this or that artwork. It should rather be sought in the manner of our responding to such features, or the way that our various faculties are engaged in the act of aesthetic understandings. And this is where the experience of art differs essentially from other forms of cognitive experience. "In order to decide whether anything is beautiful or not, we refer the representation, not by the Understanding to the object for cognition but, by the Imagination (perhaps in conjunction with the Understanding) to the Subject, and its feeling of pleasure or pain.⁷ Such is the inward or transcendental turn in Kantian aesthetics, the movement away from all forms of phenomenalist reduction. In the act of responding sympathetically to a beautiful object, the mind is thrown back (so to speak) upon its own resources, required to seek a sense of purposive relationship or harmony not between sensuous intuitions and concepts of the pure understanding (as in all forms of theoretical knowledge), but rather between those various faculties whose interplays thus define the nature of aesthetic experience. "The judgement of taste is therefore not a judgement of cognition, and is consequently not logical but aesthetical, by which we understand that whose ground can be no other than subjective."⁸

Of course Kant's point is not that this "subjective" character of aesthetic judgement amounts to a species of relativism in matters of taste. To pronounce a work beautiful is always to claim a validity for one's judgement that cannot be compared with the expression of mere personal preference in this or that regard. Thus one must be content to differ with others on the questions of what makes a good wine, for such opinions are specific to the judging individual and can lay no claim to universal validity. It would be folly according to Kant, to reprove as incorrect another's sentiments in the hope of persuading them to see reason and admit one's own superior tastes. But the principle "de gustibus, non est disputandum" cannot apply to the realm of aesthetic judgement, any more than with issues of ethical reason. Here it is a question of requiring assent to one's evaluative statements, or putting them forward as considered judgements with a claim to universal validity. So the reflective individual learns to distinguish between matters of idiosyncratic tastes and matters of absolute or principled judgement. "Many things may have for him charm and pleasantness; no one troubles himself at that; but if he gives out anything as beautiful, he supposes in other the same satisfaction - he judges not merely for himself. but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things."⁹ So the argument goes by way of analogy, deriving the universal character of aesthetic judgements for our need to treat them as they related to qualities somehow objectively present in the work or natural phenomena. But what is really at

issue in such judgements is the utterer's fitness to pronounce them with authority owing to his possession of the requisite taste or appreciative powers. And this means that there is after all a realm of properly subjective judgements whose nature is nonetheless universal or prescriptive in so far as they effectively demand our assent and brook no denial on grounds of mere personal taste.

Kant attaches the highest importance to this legislative aspect of aesthetic judgement. Thus it cannot be a matter, as Hume argued, of the social interest that there are best served by our reaching some measure of agreement on questions of good taste and beauty. For his could be no more than an empirical fact about our present social arrangement, and for a source of value only as related to our short-term motives and interests. To see the limits of such thinking, Kant argues, "we have only to look to what have a reference, although only indirectly, to the judgement of taste *a priori*."10 For even if reflection does find traces of self-interest or social motivation, still we are compelled by the very nature of such judgements to accord them a validity beyond anything accountable on those terms alone. At this stage, for Kant, "taste would discover a transition of our judging faculty from sense enjoyment to moral feeling; and not only would we be the better guided in employing taste purposively, but there be thus presented a link in the chain of the human faculties *a priori*, on which all legislation must depend."11 So there exists an analogy between aesthetic judgement and practical reason (or ethics), as well that other which Kant perceives between aesthetics and the order of phenomenal cognition. Both are in the nature of "as if" arguments — designed to give universal import to aesthetic values while not confusing them either with purely theoretical knowledge, on the one hand, or with ethical judgement on the other. Thus Kant insists that one takes its place in the chain of human faculties, an indispensable link, to be sure, but one whose role in the total system — the Kantian architectonic — needs defining with considerable care and circumspection. Otherwise aesthetics will overstep the limit of its own legitimate domain, with untoward results not only for itself but for the whole enterprise of enlightened critique.

These questions are raised more acutely in the various passages of Kant's third Critique where he discusses the relationship between mind, nature, and aesthetic judgements. What these passages seek is a clear understanding of that faculty's powers and limits, with regard not only to the specialized sphere of artistic production and taste, but also in relation to epistemology on the one hand and ethical reason on the other. For it is evident throughout Kant's writings that the aesthetic cannot be simply cordoned off within a separate discussion of art and its objects. The *Critique of Pure Reason* effectively begins - starts out on its critical path, once over the merely schematic preliminaries - with a section called the "Transcendental Aesthetic." There is something paradoxical about this phrase, since the aesthetic by definition has to do with aesthesis, sensibility,

a capacity for reception from without. Transcendental judgements, on the other hand, are those that derive not from any kind of external impression but strictly from within the thinking subject, by a mode of *a priori* knowledge independent of sensory experience. Kant responds to this by distinguishing “pure” from “empirical” intuition — the latter turned wholly toward the realm of sensuous cognition, while the former is indeed given *a priori* and thus provides a hold for conceptual understanding. There is a sense in which this strategy does nothing more than push the whole argument back a stage. Kant still has to show how the forms of *a priori* knowledge can claim to legislate for experiences whose ultimate source is in the realm of empirical or intuitive sense-certainty. This claim is crucial to his whole enterprise - since epistemology can be saved from the toils of metaphysical abstraction only in so far as it has some demonstrable grounding in the way that experience actually makes sense for us, aside from all abstract determinations, Kant’s dictum, “Intuitions without concepts are blind; concepts without intuitions are empty” can belong only on the side of “inward” intelligibility if he fails to offer more cogent argumentative grounds for this intimate involvement of sensuous experience with the concepts of pure understanding. It is here that the aesthetic plays its crucial mediating role, as a source of analogies that Kant will summon up repeatedly through his three Critiques wherever there is a question of bridging the gap between these otherwise disparate orders of knowledge.

The beautiful and the sublime are the two main categories through which the critique of aesthetic judgement hopes to achieve this ultimate reconciliation. We are mistaken, according to Kant, if we seek for some determinate properties in or of the object that would constitute the beautiful as something that precede the act of reflective judgement. For then we would be confusing theoretical knowledge, that which brings sensuous intuitions under concepts in order to establish their objective validity, with the quite different realm of aesthetic understanding. What the latter involves is a “judgement of taste [which] since it is to be possible without presupposing a definite concept, can refer to nothing else than the state of mind in the free play of the Imagination and the Understanding (so far as they agree with each other, as is requisite for cognition in general).”¹² Thus the beautiful, whether in artifacts or natural phenomena, is defined in terms of the response it provokes, a response which enables the mind to enjoy a uniquely heightened sense of its own cognitive powers. Those powers are here found in a state of “free play” because there is no determinate concept that binds them to the object in question. But such judgements are nonetheless “valid for everyone” in so far as they reflect the “universal subjective validity of the satisfaction bound up by us with the representation of the object that we call beautiful.”¹³ The knowledge they provide is not therefore a knowledge of the object itself, but a grasp of the faculties that come into play

when that object is perceived under the aspect of aesthetic judgement. Only by way of this "detour" through the form-giving powers of subjective response does the artwork take on those "harmonious" or "purposive" attributes that make it an object of beauty. And this comes about through Imagination's power to conjure up experiences "as if" in accord with the way that Understanding normally works to bring intuitions under concepts.

The beautiful thus stands in a strictly analogical relation to that process of combined and intuitive grasp by which we obtain true knowledge of the world. It is the special gift of genius to raise this analogy to a point where it surpasses all previous manifestations of the kind. In Kant's word, "the thought, undesigned subjective purposiveness in the free accordance of the Imagination with the legality of the Understanding presupposes such a proportion and disposition of these faculties as no following of rules..... can bring about, but which only the nature of the subject can produce."14. In the case of beauty, therefore, this legislates in questions of epistemological import. With the Sublime, it points in a different direction, since here the mind is brought up against the limits of phenomenal cognition by its encounter with strange, overwhelming, or mysterious kind of experience for which no adequate object can possibly be found. If the beautiful is that which evokes a state of harmonious balance the faculties, the Sublime on the contrary forces us to acknowledge the limits placed upon Understanding by its need to represent experience in the form of intelligible concepts. Thus Kant paradoxically describes the Sublime as "an object (nature) the representation of which determines consciousness to think the unattainability of nature as a sensory representation."15

Such moments are typically experienced, as so often in Romantic poetry, with a sense of the mind's abjection in the presence of natural forces or phenomena that quite overwhelm its powers of recuperative grasp. But there is also, for Kant as indeed for the poets, a redeeming aspect to this experience, a way in which it points beyond the limitations of natural or phenomenal cognition to a realm of knowledge that exists for us only as rational, reflective subjects. As the mind fails in its striving to discover some objective correlative, some adequate means of representing such moments by recourse to the natural world, so it is driven to reflect on its own "supersensible" nature, that which cannot be determined according to empirical laws of any kind. The Sublime is therefore distinguished from the beautiful by the fact that it surpasses everything expressible in terms borrowed from the realm of sensuous intuition. It relates not to Understanding but to Reason, the source of all ideas that lead beyond knowledge in its cognitive, epistemological mode to knowledge of man's authentically inward (moral) nature.

So the Sublime, even more than the Beautiful, serves Kant as a kind of categorical touchstone for determining the powers and the limits of aesthetic

judgement. In one sense it marks the suppression of epistemological concerns by informing us of that which lies beyond the grasp of any knowledge grounded in the union of concepts with sensuous intuitions. To this extent it indicates a convergence between aesthetics and ethics (or Practical Reason), a convergence at the limit-point where thought finds nothing in the outside world that could match or objectify its own "supersensible" nature. But insofar as the Sublime is still treated as in some sense an aesthetic category, it cannot be wholly divorced from the order of phenomenal cognition. The aesthetic is once again in danger of overstepping its limits, this time by a move that would seek to accord it all the dignity of Practical Reason by invoking the Sublime as a passage beyond mere sensuous experience. But there can really be no such passage beyond so long as we remain, with Kant, in the sphere of an aesthetic understanding whose terms are ultimately borrowed from precisely that phenomenalist realm. If the Sublime appears to break with such ideas — if it seems to force reflection to the point of acknowledging the inadequacy of all phenomenalist models the stakes are proportionally higher since the Sublime, unlike the Beautiful, lays claim to insights of a transcendental order close to those of Practical Reason.

Since it is by virtue of aesthetic form that the imagination brings sensation into accord with the understanding, such accord is not possible with regard to the sublime, the principle of which is formlessness and a concomitant limitlessness. The limitlessness presented by the imagination in the perception of something as sublime is constant with (so the Analytic of the Sublime tells us) the unconditionality of reason. The sublime is in fact an imaginative analogue of how reason attempts, for example, to think the sum of all causal chains in infinite time. Because the sublime as such has no form, something sublime cannot be recapitulated by the imagination in the way that something beautiful can. The imagination of a quality, first, for Kant, requires the successful perception of each unit in that quantum. Then it must combine all units perceived into a single larger unity, which can be present all at once in an immediate awareness. In the perception of something sublime, the units are either too many or too great for the imagination to combine in a single intuition, or they are themselves incommensurate with one another. The whole is too large to be made the present; such presence is however, the demand of reason. In attempting to meet the demand, the imagination fails; it can present only its own inadequacy. The feeling of inadequacy with regard to a given demand can, however, have a positive effect, for it can instill respect for the unity which poses that demand. The great example of this is respect for the moral law in the second Critique. In the Critique of Judgement, the respect is for reason itself, which is revealed to be of sufficient sense the only sublime thing. The mind gains consciousness of its independence of nature. The experience of the sublime can result in no positive rule or concept. Transcending both sensibility and the understanding,

as well as imagination, the experience of the sublime confronts them with an abyss in which all empirical rules and concepts lose standing and count for nothing.

The abyss is reason itself. Reason is not present to itself in an experience of the sublime; it is rather the mind's feeling itself set into unending motion by the effort to imagine the sublime. And the ability to experience the sublime requires cultivation. The cultivation required is the development of the moral ideas which inhabit reason. Without this, the individual experiences the sublime merely as terrifying. The articulation of the sublime would then be a mode in which all concepts and generalizations are undermined in favor of an indeterminate abyss-in-unending-motion. Such interaction achieves no harmonization of the faculties, but disrupts harmonies achieved elsewhere. The imagination is revealed as unable to conform to the demand of a higher faculty, and the awareness of this is pain. But it is a pain which brings forth the higher pleasure felt in respect. Thus, awareness of the sublime does not depend on the object but on how we take it. It is not to be found in works of art, but such works if in their scope they transcend the comparative power of the imagination, can excite the feeling of the sublime.¹⁶

Heidegger's Aesthetics

The labyrinth of Heidegger's thought reveals an enduring mission to appropriate Kant's transcendental philosophy. For a time, a distinctive attempt at a retrieval of imagination was at the heart of this appropriation.¹⁷ The imagination distinguishes a more radical occurrence of temporality which went some way toward overcoming the western tradition's understanding of being as presence. In citing Kant's recoil from the abyss opened up by imagination, Heidegger himself makes a peripheral remark about the parenthetical character of Kant's analysis of imagination in the third Critique.

We cannot discuss here the sense in which the pure power of imagination recurs in the Critique of Judgement and above all whether it still recurs in express relationships to the laying of the ground of metaphysics as such which was pointed out earlier.¹⁸

The implication is that Kant succeeds to a certain extent in detaching imagination from its subservient role in the application of concepts (in both its theoretical and practical forms). But at the same time, Heidegger maintains that in considering aesthetic experience, Kant never brings the true spontaneity of imagination to the fore any more than is already suggested in imagination's recovering its role in forming the temporal horizon of transcended. By attending to Heidegger's most extensive thinking on art, his address entitled "Origin of the Work of Art," we will see how far-reaching is Heidegger's intended

transformation of the architectonic of reason through the imagination's disruptive play. Heidegger will seemingly call forth some deepened employment of imagination as reveling in its own play in a way which goes beyond the limited terrain of aesthetics which Kant outlined. Gadamer recognized this movement beyond while pointing to a deeper appreciation of the role of art in the Greek sense of *poiesis*.¹⁹ Indeed, if Heidegger's retrieval of imagination is to prove successful, it must solicit a form of discourse that remains in concert with the self-revelation of things as occurring, for instance, in the advent of *poiesis* as embodied in the work of art. This will be seen further in the complete abandonment of any tie to subjectivity and the direction of Heidegger's thought toward the Greek experience of *poiesis*.

For Heidegger in "Origin", we cannot analyze the work of art starting from the categories of "thing" or "equipment", since both these categories become accessible only in and through the work of art itself. Works of art can only be explained once their thing-like nature has been fully understood, and for Heidegger this involves wresting thought from traditional non-technological conceptions of the things. Art is in this sense emancipatory, in that it does just this. In the essay Heidegger speaks of the "riddle of art," and of not solving the riddle but seeing it. His theory of art is not directed toward the formulation of thesis which might provide answers to traditional philosophical problems, but rather toward an investigation of the conceptual crises which surround the definitions of these problems and accepts them as genuine. Traditional aesthetic approaches to art are in crises: Heidegger proposes that the inquiry standpoint in aesthetics will need to be overcome if the work of art is to be permitted to show itself. Aesthetics has come to an inquiry standpoint and a network of concepts which have led to the definition of the work of art as an object, the access to which is by way of a special sensuous apprehension or experience. The metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions that have informed the history of aesthetics have conspired to conceal art in its "work-character." His treatment of aesthetics is basically of the same cloth as was his "destruction" of the history of western metaphysics. Art has become a riddle and we want to understand the riddle as a riddle, not solve the riddle. To understand the riddle will provide insights into how various solutions that have been sought are the products of certain prejudgements in one's setting of the question. Heidegger thus throws us back into interrogating our inquiry standpoint, questioning our questioning about art.²⁰

The problem is not only that works of art are pre-judged as things, but that the thing-ness of things is concealed. As such, neither the presence of things nor the presence of the work of art comes to the fore. Previous conceptions of the thing are lacking. The substance-attribute distinction, in which a thing is defined as a subsisting entity to which a variety of attributes finds its mirror

image in the combination of subject and predicate in the simple propositional statement. That conception which specified the thing as the unity of a manifold given to the senses, or that which proposes that a thing be viewed as a synthesis of matter and form, are lacking. The shift in the "inquiry-standpoint involves addressing ourselves to the "work-being" with its thingly character be disclosed in the proper perspective. The notion of equipment in Being and Time misses something in regard to art. The present-at-hand presented entities thematically; the ready-to-hand presents the context in which that entity is significant; the art-work sets up that context - it is self-sufficient - [*eigenwuchsigkeit*].

In order to fully understand equipment the best we can do is let a painting depicting a concrete example of equipment tell us what is essential for equipmental being. The van Gogh provides the essential features of equipment - reliability and unthematicity. From this Heidegger argues that precisely because art is the basis of our understanding of equipment (of thinghood), equipment cannot be used in an explication of art. Indeed the face we could read the truth about equipment from the painting reveals the truth-opening character of art. The art-work is self-sufficient - it sets up a universal medium of meaning - it founds a history - it sets it up like an object domain in science. Inquiry involves displacing preconceptions about the meaning of "origin." Aesthetics has variously sought the origin of the work of art in the artist, in the spectator, in the matter of the art object, in a realm of aesthetic values which stands above and beyond the object, in the social structure and conditions in which the artist lived, or in a kind of unified theory of all of these.

For Heidegger the origin of art is not to be found in a source external to art itself. The origin of the work of art is just art. Also, in the work of art, the happening of truth is at work. This is not to be taken as that conception of truth as certainty which located the essence of truth in the conformity of mind with its object. It is not to be taken as related to that conception of truth which Heidegger takes above to become normative for western metaphysics in its preoccupation with the nature, types, and relations of beings and their conformity to the mind. As is spelled out in Being and Time, On the Essence of Truth, and Plato's Doctrine of Truth, the development of truth as *aletheia* and the primal question of being have fallen into oblivion, requiring a dismantling of the history of metaphysics. What Heidegger means in his enigmatic phrase that "Art is truth setting itself to work" is truth as openness and unconcealment, an opening up so as to make visible. Truth is a happening or an event, it is not 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. If one asks what then is being disclosed, or what is it that is brought out into openness and unconcealed one needs to be wary of the sirens that lurk in the language of traditional metaphysics.

If our asking about the “what” of disclosure is an unwitting inquiry into a possible essence, or set of properties, or realm of value over and above the art work, then they still remain within the fruitless inquiry standpoint of aesthetics.

It is the primal reality or “work-being” of the work that is disclosed, but this is never a “whatness” of a definable essence as distinguished from the “thatness” of the work's existence. It is of a performative-character, having to do with the performance within the work of art itself, not some value or aesthetic property mysteriously positioned above the object-being of the work, nor it is an activity on the part of the artist or the viewer.

If the questions “What is being performed?” or “What is at work in the work of art?” are to be answered at all, one depends upon Heidegger's notions of earth and world. It is the setting up of a world and the setting forth of the earth that is at work of art. World and earth are brought into the open by the performative activity of the work of art. For Heidegger the primary meaning of *techne* was art, the capacity for disclosing something, for bringing it forth, for letting it be seen. Hence both *techne* in the form of poetry and *techne* in the form of modern technology are both modes of disclosure. Heidegger wanted to show how “genuine” *techne* involved a disclosing that preserves and guards them, instead of exploiting and dominating them. According to Heidegger *techne* for the Greeks meant both the event of bringing something into the open and the know-how required for accomplishing that disclosure. Authentic producing was something like childbirth, involving disclosing something appropriately, letting it come forth in its own, bringing it not an arena of accessibility. To produce means to lead it into its own, so that it can linger in presence in its own way [again, *eigenwuchsigkeit* in the art-essay]. Authentic producing is not a matter of an agent using force to push material together into a specific form, but a disclosure of entities for their own sake. In making things, the Greek artisan knew he was letting it be; modern *Dasein* lost touch with the awesome gift and responsibility of this ontologically disclosive capacity and instead understands it as the nonstop industrial production of objects.

Aesthetics inquired into the relation between the perceiving subject and the material art object; but for Heidegger what the authentic work of art enabled *Dasein* to apprehend was nothing perceivable - the work of art revealed the being of entities. Art for Heidegger, taken not as a subject working on something causing it to be, but as a process of enabling things to disclose themselves in accord with their own possibilities, could provide insight into the mode of producing that might replace the producing evident in modernity. Art is not so much the activity of giving shape but the drawing out of what is already there. Here art is defined ontologically, as the event of truth, not as *mimesis*. It does not reproduce what is visible; instead, it makes visible. The great artist did not impose his subjective will upon entities, but instead was claimed by beings as

the site through which works of art could be produced in order to let entities show themselves anew. The artist sought to curb the presencing of entities in such a way that they could manifest themselves in their own ways. Great art was the disclosing of entities as a whole; it brought forth the overpowering presencing of entities. It was a preserving, a measuring, a shaping of entities as a whole. The artist does not give shape to things — the delineation of things by the work of art is achieved primarily by the things themselves. The artist existed as the clearing in which the self-limiting, self-defining disclosure of entities occurred. In this way there is achieved the phenomenological completion of the revealing of things in their essence.

We have thus seen for Heidegger how the origin of the work of art is to be found in art, and, on the other hand, art is actually at work in the work of art. We have seen that works of art unquestionably have a thingly character, but the attempt to explain the thingly character of the work with the help of the common thing conceptions fails. This is because, by asking for the thingly substructure we prejudge the work's genuine, ontological status, and bar for ourselves access to its own work-being. But is the work then ever in itself accessible to us?

For Heidegger, the "work-being" of the work of art consists in the unity-in-opposition of world and earth. The work of art sets up a world. "World" clearly should not be understood here as a collection of objectifiable entities amenable to enumeration and review. World for Heidegger is never an object that stands before us and can be seen, but is the ever-non-objective. To conceive of the world as a totality of numerable entities, as in technological thinking, is to remove the world from the work-being of art and reduce it to a kind of cosmic container to entities or the summation of these entities. One approaches the meaning of world more closely when one takes the lead from the Hegelian notion of spirit. World has to do with the "simple and essential decisions in the destiny of an historical people." World is the historical drama of decision, hope, aspiration, misfortune, and death. World is spirit in its historical becoming.

Likewise, "earth" in Heidegger's use and meaning of it never makes its appearance as an object or some collection of objects. It is to be confused neither with the astronomical idea of a planet and the laws of planetary motion nor with the agronomical idea of soil. It is that upon which man "grounds his dwelling." It is that which is Heidegger's analysis of the work-being of a Greek temple "emerges as native ground." This notion of earth, Heidegger reminds us, is reminiscent of the Greek concept of *physis*, as the self-emerging of that which is. But the Greek concept of *physis* became distorted in its translation into the Roman concept of *natura*. Again, it is the technological-metaphysical tradition which is the culprit. Such thinking transforms earth into "nature" — which carries the double meaning of brute matter or stuff and the form of this which determines the essence of material objects. It is this approach to earth as

nature which needs to be overcome, if earth again is to be permitted to emerge as native ground.

For Heidegger, the temple portrays nothing. It just stays there in the middle of the valley that is filled with rocks. The temple enshrines the statue of the god Poseidon. While concealing the god, the temple nevertheless lets the statue also stand out in the holy domain through the open portico. The god comes-to-presence in the temple by means of the temple, and his coming-to-presence is at the same time both an extension and the delimitation of the open domain surrounding the temple as a holy precinct. The temple does not extend indefinitely — rather, it first orders and gathers around itself the unity of all paths and relations of a particular people. The all-governing range of this open set of relations constitutes the world of this historical people, namely the Greeks who founded Poseidonia. Thus the concrete historical world of the Greek colonists is gathered by and through the temple insofar as the temple lets the god become manifest.

With the temple example Heidegger thus tries to show that a work of art makes present a world as well as the earth; furthermore, he tries to show that in each world a dimension can be distinguished to which he refers with the help of expressions such as the god, and the human, but also with the help of all the events that may occur in the life of a historical people that has this world. World is not a collection of all things that just happen to be here. But neither is it merely an imagined framework which our imagination just adds to the sum of such given things. The world “worlds,” it does what it as world is supposed to do, it governs and holds sway, and as such it is more fully in being than the realm of tangible things in which we believe ourselves to be at home. A rock has no world, nor do plants and animals. But humans have a world because they dwell in the openings of beings. It is the world that “determines” in what way things will be things. The work of art opens up such a world and in so doing it makes space, for and liberated the open and establishes it in its structure. The work holds open the open of the world.

Heidegger’s conception of the coming to pass of truth in the work of art is that the traditional view of attributing truth exclusively to statements as the sole and essential place of the truth really has no ground. Truth does not originally reside in statements, but is to be found somewhere prior to them. And what makes this possible is the open character of *Dasein*’s comportment which is the inner condition of the possibility of correctness (truth) is grounded in freedom. The essence of truth is freedom.

In the past freedom was defined as freedom for what is manifest; freedom itself was there thus exhibited as man’s openness. The manifest to which the statement is to correspond is the being as it manifests itself in and through the open comportment of *Dasein*. Standing in the realm of the open, *Dasein* is able to subject itself to what is manifest and shows itself, and to commit itself to it.

