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**A Study of Heidegger's**  
***The Origin of the Work of Art***

*Presented by Raphaël Sys under the supervision of David Jasper*

- June 2002 -



Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the  
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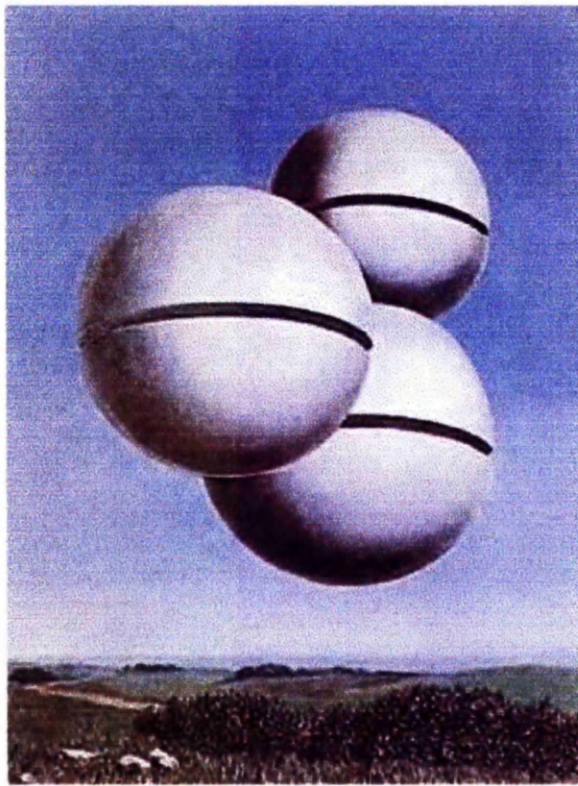
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Magritte René, *Voice of Space*

The present work proposes a phenomenological reading of Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*. It shows how Heidegger's reflection upon Art is grounded in his research upon Being and demonstrates how the latter had never been apprehended in such a fundamental way. Indeed the relationship between Art, the artist and the artwork not only asks the question of the *origin* of what we call "art", but it also conducts a deeper analysis on its essence, its expression, its mode of being. Art is revealed through matter, frame and canvas, and it claims to be truly unconcealed by phenomenology, a method to improve our gaze on things.



*The Shoes, Van Gogh*

## Table of contents

<b>Contents page .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction : .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Part I : The There of the Question.....</b>	<b>20</b>
1. <i>The question of Being.....</i>	20
2. <i>The Question of the Origin.....</i>	25
3. <i>The Question of the Phenomenon.....</i>	30
4. <i>The Thing in the Work.....</i>	35
5. <i>This Thing, the Work of Art.....</i>	37
6. <i>The Phenomenological Thing.....</i>	40
<b>Part II: From Being There to There-Being.....</b>	<b>43</b>
1. <i>Thing and Ontology.....</i>	44
2. <i>The Ontological value of the Thing.....</i>	47
3. <i>The There of Existence.....</i>	50
4. <i>The Work of Art as Statue and Mirror.....</i>	55
<b>Part III: Recognition of the There.....</b>	<b>67</b>
1. <i>Dislocation and Relocation of the There.....</i>	69
2. <i>Disclosedness of the Entity.....</i>	72
3. <i>The Entity as the Echo of the World.....</i>	76
4. <i>The Question of the World.....</i>	79
5. <i>To see the Question of the World.....</i>	84
6. <i>The Restoration of the Hermeneutics of Facticity.....</i>	87
<b>Part IV: The Question of Existence.....</b>	<b>91</b>
1. <i>The Strife, or the essential Sphere of Phenomenology.....</i>	94
2. <i>Truth Echoing Within Itself.....</i>	97
3. <i>Facticity within Factuality.....</i>	102
4. <i>Truth as Self-Presentation.....</i>	110
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>122</b>



Before commenting upon Heidegger's work and before witnessing Being revealing itself in the light of the origin of the work of art, I will propose, in this introduction, to relocate the concept of the work of art in its origin. This will help us to understand Heidegger in his philosophical and aesthetic context. Indeed, Heidegger puts a great emphasis on the idea of tradition which comes to a breakpoint with the timeless truth of Being. Is Heidegger's philosophy situated within a traditional path and, if so, how does it come to subvert it?

As far as aesthetics is concerned, it is by far the idea of perception which stands at the climax of this philosophical reflection. We commonly agree on the fact that we come across the external world, that we encounter it according to sensible rules which allow us to speak about aesthetic judgement. The evolution of aesthetic reflection needs to be apprehended through the span that distinguishes between Kant's conception of subjectivity and hermeneutic phenomenology as it circles in Heidegger's works. It is in fact the distance between the perceiving eye and the perceived object which animated the philosophical discourse evolving from an absolute subjectivity to a dynamic intersubjectivity. By this I mean that in Heidegger's philosophy, aesthetic philosophy has come to a point in which the manifestation of the work of art and its welcoming by the perceiving eye both merge. This path constitutes the world and the horizon of Heidegger's "*hermeneutic circle*", and we will see how this circle relocates this historical evolution within a larger frame, a frame comprehending the work of art and the perceiving subject, a frame described as Being standing within its own original light. It is yet difficult to speak about artistic creation without referring to the principle of perception which always is a creating act. Here perception means "*reception*" and it conveys the idea of the world that we agree upon being given to our senses. The concept implies that nothing can be created *sui generis* but always has biographical, historical,

or political circumstances. Art is first of all a human matter and we shall see with Hegel, it is the most immanent human expression that shows forth the divine. For a long time, this human dimension has been read through the lines of classical onto-theology. We will try to re-discover the authentic existential essence: Dasein as it is conjured by Being. There is therefore a double constraint as far as reception of the work of art is concerned, the one being a response to an expression described as human and the one being a response to Being in its radical alterity.

The origin of the work of art is strongly attached to the notion of judgement as it was conceived in the age of Enlightenment. As Gadamer says in *Warheit und Methode*, “the word judgement was introduced in the eighteenth century in order to convey the concept of judicium (...). In the same way, the English moral philosophers emphasise that moral and aesthetic judgement do not obey reason, but have the character of sentiment (or taste)”. This corresponds to what Burke calls “*wisdom without reflection*”<sup>1</sup>. We see how politics, ethics and aesthetics all converge around the idea of representation. Kant will say that the beautiful pleases universally and without a concept. The origin of the work of art is then related to the conditions of possibility of the enunciation of aesthetic judgement... and therefore of “taste”. Kant clearly underlines the links keeping together the particular and the universal, and he revisits this question through the notion of encounter between the two. As Alexis Philonenko says, “*la métaphysique classique séparant l’universel et le particulier, transforme l’individualité en réalité incompréhensible. Le génie de Kant lui montre que nier la possibilité d’un rapport entre le particulier et l’universalité revient à nier la communication: car c’est*

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<sup>1</sup> Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, [1790], Conor Cruise O'Brien, ed., Pelican Classics, 1973

*toujours “cet” homme qui rencontre “cet” autre homme et qui communique avec lui.”*<sup>2</sup>

Philonenko then points out that Kant aims at “elaborating a logic in which the universal and the particular join within an aesthetic communication” (translation mine). The Kantian aesthetic will then aim at solving the problem of individual interconnections within the link of the singular and the universal. Aesthetic therefore becomes the appropriate climate where a human community can take place.

Let’s have a closer look at Kant’s aesthetic judgement as it appears in his philosophy of taste. The judgement of taste is first unapproachable through concepts since there is no empirical reason that can impose a judgement of taste to somebody (§ 33). Since there is no objective principle of the taste, it is therefore the subjective principle of the faculty of judgement which operates this function. Yet Kant sees these principles as a “*sensus communis*” (§ 40) defined as such : “ *sous cette expression de sensus communis, on doit comprendre l’idée d’un sens commun à tous, c’est à dire une faculté de juger, qui dans sa réflexion, tient compte en pensant du mode de représentation de tout autre homme, afin de rattacher pour ainsi dire son jugement à la raison humaine toute entière et échapper ce faisant à l’illusion résultant des conditions subjectives et particulières pouvant aisément être tenues pour objectives*” (§ 40).

Two aspects have been mentioned: the point of coherence which gathers singularities and the “common sense” linking the three critics within the “teleological faculty of judgement”. The question of *telos* means to set up temporality in the emerging and more particularly the epiphany of the work of art. Hegel will put together Art and Religion because both are a path towards the spirit, that is to say Being in itself and for itself. Art is in fact the first moment of the mind which tells the truth as truth itself; in

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<sup>2</sup> Alexis Philonenko, introduction à Emmanuel Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger*, Vrin, 1986, p. 12

that sense, Art is Religion. As it is stated in *The Aesthetics*, I, 29: “*la plus haute destination de l’Art est celle qui lui est commune avec la religion et la philosophie*”. It is a divine mode of expression. Its role will be to give elevated ideas a sensible mode of expression: “*la pensée pénètre dans les profondeurs d’un monde supra-sensible qu’elle oppose à un au-delà à la conscience immédiate et à la sensation directe*”. Artistic activity therefore becomes a mediation between nature and finite reality on the one hand and infinite liberty of comprehensive thought on the other.

It was important for us to refer to Kant’s teleology and to Hegel’s vision of art as moments of the Mind and as modes of expression of the divine in order to understand better Heidegger’s aesthetic thinking. We should yet take a slight detour along the romantic stream in order to solidify this approach.

The romantic movement (at least in its early stages) was deeply influenced by the principles of empiricism. I would like to quote here the summary of these principles given by Finney in his book on Keats : “*The fundamental principle of empiricism is the principle that there are no innate ideas, that ideas are copies of the impressions made by external objects on the senses. The second principle is the principle that complex ideas, or intellectual ideas, develop out of simple ideas, or sensations, by the process of association. A third principle is the principle that the feelings of pleasure and pain are the springs of action. And a fourth principle is the principle that the mind acts from a mechanical or physical necessity, on which it has no control. There was a diversity of opinion among the empirical philosophers in regard to the secondary principles of empiricism. Materialists held that impulses of the mind, which govern action, are egotistic or selfish; and humanitarians held that impulses of the mind, when pure and*

*uncontaminated, are disinterested or benevolent*"<sup>3</sup>. Wordsworth accepted the fundamental principles of empiricism, and he constantly stressed the fact that sensations, the simple ideas out of which complex ideas, such as moral and religious ideas, evolve through the process of association. From this he logically deduced that the nature of a man's sensations determines the character of his higher ideas, that is to say that sensations produced by beautiful and pure objects cause pure and beautiful ideas. This indeed is the philosophy of Tintern Abbey which we have just evoked, and also that of the *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*. From this it might be inferred that the basic principles of Romanticism were of a mechanistic nature; yet, such was not the case: Wordsworth and Coleridge for instance rejected the Lockean conception of wit as merely a pleasant combination of ideas : associationism and sensationism were so to speak "corrected" or tempered by a rather thorough idealism, or, as Finney aptly puts it, *"upon the empirical bases of sensationism and associationism, Wordsworth imposed a principle of mystical insight which was neoplatonic in origin"*<sup>4</sup>. On this twofold basis was to be derived the philosophy of romantic imagination.

The romantics rejected the extreme form of sensationism (that is to say perception limited to physical objects only) and idealistically restored the idea of the supremacy of the spirit, mind being the central point and governing factor. They thus did not stop at a mechanistic conception of the world but introduced or re-introduced a philosophy of value : they were convinced that there is an order of things beyond what is perceived or known; or, as Bowra puts it : *"they were convinced that, though visible things are the instruments by which we find this reality, they are not everything and have indeed little significance unless they are related to some embracing and sustaining*

<sup>3</sup> Finney Claude, *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, New York, Russell & Russell, 1964, pp.239-240

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.240

power"<sup>5</sup>. To put it in other words, they were convinced that the imaginative principle can "see into the life of things" as Wordsworth said in Tintern Abbey : insight goes beyond mere sight; imagination then is the most vital activity of the mind, and through it man partakes of the activity of God. Blake said of imagination: "*I know that this world is a world of imagination and vision. This world is all One continued vision of Fancy or Imagination*". Imagination is then power and to some extent it governs the external world; this is what Coleridge said of imagination : it is, he says, in *Dejection, an Ode*, that which gives shape to life; nature lives only in us, and this faculty fashions reality from a shapeless, undifferentiated given.

We have seen with Kant that the true finality of the work of art is to recapture the whole of sensible diversity within a universal and supra-sensible idea. There dwells the essence of the artwork which escapes from its own wooden frame and recaptures itself within that which it casts into light, that is to say the whole of existence. In that sense the work of art remains a mystery to itself, it withdraws before its opening and it is this double movement which urges us to wonder about the *isness* of that thing which ceases to be itself when it reaches the climax of its signification.

Thinking the work of art first means to make visible that it is not given within the aggregate of its immediate constituting elements. It is within its intention that the work of art is fully alive. It is not in its physical reality that the work of art is present to us, it is not through its sensible appearance that it leaves us wordless but, on the contrary, it is its capacity to *become* the meaningful horizon of its own pictural representation.

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<sup>5</sup> This is a phrase of Franck Bowra, *Romantic Imagination*.

We can already distinguish three different aspects of the problem:

1. the meaningful horizon of the work of art is diluted among cultural imperatives that enable us to call a work a “work of art”
2. the work is “monumental”
3. the artwork relevance is related to the presence of an authority

The artwork’s horizon is diluted within an inter-text that has to be understood from a pragmatic point of view. Let’s take the example of a painting. Before focusing on and contemplating a work of art, we already have in mind whether it will be produced in a temporary or a continuous exhibition, in a gallery or a museum. The political exigencies or expectations of a country might as well play a role as to whether such or such artist’s work will be exposed. The concept of “art” is therefore shaped by the imposition of a cultural fashion. Now, if we get closer to the painting, a whole world of signification enables us to recognize it as such. Only behind these previous cultural filters does the artwork become a Paul Klee, a Monet, a Picasso or a Miro. They all bear the seal of an individual signature. We are now looking at the work of art itself as it shows itself. And yet, the work of art itself is a “*trace*” and it projects us back within a cultural horizon in which it was born. It locates itself within a canon gathering at the same time artistic, political and religious features. These three categories constitute what we culturally call culture. They give an angle to our sight, determine our comprehension, stand as a guide showing us the way to a work of art. let’s take the example of a city. Its architecture is made of “traces” and monuments as they were thought at the time: Paris was modelled by Hausmann, London was reconfigured after the great fire of 1666; some monuments are preserved, others are destroyed, and some others are rebuilt in the same identical

way. Any city corresponds to the mode of thinking of a civilisation. Something absolutely original is utterly unthinkable since it would not even be recognised. Nothing could exist without a cultural background imposing its criteria and constituting the invisible glasses that help us to see and to understand what we see. In these conditions, the work of art never belongs to us, it always stands within a transcendental entity that we name “culture”.

In the light of these considerations, we can now contemplate the inter-subjective question that is implied in the notion of work of art. We yet need to couple it to the other key notion of our dissertation, I mean the origin of the work of art. We will shape our reflection around two singularities; the “subject” who receives the work of art and the meaningful horizon embodied by such or such work.

So far, we have seen that the work of art stands in the politico-theological complexity of its signification. If we now refer to a singular individual looking at the work’s singularities, we first notice that the work of art is in progress. The work of art takes its origin in Time and it lets itself be captured through time; indeed it takes time for the work to be in progress, or to be perceived as being in progress. It is both there and not yet there. It is because it is there without being fully there that one visits it, one comes back to it, that intimate links keep us attached to it. The “*there*” of the work of art therefore tends to shrink and to yield ground to the intimacy of a moment when it becomes alive through my body. As Bakhtin says it stands as a “chronotopic” mirror of my being. Hermeneutics then becomes a reading of myself through myself; I become a work of art, I am made of works of art, texts, monuments, of what Dilthey called “the documents of life”. The “*there*” of the work of art becomes my own space. A space of experience, a space without a distance since “I” can only be read through texts and



documents. My own identity is a canvas of artworks which is designed according to my education, my political environment, my religion. “I” is made of the other.

If I am the fruit of these documents, I need to know what is the specific place of the work of art among these documents. From a reflective point of view, there is a progressive passage from the documents to the work of art, regardless of the canon’s authority that determines the legitimacy of the artistic object. Any document is the product of an activity, a labour; whether it is a philosophical system, a sculpture, a political constitution, we are dealing here with cultural objects which stand as the most appropriate expression of human nature. The work of art detaches from these cultural objects which are all “works”. To Kant’s mind, it is the spot for “*genius*” as it is distinct to “*craft*” (*The Critique of Judgement*, §48). What Kant calls genius is that which provides rules to art. Shelley will side with that point of view when, in the preface of *Prometheus Unbound*, he speaks of poets as the “*unacknowledged legislators*” of humanity. For Kant, it is an innate faculty, an expression of nature, the expression of the artist. Bearing this remark in mind, we will then conclude that a work of art is recognised as such when it sets up rules, a linguistic code. Yet, the rules find their sources in the artistic autonomy of their expressions. By this I mean that they overtake any kind of canonisation and give themselves their own rules.

As in Hegel’s philosophy, the work in progress reveals itself under the form of a double movement. It drags us towards the centre of its representation where it withdraws itself and then diffuses itself into the world that it encloses. Artistic products correspond to Being’s revelation which unfolds in its expressions. The artistic document offers itself to my perceptive attention. It is a path to Being and represents the essence of its manifestation. In that sense, the work of art comes into progress and reveals itself in that intention which, contrary to the other documents, does not belong to the field of

“*utensility*”. This intention is nothing more than the movement from the work towards itself, searching for the “authentic” light of its origin.

The work of art detaches from these documents of our culture and expands until it becomes the horizon within which this culture finds its signification. It becomes the receptacle giving a colour and a name to Being now conjuring me. A space of time is drawn within a frame that circumscribes the authentic sphere. The work of art pursues the question of becoming itself, of replacing itself within the frame of its essential sphere, and it is in the light of this movement that it sets itself into question.

This question is the appropriate moment, the *kairos*, for the work of art to let forth its “thereness” and to open itself to our discourse. It is fully present within the existential distance that is comprised within the essential revelation that it becomes itself.

The work of art opens the field of hermeneutics that comes to reveal its signification along the path from the artwork to the work of art, from the self to the self, from being to Being. So much for this introduction, let’s now follow Heidegger’s texts which we will carefully read step by step. Indeed, Heidegger needs a close reading, a meticulous analysis, and for that reason, we will exclusively remain on the path of his own philosophy.



## The There of the Question

### 1. The Question of Being

In *Sein und Zeit* 4<sup>6</sup>, Heidegger introduces us to the question of Being:

*«The very fact that we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise this question again».*

Indeed, we understand with this quotation that Heidegger's work is devoted to the concept of fundamental ontology: what is Being, what does it mean to be, what does it mean to ask the question of being, perceived in its sense of being. A question is already a response to a problem (that is to say the setting into question of an aporia) which opens its problematic complexity in the scope of the interrogation mark. *Sein und Zeit* is a book without an end and it therefore does not provide a definite answer to the issue raised in the introductory chapters: the question of the sense of being.

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<sup>6</sup> Heidegger Martin, *Being and Time*, Ed. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). *Sein und Zeit* will either be fully written or referred to as "SZ" followed by the paragraph number.

But a definite answer is not the primary object of our question. *Sein und Zeit* is above all about the *question* of being seen as our first step into a phenomenological approach to ontology. To ask a question does not only mean to add an interrogation mark at the end of a sentence. Rather, it signifies the recognition of a problem and taking into account the obstacles obstructing the way towards a possible answer. To ask the question of being therefore means to drag it out of its obviousness; it means to put into words that which usually goes without saying and consequently sinks into oblivion. In other words, the primary task is to acknowledge the fact that the phenomena are not always apparent, that they do not always stand in the light of their presence, and that the path towards the things are not automatically open. The phenomenological method can get lost, it can fail, and its primary endeavour will be to free the way and to free the things on the way so that nothing will remain forgotten. For that matter, *Sein und Zeit* is mainly about the elaboration of a starting point which is solid enough to support the whole of the things in question.

The question asks about the sense of being. It is directed towards all that is, as in « there is » (*es gibt*). It hence invites us to ask the question about itself (the question) which is also something that is. It is the object of its own considerations and, in that respect, it has to be consciously part and parcel of that which it researches for its possible answer to be satisfying. To think Being first means to think Being in its totality, in its entirety, so that our ontological research plays on a fundamental ground and not on a regional apparatus. Thus, to think Being first means to think the conditions of possibilities of an understanding of Being, to think the «*possible horizon for*

*any understanding whatsoever of Being*» (SZ § 1). In mathematical terms, we need to determine the conditions of possibilities of the set of all sets including itself. The question of the sense of being therefore appears as a preparation of an ontological ground; it is the first effort of orientation on a path of which it is the own entrance. *Sein und Zeit* is a travel along the path of thinking down to the question of being which had been so far forgotten.

If Being has been forgotten, it is for two apparent reasons: the first one, Heidegger notes it at once, dwells in the concealed nature of Being. Being is that which we all commonly understand and yet do not know how to define because it does not give itself as an empirical phenomenon would; as it is stated in *Sein und Zeit*, « *Being is that which does not have a gender but covers the entirety of what is in its most general form* » (SZ 3). Being cannot be located within an empirical manifestation inasmuch as it is nowhere and everywhere at the same time, as it is pre-supposed in the existing whole standing in the horizon of my sight and of my consciousness; it dwells in all that call upon my senses, my conscience, it dwells in my conscience itself, in the words being written, in brief, it is in all that we philosophically call a thing, that is to say the Heideggerian entity. The second reason for Being's falling into oblivion can be seen as a consequence of the first one; not knowing how to locate it –since it does not appear as such - the path to follow for a phenomenological inquiry also remains obscure and therefore out of reach. In that sense, Heidegger's method developed in *Sein und Zeit* could be legitimately reduced to an education of our sight: we need to learn how to see in order first to cast into light the path that will secondly lead us to Being then perceived as a phenomenon. In that sense, *Sein und Zeit's*

contribution is priceless. It first teaches us to see and to understand where to start, where to go; and second it teaches us how to turn Being into a perceptible phenomenon that we can now describe, since it is there before our eyes (what only announced itself now shows itself) as the object of our question. The very problem related to the difficulty to perceive Being, or at least the recognition of that problem, asks the question of perception itself; under what modes am I likely to perceive that which is before my eyes? How does it come that as far as Being is concerned, my piercing gaze ceases to be piercing and does not even manage to know what it should pierce through? The answer to that question may not only dwell in my deficient eyes but may well lie in the how, the why and the when a phenomenon like Being gives itself.

What is a phenomenon? Do all the phenomena belong to the same genre? What does it mean for a phenomenon to give or not to give itself within my question? Setting a problem, through the setting-into-question of that problem is already a making manifest of the problem which no longer sinks into oblivion. If *Sein und Zeit* does not ultimately provide us with the answer about the sense of Being, at least its merit is to ask the question and to conduct philosophy in a direction that can no longer be ignored. What we should retain from *Sein und Zeit*, is that the destination is not more important than the direction. If Being stands concealed behind or at the core of all things, knowing that a chance to find it is to look behind is therefore already knowing it well enough to guess and foresee where it is likely to withdraw.

After all, the primary contact established with the problem is undoubtedly the question about it and if it cannot entirely satisfy our request it can at least tell us where to turn our eyes. These considerations need to be well considered. In a very simple way, they relocate the existential analytic in the perspective of fundamental ontology (what it tends towards) and consequently annihilate the eight-year-distance that separates *The Origin of the Work of Art* from *Sein und Zeit*. The one cannot be read without the other. If *The Origin of the Work of Art* is even more about ontology than *Sein und Zeit*, it is certainly because in 1935, Heidegger had a clearer view of Being as a given phenomenon. *The Origin of the Work of Art* could be seen as the accomplishment of phenomenology, that is to say the moment when a non-apparent phenomenon turns into an apparent one and therefore offers itself to the method which managed to replace it within an empirical frame. Phenomenology lets the phenomenon offer itself, and it is by offering itself or manifesting itself that it presents itself before our eyes.

*Sein und Zeit's* novelty lay in the idea that a phenomenologically reconstituted phenomenon remains what is not immediately present through an empirical form but is only mediately announced and consequently guessed at. In that sense, a phenomenologically reconstituted phenomenon is different from a phenomenon which stands there in front of our eyes in its empirical, «ontical»<sup>7</sup>, manifestation. Phenomenology stands as a "digging" enterprise going always deeper down into the layers of the presupposed and

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<sup>7</sup> To be here or there in an empirical form



the pre-understood until the moment when the ultimate and originary point of our research is gathered within our understanding and comprehensive conscience. *The Origin of the Work of Art* deals with the phenomenality of Being as a phenomenologically reconstituted phenomenon, a concept which is commonly accepted as ontology. In that sense, *The Origin of the Work of Art* puts a final point to *Sein und Zeit*, but if it acts as such it is only by re-travelling along the path of phenomenology previously opened in 1927.

## 2. *The Question of Origin*

*The Origin of the Work of Art* is in no way a philosophy about art, but is exclusively about Being. In the first paragraph, Heidegger asks the question of the origin of the work of art and faces the difficulty to find a starting point for a possible inquiry about it. For that matter, what triggers Heidegger's reflection lies in that difficulty itself, as difficulty, which is the first step towards a further possible answer. The recognition of the difficulty consists in the setting into question of the «*equiprimordiality*» (SZ 84) between the work of art and the artist. Indeed, the artist can be granted the denomination *artist* thanks to what he produces, that is to say the work of art which, in turn, owes its value to the artist:

*«The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the*

*artist. Neither is without the other.»<sup>8</sup>*

Heidegger starts by asking the question of the artist, then moves on to the artwork in order to recognise the *equiprimordiality* between artist and artwork so that it is in art that we need to pursue our philosophical reflection. The origin of the work of art is now to be found in the essence of the work of art. The question becomes: what *is* the essence of the work of art? Already, we perceive how we have to deal with an ontological question applied to an ontical phenomenon, the work of art :

*«Whatever the decision may be, the question of the origin of the work of art becomes a question about the essence of art.»<sup>9</sup>*

The method is here existentialist. Heidegger reminds us that our reflection has to be guided by that which is there before our eyes; he does not aim at establishing a metaphysical reconstruction about the question of art, but makes it clear that art is art only because it can be witnessed in a work of art:

*«Can art be an origin? Where and how does art occur? Art -this is nothing more than a word to which nothing actual any longer corresponds.»<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> Heidegger Martin, «The Origin of the Work of Art», in *Basic Writings*, Revised and expanded edition. Ed. David Farrell Krell (Routledge: London, 1993) p.143.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.144.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.143.

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*«Since the question whether and how art in general exists must still remain open, we shall attempt to discover the essence of art in the place where art undoubtedly prevails in an actual way.»<sup>11</sup>*

It therefore goes without saying that our research will follow art in its way of setting itself into work, that is to say in *«the artwork»*. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger puts us into contact with Being by interrogating that in which it sets itself into presence, that in which it *«announces»* itself. Indeed, in SZ 42, it is said that *«the essence of Dasein holds in its existence»*. With Heidegger, we will see it later on, the concept of essence is understood in terms of projection into movement, as an activity which takes its form in the empirical trace of its existential reality. As for art, it is through the setting-into-work that we can hope to perceive a setting-into-question of that which opens itself to my gaze, that is to say art in the work of art. Because the work of art is *there* before my eyes, I can direct my question towards the *«what»* and the *«how»* a work of art is. The work of art is present before my eyes as an artistic *«there»* which I perceive as a given presence prompting my concern.

What has just been said already suggests many different implications which should be pointed out in order for us to understand, later on, what it means to see, to perceive, to understand a work of art as it is before my eyes. From the previous references to the text *The Origin of the Work of Art*, it already appears that Heidegger does not propose a cognitive theory based on the supremacy of the judgement by which we come to know that which is

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp.143-144

empirically there. We do not adopt a demonstrative approach but rather, a descriptive one. To question the essence of art first means to question the artwork, to interrogate its *what* and its *how*, that is to say its way of being present to me, its way of being there as a presence to which I can respond by interrogating its mode of donation, that is its mode of giving itself as and in a «there». I can only consider that which is before me and nothing exists for me without my eyes to see. It is quite manifest that any cognitive theory takes its source in a point of contact in which the thing opens within the light of my question and in which my question finds its own condition of possibility. In other words, Heidegger does not conceive the possibility of a unilateral relationship to the external world.

Phenomenology thus parts both from Realism and Idealism; in the former instance, the philosophers aimed at a knowledge leaving the subjective sphere constituted by our senses, and in the latter instance, they aimed at the constitution of an objective knowledge without leaving the subjective sphere. In phenomenology, a thing is always present to my eyes within a space of interrogation that I myself determine through the field of my considerations. To see something hence means to find a point of encounter between my *seeing* the phenomenon and the *giving* of the same phenomenon. If Heidegger first emphasises the essence of art, it is exclusively because his intention is to find the right angle to begin with; an angle where there is a chance that the object might give itself within the scope of the question. I position the object in front of me so that the aspect it presents to me allows me an *entrée en matière*, that is to say a localisation of the aporia and an understanding of it. In that respect, my question is always and already

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directed in a way that I evaluate as appropriate for the opening of a field of investigation.

Yet, my question was not born out of the blue; it is in no way a cause in itself. It is in effect not only actualised by my expressed concern, but it is also provoked and stimulated by the presence of the object itself which, by being there, enables the question: what is it doing there? The possibility for me to have a knowledge about something before my eyes seems, at first sight, to rely on the contact between myself and that something. Heidegger begins his investigation about the origin of the work of art at this very point. Art is not a visible phenomenon and only an analysis through the work of art will perhaps allow us to enter into contact with art itself. In the most simple terms, Heidegger proposes to ask the question of the work of art by considering it as an «*entity*» that we have before our eyes and that gives itself as a visible phenomenon. To respond to the presence of the phenomenon by asking the question of its very presence is in itself a phenomenological approach through which we might hope to pierce through the empirical envelope that keeps us away from the «*thing in itself*», that is the essence that lies in the existence of the thing and that makes it such. Already, any entity seems to be constituted by a twofold phenomenal reality. We find ourselves either in presence of a phenomenology of the apparent (when we deal with the work of art as a painting that is there inside a frame) or a phenomenology of the non-apparent ( when we ask the question of the essence of the work of art).

### 3. *The Question of the Phenomenon*

These introductory considerations certainly draw our attention to the definition of the phenomenon itself. We perceive what gives itself through its mode of donation, that is to say its way of giving itself to our eyes in our most daily acts. In *Sein und Zeit*, a phenomenon is defined as an entity the mode of being of which is to «*show itself*» (SZ 29). It refers to the Greek *φαίνεσθαι* commonly understood as the reflexive form of *φαίνω*, *that wherein something can become manifest*. We are therefore interested in the *what* and the *how* of that which «*shows itself in itself*». As opposed to Husserl's "Cartesian" view on the subject, the phenomenon in Heidegger's phenomenology is never reduced to the object of doubt. There is no such thing as a phenomenological reduction (that is to say reduction of the empirical reality to doubt) in Heidegger's philosophy; the empirical world present before my eyes is never put between brackets for the simple reason that its reality is never questioned. It is yet pierced through by our phenomenological eyes but never constitutes the object of doubt. There is therefore no going beyond the phenomenon for Heidegger and similarly, phenomenological reduction can no longer be the means to be used for a reflection on the modes of being of the self. The phenomenon, in its being there in front of me, can well take the form of a «*symptom*», or deceive our senses by the means of a deceitful appearance, but its being there howsoever remains that towards which my gaze is turned. Heidegger enlarges the perceptible field of phenomena to that which shows itself as a *not showing*

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itself or as «something which it is not» (SZ 29). We now find ourselves in presence of three different types of phenomena:

1. The *φαίνεται* understood as an auto-manifestation, a revelation of the thing in itself.
2. The *Scheinen* signifying «semblance», «looking like», illusion.
3. The *Erscheinung*, that is the announcement within the *φαίνεται*, non-appearance, a showing itself in the mode of withdrawing which is in fact a non-showing.

That which only announces itself can only be guessed within and through the empirical shape of the *φαίνεται*, either as a *looking like* or as a *withdrawal*. The phenomenon, for example the phenomenon of the work of art, is here described as a whole according to its mode of donation. A work of art, by showing itself as such, shows what does not appear but only announces itself. Art as the essence of any work of art therefore stands as a phenomenon showing itself as a non-showing itself, as that which withdraws itself and lies in the «deep heart's core of»<sup>12</sup> the artwork. Phenomenology is a method describing the phenomenon as it is in itself, so that it can be respected in its mode of donation. In Heidegger's mind, the phenomenon can never be the object of doubt but it can be misunderstood if it is not grasped as it gives itself.

Phenomenology describes in order to see better, to perceive better, that is to say to "see through" according to principles which are not dictated by our

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<sup>12</sup> This is a phrase of S.T. Coleridge

subjective sphere but which emanate from the thing itself: «*to the things themselves*» (SZ 34) so that the Being of the thing can be reached through the thing itself:

*«it is something that proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground»* (SZ 35).

Phenomenology stands as a way of approaching the phenomena and especially a way of approaching that which shows itself as a non-showing. In that sense, our method is a making manifest, an act of casting into light that which remains hidden or shows itself in disguise. It proceeds to a passage from the apparent to the non-apparent. To see what does not show itself (because its mode of being stands either in the *disguise* or in the *hiding*) means to perceive, phenomenologically speaking, its essential mode of being, *constituting its meaning and its ground*, as a non-showing. A phenomenological phenomenon differs from a phenomenon as *φαίνεσται* in the sense that it is phenomenologically looked at, that is to say pierced through, and implies a passage from the apparent to the non-apparent so that, as non-apparent, it is cast into light, made manifest and therefore apparent as a non-apparent.



A phenomenology of the non-apparent applied to the work of art comes back to the question of the essence of the work of art. What *is* the essence of the work of art? We have already shown the ontological consequences of such a question, but through the phenomenological analysis of the phenomenon as *meaning and ground* of the thing in itself, it appears to be even more transparent that the only phenomenological phenomenon we are re-searching is the Being of the entity. In that respect, ontology and phenomenology come to a perfect alliance. I would even push it as far as to say that ontology is only possible as phenomenology. Consequently, the importance of *The Origin of the Work of Art* stands in the importance of its phenomenological approach.

In the essay, the artwork is understood as a phenomenon the mode of donation of which has to be found in its empirical «there». Through this mode of donation, the phenomenon appears to us as «*that from which and by which something is what it is and how it is*». The path of thinking that is developed here makes manifest the passage from a phenomenology of the apparent to a phenomenology of the non-apparent. We are not *telling a story* (SZ 6), we are in fact dealing with what goes without saying, the «*Selbstverständlichkeit*» (SZ 5), that which is always and already there before our eyes which, being our only and constant point of reference, forgets that it is still a point of reference implying a specific mode of perception and a mode of donation. Phenomenology functions as a «*wanting-to-have-a-conscience*» of what goes without saying because it is *selbstverstehen*. It works as a highlighting of what we always and already do

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in our everydayness and that we will keep doing as long as we exist, that is, to see with our eyes. In *The Origin of the Work of Art* the method consists in learning how to see in a phenomenological way that will "open the doors" to the object, or to be more accurate, that will let the object open its own phenomenal doors. Through the contemplation of the work of art, Heidegger reproduces what could be called an aporetic space in which Dasein witnesses itself in the phenomenological process of being in contact with a given phenomenon, that is to say the world of the work of art. To be in contact signifies that I contemplate the «there» of the contact in which the phenomenon is allowed to be given because it is contemplated and in which I am allowed to perceive because I can perceive something. To think in these terms does not yet enable us to define an elaborated concept of the work of art; still, the work of art, being an artistic or not artistic phenomenon, expresses itself as any other phenomenon, that is to say as an entity within the world. A phenomenology of the non-apparent will make us take into account the artistic essence of the artwork, precisely that which is «*at work in the work*», that is to say at work in the *ontical* reality of the wooden frame. Unveiling the work of art as such therefore first consists in defining the conditions of possibility for an artistic representation to be; in other words, we first have to establish the *there* of the thing in order to visualise the *there* of the work.

#### 4. *The Thing in the Work*

*«In order to discover the essence of the art that actually prevails in the work, let us go to the actual work and ask the work what and how it is»<sup>13</sup>.*

The setting-into-question of the *what* and the *how* turns out to be our primary contact with the work of art. By being empirically there before my eyes, that which is there gives itself within the space of donation which it occupies. It is only in that space of donation that I can even conceive to see the phenomenon. Outside of it, I find myself in a different space inhabited by another entity and outside of it, the «there» of my work of art switches off and the work of art itself falls back into the empirical oblivion of my non-concern. It (the work of art) is yet at the disposition of my eyes that can turn towards it any time they choose to be in contact with it. Even though the work of art is not commonly perceived as a thing among so many others (indeed, it is granted the distinctive sign of being individually exposed to the sight of the spectator) one of its modes of donation expresses itself as being ontically there in the midst of our environment. In that respect, the work of art is but a thing, a work of art that has been devitalised, deprived of its artistic reality:

*«If we consider the works in their untouched actuality and do not deceive ourselves, the result is that the works are as naturally present as are*

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<sup>13</sup> Heidegger Martin, "The Origin of the Work of Art", *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, (London, Routledge, 1993) p.144.

*things. The picture hangs on the wall like a rifle or a hat»<sup>14</sup>.*

The «*thingly element*» of the work of art hangs on the wall as the condition of possibility for the work of art to be hung. Art as the essence of the work of art cannot be hung on its own; it needs a support, a setting-into-matter, a «*setting-into-work*» so that it can be seen:

*«The thingly element is so irremovably present in the artwork that we are compelled rather to say conversely that the architectural work is in the stone, the carving is in wood, the painting in colour, the linguistic work in speech, the musical composition in sound»<sup>15</sup>.*

The thing is always present around us, either as a thing or as something which is more and yet always a thing. The thing stands as the most basic constitutive element of any entity about which we always unconsciously presuppose that it will happen in a thingly there. If a man is reduced to a thingly state, or in other words, when a man is treated like a thing, it is not a matter of recognising and telling how he is a thing, but, rather, it is a matter of not telling that which makes a man of him:

*«It is true that we speak of a young girl who is faced with a task too difficult for her as being a young thing, still too young for it, but only because we feel that being human is in a certain way missing here and*

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

*think that instead we have to do here with the factor that constitutes the thingly character of things»<sup>16</sup>.*

Because our conception of the thing is «*self-evident*», because it goes without saying, we can only describe it as that which it is not. For a man to be called a thing comes back to depriving him of all the elements which characterise him as a man. It therefore becomes a generic designation expressed under a negative form. A work of art never gives itself as a thing because it is always something else which itself presupposes a ground it can rest on:

*«it seems almost as though the thingly element in the artwork is like the substructure into and upon which the other, proper element is built»<sup>17</sup>.*

## ***5. This Thing, the Work of Art***

The interrogation of the *what* and the *how* of the work of art already casts into light two different modes of donation of its own. We can either perceive it as a thing or as a work, although that which we contemplate in the work of art is the unity in the work. We now know that through a work of art, we are in presence of two non-apparent phenomena, art and thing, which only announce themselves within the work of art. The thing in the work as well as

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.147

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.145

the art in the work are not empirically present before our eyes. I cannot say that there is some art in that corner right beside that blue thingly element. A work of art being taken as a whole, these two elements are everywhere and nowhere at the same time. In that sense, these are phenomena which do not give themselves but either hide, withdraw or disguise themselves. We are hence in the presence of phenomenological phenomena that we now have to reach by piercing through the surrounding and ontical reality of the work of art. As a matter of fact, the thing and the art are both present and represented in the «there» of the work of art, in the apparent spatiality of the work of art as φαίνεσθαι. Does that mean that the «there» of the thing and the «there» of art are not the same and that both cohere in the «there» of the work of art? If by «there» I mean the space in which a phenomenon gives itself by showing what it is and how it is, that is by being that which it can only be as it is in itself, then it appears that the «*thing-being*»<sup>18</sup> does not give itself as the *art-being* and that for each of them correspond two different «there». In that respect, it is for me possible to encounter the two of them at two different times since they exclusively give themselves in the «there» seen as the opening that they themselves open by giving themselves. The «there» of the thing, as that which withdraws from my gaze, therefore becomes manifest as a «non-there» which is yet not nothing but the «there» of the «non-there», a non-apparent «there». It is as such that I must envision a possible contact with the thing «*resting in itself*», that is to say the thing as it is in itself, in its non-appearance:

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.157.

*«We ought to turn towards the being, think about it in regard to its Being, but by means of this thinking at the same time let it rest upon itself in its very own essence»<sup>19</sup>.*

To think the thing now means to follow the *«path of thinking»* down to the *thing-being* which turns out to be greatly *«resistant»* to any definition. The notion of resistance here stands in the absence of contact with the thing. Without this contact, there is no space of encounter where the *«there»* of my preoccupation can meet with the *«there»* of the donation of the phenomenon.

Here phenomenology works as a definition of that which the thing is not. Any other kind of definition would now automatically be a discrimination, an insult not respecting the thing as it is in itself. That which it is not, is an apparent phenomenon and if we manage to enter into contact with its phenomenal *«there»*, it will be either in respect of its silence, which is already one of its modes of being, or it will not be at all:

*«Must not this strange and uncommunicative feature of the essence of the thing become intimately familiar to thought that tries to think the thing? If so, then we should not force our way to its thingly character»<sup>20</sup>.*

Phenomenology is consequently the only appropriate method for such an investigation. It does not propose a metaphysical demonstration of what is beyond physics and does not appear to our senses. It proceeds to a

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.157

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.157.

progressive description of the phenomenon as it shows itself from itself and in itself. As a setting-into-question of what appears before my eyes, it always and first is a setting-into-contact with the «manifest» (SZ 29) which, as such, manifests itself as a presence in a «there» in which I can project my phenomenological eyes. This manifest «there» is the first revealed element which, opening the doors of its enacted being, enables me to guess another something which only announces itself in it. The revealed phenomenon turns into a revealing one setting me into contact with the non-apparent. In the light of the apparent «there» of my primary phenomenon, something becomes manifest in its non-manifestation, something becomes visible in its invisibility.

## **6. *The Phenomenological Thing***

We have set into question the presence of the empirical «there» which now appears as the *thing-being* of the work of art. The work is first present as a thing insofar as it ontically gives itself in the «there» of its existence. As it is said in *Sein und Zeit*, existence is

*«the kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow» (SZ 12).*

In the introduction, we had mentioned how *The Origin of the Work of Art* differs from *Sein und Zeit* in the sense that it is «a path across



*phenomenology down to the thinking of being*<sup>21</sup> by the means of a dialogical tension between Dasein and the work of art. Dasein loses its central position. It is put in the presence of the work of art as the fundamental experience where it encounters itself as a being that «is», so that, living in that experience, it can direct its question towards the sense of its «I am» as a being that is. In other words, Dasein encounters its existing being, that is to say that it encounters itself within the reflexive consciousness of the question that it asks about itself. These statements are probably the most important ones of our reflection; they explicitly state the significance of the setting into presence of a phenomenon in a moment of encounter, of contact between the questioned and the questioning, the revealed and the revealing. In this space of perception and donation, an existential field opens within the empirical disclosedness of the «there». By that, I mean that the work of art always and already appears to me as an entity that is, an entity that came to birth in the workshop of the artist and that is bound to hold in the space of its «there», whether it is the «there» of the workshop, the «there» of a museum, the «there» of a heart or, as we shall see it later, the "there" of the world which it itself evokes. And yet it is doomed to express itself in an empirical «there» which discloses itself not only in the «what» of its represented ontical reality, but in the essential «who» enabling a «what» to take place. Having a conscience of the quiddity of the "there" means to let it express itself as it is in itself, in the harmonious «*equiprimordiality*» between its explicit (ontical) *presence-at-hand* and its implicit recall. It also means to cast into light, to make it manifest. The «there» is recognised as the

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<sup>21</sup> Otto Pöggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking* (Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press International, 1989)

space of encounter the function of which is also its nature, that is a space-in-between that I suddenly consider fully and that I perceive as a phenomenon of its own. It then becomes possible to ask the question of the *what* and the *how*, that is to say what and how it is in its way of behaving as an expression of its own being. The new phenomenological phenomenon is now located within the existence itself, the existing «there» of the work of art.

## From Being There to There-Being

### *1. Thing and Ontology*

The object of this primary approach has been to see the work of art as an empirical presence and to perceive its own space of donation disclosing itself within its disclosed «there». In other words, we have relocated the work of art within one of its modes of donation, that is to say that which makes it visible to the eye, the *thingly* «there».

This effort of relocation of the work-being within its thing-being appears, at first sight, as a dislocation of the work of art which, to a certain extent, is no longer perceived as a work of art. If the work of art is indeed a thing, it is yet not called so and its distinctive feature certainly does not lie in its *thingness*. It is always a thing and yet it is always more than a thing. The traditional art critics will undoubtedly stress the *more* and leave aside the thingly element which is taken for granted and therefore void of interest. They will linger on the aesthetic value of a particular work of art and probably ponder on the particular details of this particular work of art. As far as our reflection is concerned, it is the unity of its being that we are

looking for. If the work of art is always more than a thing, it is yet not less than a thing. What is «*at work*» is at least a thing. For the work of art to be such, it has to be a thing as well. We are facing here an undeniable fact, the work of art, in its «*thingly substructure*»<sup>22</sup>, is «*present-at-hand*» or «*can with some right and within certain limits be taken as merely present-at-hand*» (SZ 56). Through these remarks, different ontological manifestations become perceptible. The very perception of these different manifestations enable us at least not to fall into the prejudice of the *Selbstverstaendnis*, of that which goes without saying because it is so obvious:

*«The status of the ontological analytic shows, however, that we have been far from interpreting these obvious matters with an adequate grasp, still less with regard for the meaning of their Being; and we are even farther from possessing a stable coinage for the appropriate structural concepts»* (SZ 55).

The work of art therefore has to be considered and perceived as a «*factual Being-present-at-hand*» (SZ 56) which means here «*happening*», taking place, occurring. It takes place as any other thing does because it is a thing in the first place. This statement bears important consequences in terms of fundamental ontology. Our phenomenological gaze reduced the phenomenon of the work of art to the phenomenon of the thing. We have gone through a step of devitalisation, of de-animation of the work of art which now appears in its thingly substructure. In other words, we are considering the work of art

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p.164.

in that which it has in common with all that stands in the span of the *es gibt*, of the *there is*, that is to say the thing:

*«The stone in the road is a thing, as is the clod in the field. A jug is a thing, as is the well beside the road. But what about the milk in the jug and the water in the well? These too are things if the cloud in the sky and the thistle in the field, the leaf in the autumn breeze and the hawk over the wood, are rightly called by the name of thing»<sup>23</sup>.*

The thing is that which gathers within its name the whole of that which is, the whole of the things. A human being is undoubtedly more than a thing but yet answers the criteria of a thing and can consider him or herself as such. It is because it has the reflexive capacity to see itself as a thing that it can always be more than that. Everything is a thing and to miss the work of art's thingness also means to miss the ontological reality of the thing as such.

Our task is to set into question the origin of the work of art and therefore to perceive it as the phenomenon which is cast into light in the «there» of my question. The *equiprimordial* relationship between the artist and the artwork showed us that the origin only gives itself in its «*concealment*». This is what constitutes the difficulty of our enterprise and the necessity of phenomenology which alone is able to highlight the *around* and the *within* of the «there» in which it can only give itself. For that matter, the access to our

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.146.

ultimate and originary element found a starting point in the concept of essence. The question, as we have seen it, now becomes: what *is* the essence of the work of art?

## ***2. The Ontological Value of the Thing***

*What* immediately loses its function of whatness. It no longer refers to that which stands as an expression of the essence but it refers to the *quiddity* of the essence; my question immediately takes the following form: what is the *is* of the essence of the work of art? Everything that *is* is by definition a thing that is. A fundamental ontology will then have to be developed in regard to the *quiddity* of all things. But what is it that *is* of all things including the *is* of the work of art? Undoubtedly, it is and has to be the *is-ness* of the work of art. We have questioned the *is-ness* of the work of art by making manifest the different modes of donation related to its different modes of being. So far, it is the *thing-being* which has «solicited» our gaze. Its importance is fundamental inasmuch as it constitutes the *thingly substructure* by which a work of art can be a work of art and be *present-at-hand* in the field of *es gibt*. It *is* in the same mode as anything else. The prospect of a fundamental ontology cannot ignore the thingly aspect of a work of art even though it seems to be always more than a thing. Again, not to direct our question towards the thing in the work would automatically close the gates of fundamental ontology and would, at best, lead us towards a semi-conscious regional ontology.

Without revealing what the *thingness* is in its essence, we have still paved the way towards its full recognition by taking it into consideration as a mode of expression of Being and as one possible mode of donation of the work of art still perceived in its unity. The unity is here a phenomenon of a general order described as the phenomenon of the work of art in which the phenomenon of the thing inhabits. Indeed, it inhabits the frame of the work of art, the trait, each spot of colour, it is in the «*there*» of all that makes it hold in its empirical reality. The thingness of the work of art, we find it in the *holding*. The thingly element holds in the *holding*; it is no longer the this or that put together as in a «*matter-form structure*», it is the *putting-together* itself for the purpose of a determined «*usefulness*» presenting the object, this time, in its *matter-form structure*:

*«the interfusion of form and matter prevailing here is moreover, controlled beforehand by the purposes served by jug, axe, shoes». Therefore, «Usefulness is the basic feature from which this being regards us, that is, flashes at us and thereby is present and thus is this being»<sup>24</sup>.*

The unity of the work of art, that is its artistic value, its matter-form structure and its thingly substance, holds in the holding of the entity, in its thingness.

The «*there*» of the work of art is therefore present in the «*there*» of the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 154

thing which gives the work of art the ontical possibility of setting something called art into work. In that respect, the work of art can be *present-at-hand* (*Vorhandenheit*). In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger uses the term *Vorhandenheit* in order to differentiate between ontological existence and the mere *taking place*. In traditional ontology, to exist meant to take place and could therefore not be applied to the entities responding to the question *who?*. A *who* never takes place, it is always somewhere else than where it stands before somebody else's eyes. As a *who*, I can never be constrained to the «there» of my location. I always dislocate the «there» of my ontical presence in order to relocate it within the «there» of my pre-occupations. In other words, I take place in my pre-occupations which, in turn, project me within a «there» which I now occupy and which stands as a «there» because I occupy it. In traditional ontology, «*existentia is tantamount to Being-present-at-hand, a kind of Being which is essentially inappropriate to entities of Dasein's character*» (SZ 42). As we have seen it before, *existence* for Heidegger stands as the way an entity always comports itself towards its being. It implies a sense of belonging to being, a necessary urge of «*to be*» (*Zu-sein*) because «*Being is that which is an issue for every such entity*» (SZ 42). Existence becomes synonymous with setting oneself into question, that is to say to ask oneself the question of one's own being; existing is essentially the reflexive capacity of being turned towards one's own being, the enlightening conscience asking: who am I? To exist means to be pre-occupied by one's *presence-at-hand* perceived as an expression of Being. In that respect, the question *who am I* exists, my existence exists, an existential



analytic towards ontology exists, phenomenology exists and, as we shall see it, the work of art exists.

### ***3. The «There» of Existence***

Existence is not something about which one can say that it *takes place in* but, rather, that through the act of *taking place in*, it stands as an expression of itself. Existence *ex-ists*, which means that it “is” as a projection made possible by its consciousness. I always am within the projection (the “ex-pression”) of my thinking and, when, as Dasein, I am contemplating my thinking being (towards which my intention is turned), I im-press what it ex-presses. Ex-istence is always a capacity not to let a phenomenon go in the disorganised jungle of the world of the things and to relate it to an organising consciousness enabling the thing-world. Existence, because it is always and already outside (in the «what» of my environment), is the *what* and the *how* an *outside* is never on the other side (that which I cannot see since, as a being that is, I can never leave the realm of Being) but always the inside of my thinking scope:

*«Beings can be as beings only if they stand within and stand out within what is cleared in this clearing. Only this clearing grants and*

*guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are»<sup>25</sup>.*

In the light of these considerations, it appears quite clearly that a study about the work of art comes back to a study about the «there» in which it has to be located. We have seen that a work of art can be and has to be re-located within the there of its thingness. That means to read the work of art as a *thing-being*. Yet, when we contemplate a work of art, we hardly think in terms of thingness. The work of art in its unity proposes, offers, a represented universe that I enjoy as such. Indeed, the *Shoes* by Van Gogh immediately projects us within a world given by the work of art itself: «*To work-being there belongs the setting up of a world*»<sup>26</sup>. The painting is present to us in its total absence of belonging; nothing in it can replace it in its right context. The shoes it represents are there in the *nudity* of the «there». It no longer is the context which justifies their presence, but it is the shoes themselves which allow any context to *take place*. The shoes give themselves from themselves as they are in themselves. They are their own presence, the auto-justification of their being-there: «*A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet.*»<sup>27</sup> The whole of Heidegger's philosophy stands in the yet. We have here a setting-into-question of the *yet*. Nothing in the painting tells us how to read it and *yet* we cannot help seeing it and reading it: to read it in a way that can and has to be ours. Art reads in the first person singular but reads in the infinite ways of the infinite projective

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 159

consciousness. In the *yet*, the work of art expects. It expects us to read it. The strength of Heidegger's essay lies in the expectation of a reading, of an understanding of the work of art, and not in the form of the reading. The same painting in a technologically advanced society would probably evoke the memory of the good old days ; in a big city it would certainly revive the colours and scents of our childhood. Art is not what we see in it, but it is the fact that we always see something in it. It is part of the work of art as a phenomenon to give itself in the range of its belonging possibilities. This is what the work of art expects us to do, that is to replace it into a coherent and systematic articulation.

Yet, the truth of our articulated system does not alter the truth of the shoes alone. Truth does not stand in the accuracy of our interpretation. It is not here synonymous with concordance between two predicates based on a judgement. It is essentially ante-predicative. The shoes give themselves from themselves as they are in themselves, in the *nudity* of their «there», in the ontical absence of «*references and signs*» (SZ §17). Truth here means the *casting into light* the shoes themselves which, deprived of any point of reference, suddenly appear in the totality of the contexts to which they *could* have belonged. I do not mean here that truth lies in the whole of the contexts, but that inside the ontical possibility of such or such context, the absolute necessity of at least one (any context, its ontical form does not matter) is present. One context, any context, opens in its having to be (*Zu-sein*). The artistic dislocation of a thing from its context, makes manifest, by our relocating reading, the necessity of a location, that is the location of a

thing within a larger frame. If the truth of our interpretation is based on the coherence of our judgement, that is to say the non resistance of A put together with B, the shared and public knowledge that this is exact, truth in its artistic essence stands beyond our judgement and lies in the unveiling of the shoes seen as a thing in itself in its behaviour to the world of the things. With Heidegger, and certainly with Husserl before him, truth is reconciled with the Greek etymology of *Aletheia*. It means here absence of concealment, even though, for that matter, the phenomenon has to be read as *concealment*.

But how does a thing come to open itself in its mode of being? How does the work of art bring forth the opening of that thing which it represents? For that matter, the stress is not put on the empirical and ontical manifestation of the interpretation itself but on the pre-interpretative mode, on the pre-hermeneutic value of our phenomenological gaze. Indeed, it is the act of seeing which unveils the thing as it is in itself and if for us to see instinctively means to understand, as in an interpretative reading, we will then read the reading as an action highlighting the behaviour of a phenomenon in the «there» that it occupies. To interpret, we are compelled to do it; it is part of our perception of any phenomenon; interpretation no longer refers to a settled science, rather, it refers to our mode of being, that which we cannot help but do lest we should stop being.

We have then seen the thing and its thing-there. It presented itself as a pair of shoes that we have read as such, in the «*naked [there] in the nothing*

*of the world*»(SZ 187, 343, 276)<sup>28</sup>. The thingness of the thing is still obscure in our reflection. It remains to be defined. Yet, we can already say that the shoes are set into work in the work of art. Taken as a thing deprived of its belonging to a particular environment, the thing-there is limited to the periphery and the inside of its ontical reality. Its «there» stands in the limits of its *presence-at-hand*. And yet, the work of art always drags us beyond the image present before our eyes. From the thing-*there* of the shoes that we have reached by interrogating the artwork in its unity, we shift to the «there» of the re-presented thing. From the work of art as a statue, we shift to the work of art as a mirror. That does not mean that it is one or another, or one then another. It is both at the same time. In the case of our painting, the thing always is a statue, an element within its world, as much as it is always a mirror of the world which it itself evokes. It is an element within a world which is its own world. For that matter, the work of art brought us inside the evocative darkness of the shoes, within the enlightening disclosedness of its set-into-work «thereness».

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<sup>28</sup> Otto Poeggeler, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*, (Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press International, 1989) p.169

#### 4. *The Work of Art as Statue and Mirror*

The work of art originates in a world. It is the image of a historical state in which it is thrown and which always surrounds and overwhelms it. It is mediated by a cultural horizon, a canon, and only through this mediation the work of art can express itself in its singularity. We have briefly introduced the work of art as an equipment, as an equipmental quality whose value lies in its *usefulness*. «*But what about this usefulness itself?*»<sup>29</sup> As it is said in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the usefulness appears when

*«the peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them.»*<sup>30</sup>

To understand the concept of usefulness therefore means to have the unifying capacity to organise the ontical diversity into a meaningful whole. The shoes' usefulness, as the word shows it, aims at being useful by serving a larger purpose. It is not a matter of wearing the shoes for the sake of it. The shoes serve for the harvesting of the field, the hope for a generous crop. The shoes, as soon as they perform their useful task, immediately sink into oblivion. Their reality suddenly disintegrates and within the empty equipmental usefulness of the thing, the *«uncomplaining worry as to the*

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.159

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.159

*certainty of bread*» pervades. The usefulness of a thing refers to the presence of something else. Something is useful only with regard to something else and it is so inasmuch as «*it has the character of the in-order-to*» (SZ 78). The object, in its totality, needs be taken as a reference to something else. It becomes a sign pointing at another one and, together, they make manifest the presence of another invisible phenomenon, that is the constitution of the enterprise. The work of art, perceived as an equipmental value, loses its artistic plenitude which is now conceived *in order to* serve a purpose which does not belong to it; for that matter, it could refer to its trading value, the economic status which it occupies in a museum. Such a consideration of the represented object does not allow us to perceive it as it is in itself; the shoes disseminate in the mode of belonging to a specific world, they scatter in the infinite possibilities of the *in order to* which takes the thing apart from itself. The work of art taken as a work of art implies the de-connection to the *in-order-to*. The edifice of usefulness must entirely collapse for the thing in itself to come back within the there of its authentic (*eigentlich*) image. By authentic we have to understand a sense of belonging to oneself. With the *in-order-to*, the phenomenon in question is no longer the individual image of a thing, but the thing + connection + thing... . We therefore find ourselves in the presence of an invisible phenomenon, a set, whose members are all representing and represented by the set. In such a set, the element is granted a meaning whose truth is based on its accordance and non-resistance to the final purpose. The value of the set rests on the validity of the connections and not on the individual presence of the elements. In other words, the elements lose their thingly character for the profit of an invisible and

articulated phenomenon. The thing suddenly does not belong to itself, it no longer is a phenomenal whole but is part of the act of putting together fragments. We witness here a betrayal of the quiddity of the thing which is now perceived as « What is it »? and no longer « Who is it? ».

For that reason, the shoes are represented in the naked «there» of non-involvement. They are deprived of the environment in which they take the equipmental value of the *in-order-to*. The thing in question is relocated within the «there» of its auto-sufficiency and expresses itself from itself as it is in itself. Only because the edifice of usefulness collapses, the thing expresses itself as the being of the entity which it always is. In the act of withdrawing the phenomenon from its participation to a larger frame, by reducing it to that which it is when it is not *in order to*, the thing fully expresses itself as a presence recalled in its ontical "there". Yet, «*as a rule it is the use-objects (Gebrauchsdinge) around us that are the nearest and the proper things*»<sup>31</sup>. If so far our task has been to find the thing in the work and to cast it into light in its absence of usefulness, we still cannot ignore the equipmental being of the shoes. The shoes, taken in their thingly substructure, do not stop serving the purpose determining that which they are in their *matter-form structure*. It is because the need of protecting our feet arose that we were able to witness the birth of the thing in the shoes. The thingly value as well as the equipmental one turn out to be «*equiprimordial*», they express themselves in each other's light. The absence of equipmental consideration in the shoes as a thing therefore shows us the thing as it is in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp.154-155.



itself, that is to say in its satisfaction, its *«provenance»*, its *«boundless presumption»*, its *«semblance of evidence»*<sup>32</sup>, its *having-to-be* which also is, in this particular instance, a *having-to-be* a piece of equipment. Indeed, if the pair of shoes finds itself in *«non-involvement»*, in its thingly *having-to-be* without being *in-order-to*, what then prevails in the withdrawing within the thing is the frustration of the equipmental side of the phenomenon.

What we notice in Van Gogh's shoes seen as a thing, is that the essential desire of *having-to-be* an equipment is sacrificed in the work of art. In that sense, the work of art enables a setting into work of that which the thing is in its *having to be*, at once, the whole of its manifestations, the entirety of all the empirical and ontical forms that it can assume. It enables an act of disclosedness of the thing, a moment of revelation during which the thing expresses all that it can be, either as a withdrawn being "there" in the image of the shoes or as *«There Being»* in the thing which claims its belonging to its mode of being, that is to say the thing in its equipmental reserve. In its non-involvement, the *having-to-be in-order-to* is pressurised within the *«carnal sacrifice»* of the artistic constraint. It becomes an insisting presence. It affirms itself as an ex-isting recall. The work of art allows a *«wanting-to-have-a-conscience»* of that which usually projects the thing into oblivion; by that I mean that the equipment, as already mentioned, is forgotten within the larger purpose it serves as soon as it starts being in use. In the non-actualisation of the *in-order-to*, the *having-to-be in use* is highlighted. In the *wanting-to-have-a-conscience* of the *in-order-to*, the *in-order-to* suddenly turns towards itself, it becomes the "there" of its own preoccupation which is

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.157.

«*pre-occupied*» «*for-the-sake-of*» itself. The factual connection of and to, does not allow us visualise the act of setting-into-connection. In that respect, it is already forgotten for the benefit of the ontical elements of the connection. What matters here is the *cement* and the *joining-together* activity:

*«Not only do we lack the cement; even the schema in accordance with which this joining-together is to be accomplished, has been split asunder, or never as yet unveiled. What is decisive for ontology is to prevent the splitting of the phenomenon, in other words, to hold its positive phenomenal content secure» (SZ 132).*

In order to prevent the splitting of the phenomenon and to hold its positive phenomenal content secure, it has to be understood in the light of the regional system it belongs to (which, in turn, can and will have to be understood in the same way in the light of an even wider system which ultimately will encompass itself in the form of a comprehensive horizon). The periphery of the phenomenon cannot be limited to the ontical envelope of its empirical "there"; it has to be *held secure* within the field of signification in which the phenomenon takes its place as such or such piece of equipment.

Stepping back from our text *The Origin of the Work of Art*, it seems that Heidegger's conception of phenomenology starts at this very point. What is in question here is the passage from the ontical "there" of the work

of art to the "there" of the world which it presents and into which we can but feel drawn. The presence of this passage reveals the importance of a particular point found, in the first place, in Husserl's *Ideen*, that is the «*categorial intuition*». The categorial intuition stands as a synthetic act in which the possible multiplicity of a phenomenon is gathered within a unifying state of consciousness. It allows us to have a one and single conscious representation of the different aspects that the visible object can have. The empirical form is then reduced to its ante-predicative mode as a structural idea. This synthetisation of the ontical potentiality by the categorial intuition is expressed in the *Cartesian Meditations*<sup>33</sup> through the example of a cube;

*«Je prends par exemple, pour objet de description la perception d'un cube. Je vois alors, dans la réflexion pure, que ce cube individuel m'est donné d'une façon continue comme une unité objective, et cela dans une multiplicité variable et multiforme d'aspects (modes de présentation) liés par des rapports déterminés»*<sup>34</sup>.

The synthetic effort is here applied to an individual entity the perception and the perceptive understanding of which refer only to itself. The very same fact of synthetic structure can also be exercised on a phenomenon composed of various constitutive elements; indeed, if I decide to place this cube in the

<sup>33</sup> Husserl Edmund, *Méditations Cartésiennes. Introduction à la Phénoménologie*, Ed. Vrin, (Paris 1986)

<sup>34</sup> "If, for instance, I take as an object the perception of a cube. What I see on the plane of pure reflection is that this particular cube is offered in a continuous fashion as an objective entity, and that within a number of varying and multiform aspects (modes of presentation) it is bound together by a series of determined relationships" (translation mine).

hands of a child, my understanding of the phenomenon varies significantly. I can either refer to the constitutive elements only, or I can perceive it as a unified image bringing forth the concept of "*noemato-noétique*" unity. In the second instance I am in the presence of a new invisible object characterised by a categorial form. It is precisely this categorial intuition which allows me to replace the phenomenon within a meaningful context. Meaning does not stand in the individual phenomenon but in the act of putting together different facts which either accord to or resist the setting into connection. The phenomenological meaning points at the act of setting into connection itself; in that sense, phenomenology becomes hermeneutic. It is the organising consciousness enabling the understanding of a whole.

Let us refer to an example in order to grasp what is for Heidegger an ontological phenomenon and for Husserl a transcendental mode, that is to say the synthetic perception of categorial intuition. Let us take the phenomenon of the office in a village church; it is required and necessary for the priest to be either empirical or phenomenological. The priest, as in any village, is considered as the man of the village; should the need arise, he is the one people naturally consult outside the church, and, should the need arise, he is the one inviting people to confession. This implies a one to one relationship, a taking into account the individual who is part of a community. In this case, the priest has an empirical mode of relating to his parishioner which he cannot ignore during the office. Behind the altar he recognises familiar faces on which he can put names. On the other hand, the priest, according to the liturgical hierarchy, stands as the medium between two

worlds. In that respect, all the familiar faces merge into one and single community and the names fuse into the spirit of God. In this moment of sharing the priest needs to have a phenomenological gaze through which his categorial intuition reveals a new invisible object, a phenomenal reality, that is a community. And only in that very instant, his prayers welcome the descending grace which, in turn, sees and hears the will of each for the good of all. The phenomenological priest, in this moment of communication, sees the «to see», he hears the «to hear» and becomes messenger of God, the hermeneutic prophet, Hermes. The categorial perception is not limited to the perception of that new invisible phenomenon announcing itself through the constitutive elements present before my eyes; being an act of spontaneous reconstruction of that which is given by the sensible intuition, this reconstructed entity becomes reconstructing. Here stands the new distinction between the «*revealed*» and the «*revealing*». The conscious re-presentation of an empirically given phenomenon gives access to the idea of the phenomenon. Through the phenomenological vision of the community, the priest can suddenly grab the idea of a community, any community towards which he is turned any time his categorial intuition provides him with the idea of it. The phenomenological phenomenon of community revealed by the sensible intuition in turn reveals of a higher concept of community in which the sensible presence of the individual is not needed. Truly, ideas can be seen, although they do not stand in front of our eyes. Phenomenology, by piercing its way through the empirical obstacle reaches the world of the idea without leaving the subjective sphere and by the same process sets us into

contact with the idea of the world without questioning the existence of external reality.

In the light of the categorial intuition, we now discern how the field of experience is not limited to the empirical reality seen by our senses. Who wants to see is not entitled to see. It is the result of a difficult labour that Heidegger developed throughout *Sein und Zeit*. Although Husserl opened the sphere of a wider experience, he nonetheless miscarried the recognition of the «to see» and somehow left behind the question of «who» (the *quid*) is the being of intentionality itself. As for Heidegger, he initiated his investigations by presenting a more radically phenomenological interpretation of the noetic-noematic correlation in which phenomenology has to understand itself according to its own condition of possibility, that is to say its phenomenological and ontological presence as *Vorhandenheit*. As a consequence of the former analysis, we consciously manage to catch a glimpse of the question of ontology. The world, as an eidetic reality, is now present before my eyes and gives itself as any other phenomena. To replace our reflection in a philosophical context, I can say that we are now at the end of Husserl's philosophy and at the threshold of Heidegger's. We are at the point where an eidetic reality becomes perceptible to the phenomenological eye, not as a noumenal notion but as a phenomenological phenomenon. I hope the reader will allow me not to enter the details of Kantian philosophy forbidding the jump from phenomenal to noumenal realities in which a cognitive duality is preserved for the sake of sensible intuition.

Let us now come back to *the Origin of the Work of Art*. We now have a better idea of the importance of an educated phenomenological gaze. To be able to perceive intuition in its categorial mode means that we can now focus on the conditions of possibility for the passage from the "thing-there" to the "work-there" to happen. As we have said before, the *wanting to have a conscience* of the *in order to* for the *sake of itself* releases the shoes in their wanting to be shoes. The shoes become shoes in their *presence-at-hand*, in their *equipmentality*, that is in their *factual* meaningful context. As such, they reveal themselves as shoes. It is thus the revelation of the shoes as shoes expressing themselves as they are in themselves which is important here. In the work of art, the shoes are set into work so that they can let free their essential constitution «*from which and by which [they] are what [they] are and how [they] are*»<sup>35</sup>. The work of art puts us into the presence of the having-to-be shoes of the shoes; by reducing the factual shoes to their mere factual presence, we operate a devitalisation of the subjective implementations usually attributed to the shoes which accompany us in the variable and personal activities of our different lives. In the work of art, an authentic relocation of the being of the shoes is at stake so that they become an authentic expression of themselves and not an inauthentic expression of our tribulations. In the *nudity of the naked [there] in the nothing of the world*, they function as a mirror of the world which welcomes them into a context of signification :

*«From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the*

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.1

*shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind»<sup>36</sup>.*

Again, what matters here does not lie in the ontical particularity of our interpretation. The important point dwells in the faculty the shoes have to motivate our interpretative nature. I can interpret all that stands before my eyes any time I feel concerned by it. For that matter, I can purposely drag a normal pair of shoes out of its daily oblivion and, by the means of my natural interpretative mode, I can reach the same reading as with the shoes in the work of art. This statement will now enable us to approach and define that which is at work in the work of art. What we see in the shoes of the work of art, we can also see in any pair of shoes. We then need to have a particular gaze on the shoes and stop thinking ahead about the walk or the tennis game that they will enable. In other words, it means that we need to get rid of the everyday conception of the shoes we usually have in order to dislocate from the ontical oblivion in which they dwell and relocate them within the spotlight of my concern. It is not a daily occupation to perceive the shoes as such. It costs an effort inasmuch as the shoes suddenly stand outside my articulated and re-presented environment in which things are *present-at-hand* for the sake of my own convenience. They are suddenly deprived of their usefulness which I praise insofar as a useless pair of shoes is not worth a penny. I therefore tend to avoid thinking of an equipment in non-equipmental terms and, consequently, fail to consider it as a thing-in-itself. The work of art, on the other hand, deliberately relocates the shoes in

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.159.



their thingly presence. In that respect, they motivate, not to say urge, a thingly reading of the re-presented object. They spare us an effort which we do not naturally make, and even always forget to make. The fact that it belongs to the pair of shoes to evoke the world they originated in, undoubtedly shows that a work of art does not *«tell us a story»*. It is not about the telling a story about shoes, it is about the capacity to let the shoes tell us their own story. The shoes, and only the shoes, have the monopoly of their mode of being which they express in a sense of belonging to their own being. A work of art has thus no interest in reproducing reality. Its purpose is to let the phenomenon be itself and express itself as it is in itself from itself. What is at work in the work of art is definitely the thing and only the thing. The work of art deals with the deliberate act of placing us into contact with the thing itself. It is therefore an effort of seeing the thing itself and expressing it as it expresses itself. Because the work of art shows the thing as it is in itself, the thing, letting go all that it is and will ever be, motivates and solicits our interpretative gaze which surprises itself in its incapacity to refrain from its activity. Indeed, it no longer is our gaze which chooses to be interpretative, it is the shoes themselves which call for an interpretation by recalling that which they essentially are. Art does not create, it does not reproduce, it only unveils and discovers that which our gaze cannot see. Heidegger quotes Albrecht Dürer who says:

*«For in truth, art lies hidden within nature; he who can wrest it from her, has it»<sup>37</sup>.*

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.195.

Art means to drag the thing as it is out, to cast it into light and unbind it from its «*captivity*»<sup>38</sup> within other entities.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

## Recognition of the There

### *1. Dislocation and Relocation of the "There"*

The conclusion of the former chapter made manifest the different "there" related to the different modes of donation of the phenomenon. It gives itself as an expression of its being, through which it recalls its belonging to this constitutive being. To see and read a phenomenon means to be willing to understand it, to comprehend it as it is in itself. To know it means to be wanting to see it in its being. The mode of donation that has been privileged so far is undoubtedly the mode of donation of the thing in itself as it gives itself in "*the naked [that] in the nothing of the world*". We are dealing here with a premeditated isolation of the thing (the shoes) through which it expresses itself as it is in itself. In other words, the shoes suddenly withdraw within the essential totality of their *thing-being* in the light of which they always have to be (*Zusein*):

*"The more solitary the work, fixed in the figure, stands on its own and the more cleanly it seems to cut all ties to human beings, the more simply does the thrust come into the open that such a work is, and the*

*more essentially is the extraordinary thrust to the surface and what is long-familiar thrust down*"<sup>39</sup>.

Only then the shoes can show themselves as they are in themselves, that is as they are in their essential and unitary constitution of their structural complexity. The shoes reveal themselves in the congregating (it is indeed this unity which is at work in the work of art) "*massiveness and heaviness*" of their immediate tangibility which "*sets forth*"<sup>40</sup> that which they are in their totality, that is the shoes in their "*reliability*", in their usefulness. The shoes, as a thing, are that which we perceive in the *naked that in the nothing of the world* and the shoes as equipment, it that which we feel in the surprise of the presence of the thing (the shoes usually sink into oblivion for the benefit of the walk, they are forgotten in the comfort whose mode of being is the nudity of the sensation). The shoes surprise us because they are not where and how they usually are:

*"When she takes off her shoes late in the evening, in deep but healthy fatigue, and reaches out for them again in the still dim dawn, or passes them by on the day of rest, she knows all this without noticing or reflecting"*<sup>41</sup>.

They usually are in the realm of *usefulness*. There, they dwell in the systematic relationship of the *in-order-to* in which they are granted a

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

signification (this signification does not require the consideration of the thing-being since the shoes are set into signification by being a sign referring, for instance, to the activity of walking):

*“In our provisional interpretation of that structure of Being which belongs to the ready-to-hand (to equipment), the phenomenon of reference or assignment became visible” (SZ 77).*

Yet, as we have already seen it, the shoes, when recaptured within the essential expression of their being, express themselves in the totality of what they are or could be, that is they claim their having to be *ready-to-hand*. They silently shout the need for a signification which they can only find within the environment they were conceived in and in which they find a *“necessity and a nearness”*<sup>42</sup>. By so doing or, rather, by so behaving, they put us into the presence of the idea of environment which I automatically translate into the ontical environment of my own projective experience. Again, the shoes as thing claim their belonging to a specific environment which can only be the environment of the shoes. They would resist any attempt to place them in an environment which is not theirs. It does not mean that it is not possible, but such an attempt would *“insult”* them and they would all the more express their desire to be re-located in their proper significant system. For that matter, we could easily imagine a novice asking an art critic why Magritte’s rock floats in the air, and, undoubtedly, the answer to the question would stress the *“setting up”* of the thing surprising

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

us in its singularity, that is in its paradoxical marginality which we only understand because a margin is such with regard to its centre. Art purposely operates an act of dislocation of the thing which, because it is a thing and expresses itself as such as it is in itself, complains of misuse and abuse and claims for a relocation in the world of its use. As a thing being also a piece of equipment, it claims for its comfort in which it would fall back into the silence of the naked sensation, into the discretion of its well-being.

## ***2. The Disclosedness of the Entity***

That which is at work in the work of art is the *insistence* of the shoes in their thingly-there which is only possible by the means of taking apart the edifice of usefulness, by the means of depriving the thing of its equipmentality, the present-at-hand of its ready-to-hand character, and let it claim for its unity, its totality. The shoes, by withdrawing within the essential totality of their *having-to-be* (*Zu-sein*) open themselves as the comprehensive horizon of their *can-be* :

*“Towering up within itself, the work opens up a world and keeps it abidingly in force”<sup>43</sup>*

The notion of passage from the "there" of the shoes to the "there" of the set-at-work shoes now takes its full signification. The work of art drags

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

us into the subjective representation of its objective reality. Yet, this passage is not actualised by an effort of interpretative reconstruction. When I find myself contemplating the work of art that is there before my eyes, I never set myself to a task of clearing the way in the hope of extracting a meaningful element, of making some sense of something senseless. A proper approach to the work of art does not consist in dragging it down into the light of my interpretative revision by first prying into it and second by exposing what has been found. The work of art already exposes itself; by ex-posing itself, it gives itself to our eyes which can delimit its space of donation and observe without invading it. For that matter, the work of art needs to be inviting, to be welcoming, not only by letting me inhabit its world, but by setting me forth in the setting into work itself. I can still freely decide to turn my back to it and walk the other way, but when I set my eyes on it, the work of art drags me inside, motivates my interest and conjures my interrogative gaze. If I find myself invading its space of donation it is exclusively because the work of art gives itself on the mode of surrender; it entirely submits and is fully itself in the act of submission. Indeed, the work of art is only a work of art when it is looked at. What we could think is nothing but an invasion is in fact a respectful response to the phenomenon which invites us to take over it, to work on it. By taking over, I mean to participate actively in the *having-to-be* a work of the work of art. I usurp or, to be more accurate, the work of art makes me usurp the title of artist inasmuch as I set myself into the work by having the thing at work opening itself within the field of signification which I can and have to provide if I look at it. In other words, I find myself in the obligation of setting myself into the work. The work of art confines

itself within itself, it sequesters itself in a mode of sequestration belonging to itself and in which it allows me to find the key to the opening of its being. It now appears quite clearly that what is at work in the work of art is, on the one hand, the setting into work of the thing itself as it is in itself and, on the other hand, the setting into work of my own setting into work.

As already mentioned, we can always relate to any phenomenon in such a way. Truly, this is what we keep doing in the most trivial activities of our everyday lives. As much as we intend to cut away from our daily routine, we also treasure and cherish it. We shelter in the safety and the security it offers by unconsciously preventing the happening of the surprise and, therefore, by relocating all that stands in its singularity within the realm of the *ready-to-hand* regularity. In other words, we dilute the presence of things within the presence of an organised whole, a represented and articulated system which is always within my reach because I can always keep an eye on it since its mode of being is to be there before my eyes for my hand (*Zuhandenheit*). Yet, my point of reference, that is to say the *what* and the *where* and the *how* I see the world around me, always dwells in the comforting presence of the ready to hand. Because it is *ready*, I do not have either to prepare or to look for. Indeed, the thing is already there before my eyes as a piece of equipment. The only thing I need to think of is the *in-order-to*, the particular usage for the purpose of that other thing which I have in mind. But even that other thing that I have in mind could also be forgotten for the profit of its usage. The worker working on the making of a knife will never think about it in terms of a thing but will already have before the



confection and always have during the confection a conceptual idea of the *matter-form complex* of the thing. In that respect, either the piece of equipment is there before my eyes and I never have a conscience of its presence but always am *ahead* of it in the projective visualisation of the *in-order-to*; or, still by the means of the *in-order-to*, I relocate the singular object within an organised and spatialised environment, in which case my attention is entirely absorbed in the aim of my action and forget the nature of my intention; I therefore cannot have a consciousness of my activity of relocation since the object is automatically put away so that it no longer requests our attention.

In a puzzle, only the piece that does not fit starts being considered as a piece of its own. We study its contour, its particular colour, first in the expectation of its non-resistance towards my organising skills, second with the recognition of its interesting and challenging nature, third with the hammer determined to square the consistency of its arrogance. Dasein is not keen on surprise and resistance. In the instance of the work of art, our organising systematisation is constantly at work insofar as the represented thing is constantly withdrawn within itself. It is submitted in its non-submission. Again, by withdrawing within the essential totality of its having to be the thing that it is, the thing opens as the comprehensive horizon of its can-be. Only because of this inner tension - because of this dialogical commutation between the immediate tangibility of the thing and the world that it represents - the work of art sets into work the *wanting-to-have-a-conscience* first of the thing as it is in itself, second of the world of

signification to which it belongs. The work of art fully becomes a work of art when it is subjected to the act of relocation, and yet, it is such only because the thing that is at work never lets itself to be totally absorbed by it. It always opposes its presence as a "*mere*" thing, it resists this particular attempt of relocation because it could always have been another one and therefore makes manifest the attempt itself in the contingency of its ontical emptiness.

### ***3. The Entity as the Echo of a World***

Because the thing originates in a world, it always claims its factual belonging to this world. Within it, the thing takes its signification and becomes a thing with an apparent meaning. We are speaking here of the world of the things that are around us in their *ready-to-hand* proximity. If a thing is also a piece of equipment (ready-to-hand), it will only be able to express itself within an equipmental world. As we have seen it, if our phenomenological gaze pierces through a phenomenon and manages to grasp the underlying reality of the thing as it is in itself, the reality of its *usefulness* collapses. It volatilizes in the passage from the ontical "there" of the *can be* to the ontological "there" of the *having to be* (which also comprehends the having to be a useful piece of equipment). Grasping the thing as it is in itself therefore puts us into the presence of the fundamental terrain on/in which the thing expresses itself in the totality of its being. By

delimiting the "there" of donation of the thing without invading it, the thing becomes the guide of our investigation about it. In order to inspect the intimacy of the thing, we first have to respect its privacy. It then guides us along the fundamental truth of its being in which its origin and its essence mingle. It becomes the ontical manifestation of the world in which it originated and in which it is condemned to be. Van Gogh's shoes, from being a piece of equipment, are condemned to express their equipmentality within an equipmental world, whether it is the world of the peasant woman or the world of Van Gogh himself. In order to understand the contingency of such or such world, we have to bear in mind that we are not dealing with such or such pair of shoes but with the shoes as a thing which, as an expression of being, casts into light and movement the being of the world whose ontical reality allows their own ontical reality.

If in our everyday lives the echo of the world can be felt through the questioned singularity of a phenomenon, it is not less true that this requires an effort in the thinking of the thing-being:

*"Still another way in which truth becomes is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness"*<sup>44</sup>.

As far as the work of art is concerned, we can say that it motivates the *thinking of Being*; by thinking the thing in its having to be a Being that is, it

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

is a setting-into-question of Being and it invites us to come and think the thing-being with it. It motivates, it invites, it guides, all these steps are present within the work of art. Its mode of being is to motivate the thinking of being. Following the guide, we encounter the thing in the space of donation of its "there" referring to and indicating the "thereness" of the world in which it originated. The work of art *worlds* the world (*es weltet*). The represented thing takes place in the world, it is a thing of the world, and yet, by motivating the evocation of a world, it is also the organising and motivating conscience of the world and it is always the world in which it itself takes place. It is a response to the world in which and by which it happens to be, as well as it is a setting into question of that very world.

As true as this statement can be, we still have not shown how the work of art *worlds* the world no longer seen as the ontical manifestation of such or such equipmental environment but as the essence of all worlds, that is the worldhood of the world. Even though it is within reach for any of us to concentrate on the thingly character of the thing claiming its having to be a piece of equipment and therefore relocate it in the systematic complexity of the ready-to-hand, yet this exercise in the thinking of the thing in itself only allows us to have a conscience of its *in-order-to* by casting into light the *for-the-sake* of the *in-order-to* as well as the equipmental world to which it is applied. Nonetheless, the *wanting-to-have-a-conscience* of that which the thing is in its totality is not yet reachable since it has only led us to the threshold of the worldhood of the world without letting forth its essential quality. The task is now to cast the thing in itself into its own light so that

its having to be the thing that it is not only enlightens the *can-be* of its equipmental form, but can direct its field of action on itself. In other words, the *having-to-be* the thing has to question the *having-to-be* itself, the purpose of which dwells in the making manifest of the quiddity, the who, the essence of the thing as it is at work in the work of art. How does the thing in the work of art ask the question of itself and, consequently, how does the work of art ask the question of itself? These two “*equiprimordial*” investigations will now have to be the guide of our reflexion insofar as they stand as the essential points of my encounter with the work of art. In such a space of encounter, the work of art truly becomes a fundamental experience in which, as we shall see it later, Being opens itself in the scope of its own existential question and in which, consequently, I discover my *I am* as a Being that is.

#### ***4. The Question of the World***

As we have just announced it in the former paragraph, the purpose of the work of art is to set into work the thing as it is in itself when it stands in the light of its own being. It is then no longer concealed by the contingency of its factual and ontical *can-be*. For the thing, to be itself means to find oneself in the *naked that in the nothing of the world*. Only then the thing can be present as *un-concealment*. Unconcealment corresponds to the Greek term *ἀληθεια* which we commonly translate as “truth”. I am not speaking here of truth as the non-resistance of A put together with B as in the mode of our

subjective judgement, but as a *structural moment* during which the phenomenon opens within the light of its being. The thing in its truth opens and expresses itself within the light of its being. The work of art is therefore synonymous to the setting into work of an entity in its truth. The work of art is also the setting into work of the entity on the mode of the « *make see* ». To see has to be understood in its largest meaning; the one designating the whole of our sensible perceptions, the one saying:

*“See how that sounds, see how that is scented, see how that tastes, see how hard that is” (SZ 171).*

The work of art is fully itself only when it is looked at, when it is contemplated, not only because it visually expresses itself, but also, as we have seen it, because it sets me into work in its having to be a work. Because it is always a setting into work, the work of art does not limit itself to setting truth into work for its own good, rather, it is in charge of making us see the act of setting truth into work. In that respect, it is an act of casting into light, of making manifest the truth expressed in the represented entity, that is to say a making manifest of the thing at work in the work. Truth being the way a thing can show itself from itself as it is in itself, the work of art is therefore an act of casting into light that which casts itself into light, that is the thing in itself, that is truth. The work of art is thus phenomenological in the sense that we defined in the course of our first part: it is a « making see » of that which shows itself, it is a « making see » of what makes itself see.

We have reached the concept of truth by describing that which was already there before our eyes. We stand in the arena of existentialist phenomenology. Had we begun our reflection with the elaborate concept of truth itself, and had we applied it to the work of art, we would have adopted a demonstrative approach in which truth is not something that can be revealed because it is self-revealing, but something that is built up as in an aesthetic approach. We grasped the concept of truth by describing the thing as it shows itself in its *having to be* a thing in a world. The work of art, because it always is a setting into work, makes us see the thing as it lets itself see, that is as a thing in a world. It is a setting into question of being a thing in a world.

Taking the risk of a heavy formulation, I would say that it is a setting into question of the thing and its *having to be*, a setting into question of its conditions of possibility of *being able* to be in a world, a setting into question of my ability to replace it in an ontical world, of my being related to the world, of my *Being-in-the-world*. As we have said before, the work of art, being the revelation of the thing in itself, shifts from the "there" of the statue to the "there" of the mirror. Asking the question of the world does not mean to add an interrogation mark at the end of a sentence speaking of the world; the question, or the setting into question, *sets forth* the world, it makes it come in the interrogative light of my question which is directed towards its essence, its Being, its expression in truth so that it can reveal it

as it shows itself from itself as it is in itself. The question of the world has to reduce its focus on that which the world is truly.

Only for all these reasons we can allow ourselves to speak of the *worldhood* of the world, of the essence of the world, that which gathers all the things of the world into the whole of the thing-world. The thing that is at work now enables us to see the world which sets itself into question because it is set into work in its *equiprimordial* truth (therefore the world shows itself from itself as it is in itself) with the thing. The world opens as the "there" welcoming the work perceived as a factual element which is yet always more than factual since it itself opens in the staging and enlightening "there" of the thing (that is the work taken as a mere material object). To sum up, the world, the work as an artistic production and the work as a material object are all three *equiprimordial*. The realisation and interrogation of the world as "there" results from the work of art setting itself into work within the thing that it represents; it opens a world in which it has to be as a work of art, that is it sets itself into work within the world that it contains; the work of art sets up that by which it is itself set up, that is to say the world as the conditions of possibility for any factual entity to be. Setting up and being set up is a "*strife*"<sup>45</sup> in itself that is witnessed in the essential tension between the eternal withdrawing within the impenetrable consistency of the thing and the boundless magnitude of the world. The thing is earthed in the holding of its *isness* by which the world is maintained in its structural amplitude. This *strife* is actualised by the work of art sitting in the world

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 174.



that issued it and yet carrying it within its frame as a claim to its original place and date of birth. It is thereby *worlded* and my gaze both participates in and observes this *worlding* process by taking the work out of oblivion (let's not forget that a work of art is designed to be looked at and not ignored) and therefore giving it a chance to let its world sprout up. When realising that the ontical is related to the ontological, like an antique dating its own time, we then perceive the inextricable tension between the world seen in the thing and the matter being identified, listed and classified within a wider structure. The work of art reveals that in which the *there is* reveals itself, that is to say the world that is mine and in which I am. The work of art makes me see the revealing being that I was as the conscience of a given world and, consequently, reveals me as revealing. In the work of art, I am revealing and revealed, I am factive and factual, I see the being in the thing, and I see the to see of Being set into light.

In the work of art, the whole of the world is set up as much as it sets itself up. *Es gibt* is made manifest as an essential foreground which is also the background of the work of art. The work of art bets on truth and on truth only. It makes see (sets into work) that which makes itself see. Art no longer is about the aesthetic value of the representation, or about the genius of the trait, it is a bet on truth on which it relies because only truth can set itself into work. If a thing does not express itself in the light of its truth, that is in the light of its being, the work of art dies. The work of art bets, it cannot rely either on its status as work of art, or on its aesthetic reality (in the traditional meaning of the term) to be preserved as a work of art. The artistic

essence of the work of art does not hold in the work of art which does not create in the sense that it builds up. It creates in the sense that it reveals that which lets itself revealed, that is that which stands in the light of being, that is the whole of the world, its *worldhood*.

### ***5. To See the Question of the World***

We have shown how the setting into work of the thing allows the setting into question of the world. The "there" of the world has been *set forth* in the "there" of my question. The whole of the world, its *worldhood*, has revealed itself in the light of its Being, it has essentially merged into the interrogation mark of my question. In the "there" of my question, the world has not yet lost its essence in the now and here of its ontical reality. It has shown itself in the truth of its disclosedness, in its Being in which the "*particular beings*"<sup>46</sup>, that is the things in their singular plurality including us and the work of art, stand.

The thing, as an entity, dwells in the world, it is *present-at-hand*.  
Thus,

*"to give a phenomenological description of the world will mean to exhibit the Being of those entities which are present-at-hand within the world..."* (SZ 63).

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

We have ourselves reached the concept of world and its ontological nature by interrogating the factual presence of the thing. In the first part, we have cast into light the factual world of the ontical reality of a phenomenon:

*“World is used as an ontical concept, and signifies the totality of those entities which can be present-at-hand within the world” (SZ 65).*

We approached this particular mode of donation of the world as a phenomenon by making manifest the ontical reality of the thing expressed in its *thingly* character and its equipmentality. Through this second notion (*readiness to hand*), we have reached a second manifestation of the world, that is to say the world as the regional ontology of signification: the *ready-to-hand environment*:

*“World functions as an ontological term, and signifies the Being of those entities which we have just mentioned. And indeed world can become a term for any realm which encompasses a multiplicity of entities; for instance, when one talks of the world of a mathematician, world signifies the realm of possible objects of mathematics” (SZ 65).*

This world has been cast into light by the setting into work of the thing in itself claiming its having to be within the arena of its signification. The thing, in its arrogant singularity, stimulated our gaze which automatically set itself into work for the sake of the well-being of the thing: we provided a world for the thing to be at home. I found myself as the revealing agent itself

revealed in the setting into work to which I participated. The work of art, functioning in the mode of the make see, made me see my own world as a revealing factor actualising the setting into work of truth. Truth *happened* in the light of my intervention that I happened, to my surprise, to provide. In that respect, I let truth happen. Yet, the nature of truth as un-concealment is, as the word shows it, not to conceal itself and therefore to show itself according to its mode of donation. The conditions of possibility for truth to show itself as that which shows itself from itself as it is in itself therefore lies in the conditions of possibility for the regarding/looking/watching object to witness the happening of truth as a spontaneous setting into work. For that matter, the revealing object, that is the subject enabling the make see to be seen, has to stand in the scope of its own act of seeing. In other words, its facticity has to perceive itself in its factuality. Not only do we realise at first glance that the *subject* and *object* terminology has no relevance as far as the elucidation of truth and its setting into work and question are concerned, but we also grasp the idea that the work of art puts us into the presence of the conditions of possibility for anything to happen, including the essential "there" of the world. The work of art highlights the essential source of Being by casting into light the conditions of possibility of the setting into work of the world that I provide. Using a Heideggerian language, the work of art proposes a restoration of *the hermeneutics of facticity*.

## 6. *The Restoration of the Hermeneutics of Facticity*

The Hermeneutics of facticity does not have any signification if not in its name. It is an empty support rising in each of its utterances. To say its name is in itself an explicit path towards its implicit recall.

Because the world is always and already presupposed within the whole of our considerations, the understanding of this world can only be a recognition. Our method is, for that purpose, descriptive. It does not have the presumption of re-inventing the world. Its merit is at least first to grow aware of this fact and second to explain why it has to be so. It is a recognition, a *reconnaissance*, that is, a re-birth. The French word is here particularly noteworthy; its current understanding leaves aside its etymological composition expressing the idea of *being born with again*.

Its ambiguous grammatical position in a sentence does not unveil the doubt as far as the *what* and the *who*. The Hermeneutics of facticity as a recognition has to be perceived in the light of the French understanding of the term. In that sense, our question takes all its importance since it appears as the crystallisation of the ontological research already opened in the former paragraphs. Indeed, truth stands as that which shows itself from itself and yet, its ontological importance escapes our thinking because Western philosophy never managed to perceive it first in its *being there* and second in its consistency. A hermeneutic reading of the setting into work of art therefore presents a twofold interest: the presentation of truth, its

"*establishment*" (as we have already shown it) and its re-presentation in its "*sustained*"<sup>47</sup> disclosedness.

In *Sein und Zeit*, Facticity consists in the faculty for an entity to let another entity *happen*. It is the setting into fact of a phenomenon. This is only possible under the condition of an organising consciousness dividing the world into categories of signification in which the thing is granted a meaning. If a thing *is* in its having to be a piece of equipment, it then can only be as such in the categorial "there" that my spatializing consciousness organised for it. Things *happen* within the revealing "there" of my preoccupation. In that sense, the world is understood as the comprehensive horizon of my own concern. I am the consciousness of the world in which I always stand. A hermeneutics of this facticity therefore proposes a reading of the fact that I always am the "there" of my preoccupations in which the targeted thing is brought forth. It then deals with an elaboration of the conditions of possibility for the thereness of the "there" to be at all:

*"World can be understood in another ontical sense - not, however, as those entities which Dasein essentially is not and which can be encountered within-the-world, but rather as that "wherein" a factual Dasein as such can be said to live. World has here a pre-ontological existentiell signification. Here again there are different possibilities: world may stand for the public we-world, or one's own closest (domestic) environment" (SZ 65).*

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

In *Sein und Zeit*, the hermeneutics of facticity then comes back to a reading of Dasein's having to be Dasein. Dasein bears a central position in the light of which all the particular beings that are converge in a sense of Being. For that matter, the concept of fundamental ontology has to go through the various stages of *existential analytics*. *Sein und Zeit* is a phenomenological journey from existential analytics to fundamental ontology: "*Dasein is in the truth*"(SZ 221). *The Origin of the Work of Art*'s originality lies in the change of directionality that it operates; Dasein, that is to say ourselves, no longer bears this central position since it no longer has the monopoly of truth. Truth has to be revealed in the entirety of that which is, in the whole of *es gibt* which is no longer seen through Dasein's articulating consciousness. In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, truth escapes Dasein even though it still needs its eyes in order to disclose itself within its unconcealment:

*"With all our correct representations we would get nowhere, we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealment of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that cleared realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws"*<sup>48</sup>.

The work of art then looks after the exposition of the unconcealment of beings. It is a *make see* that reveals that which already makes itself see in its *unconcealment*. It is a revelatory space in which things in their truth come to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

show themselves to us, not for them to be granted a signification but for us to *conform* to them. We conform ourselves to the realm of factuality by witnessing in the work of art the *happening* of our "there" in truth and its mode of donation in truth. Truth stands both in its disclosedness and in the revelation of its disclosedness:

*"The actuality of the work has been defined by that which is at work in the work, by the happening of truth"<sup>49</sup>.*

As a consequence, the work of art only has a "*work-being*"<sup>50</sup> in the recognition of the *strife* (the withdrawal of the thing within itself and the world in its magnitude) as such. Only the making manifest of their *equiprimordiality* enables the actualisation of the strife. In that respect,

*"the attempt to define the work-being of the work purely in terms of the work of art proves to be unfeasible"<sup>51</sup>.*

An analysis of the hermeneutics of facticity therefore no longer shows, as in *Sein und Zeit*, the revealing primacy of the ontico-ontological nature of Dasein, but the having to be at work of truth:

*"Because it is in the essence of truth to establish itself within beings, in order thus first to become truth, the impulse toward the work lies in the*

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 183.



*essence of truth as one of truth's possible distinctive possibilities, by which it can itself occur as being in the midst of beings*"<sup>52</sup>.

Truth stands in the moment when it stages its revealing act, in the making see of that which can be seen, and sets itself up as the conditions of possibility for the hermeneutics of facticity to be. The hermeneutics of facticity serves the absolute purpose of truth. If it happens to be revealing, and if it happens to maintain its revealing gaze in its revealing space, it is for ever to be revealed in its factuality:

*"The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again"*<sup>53</sup>.

Truth constitutes its own and impulsive attraction to the hermeneutics of facticity seen as the compulsory passage towards the setting into work in the work of art. As a passage, a mediation, the hermeneutics of facticity only works as the revealing agent of its revealed factor. A gigantic step has thus been made in the transition between *Sein und Zeit* and *The Origin of the Work of Art* since it is through the casting into light of the hermeneutics of facticity in the essay that we come to a point of realisation not only of the fundamentalisation of fundamental ontology, but also of the achievement of phenomenology as a making manifest of the space of encounter between the phenomenon and itself. In the course of the first part, we defined the work of art as a fundamental experience in which Being coheres with itself in the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

"there" of my question. This only takes its full meaning in the understanding of the hermeneutics of facticity as, maybe, a given organ no longer belonging to its user. I mean by that that I am free to set my eyes in contact with anything that stands in the field of my preoccupation but, ultimately, my eyes are an organ setting itself on what is already given, including themselves. Consequently, through the work of art, my eyes perceive themselves in their factual possibility. This statement therefore sets forth the necessity for ontology and phenomenology to be a philosophy of mediation and transition.

## The Question of Existence

### *1. The Strife, or the Essential Sphere of Phenomenology*

The *strife*, being at work in the work of art, ex-poses itself. It shows itself from itself as it is in itself in the work of art. The mode of being of the work of art, the *make see*, therefore has to preserve the essence of that which it represents. Since to *represent* means to set back into presence, then it has to care about the accuracy of the representation for the object of its concern not to be insulted. It is a fact that in the work of art, that which is at work is an issue for it. As a representation, it has to assure the security of the represented entity's truth.

Here lies the core of phenomenology. In that respect, it parts from either Realistic philosophy or Idealist philosophy. The former was aiming at reaching an objective sphere of knowledge based on our senses and the latter elaborated the conditions of possibility of the same knowledge without leaving the subjective sphere. Phenomenology dwells in the point of coherence between the two spheres. For that matter, it proposes to cast into light the modes of donation of the reality before our eyes in order to cast into light the why and the how of our modes of understanding. As it is said in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, the disclosedness of being as it shows itself

from itself constitutes that to which our cognitive mode conforms. With Heideggerian phenomenology, we no longer find ourselves in a position in which knowledge is based on the equation *value = validity* of my intuitive conceptualisation, that is the validity of my judgement related to a formerly distant object. When traditional philosophy based the concept of cognition on the correlation of A and B and therefore on the non-resistance for these two elements to be put together, phenomenology, on the other hand, poses knowledge as the immediate identification of that which is seen. Everything that is seen or not seen is in itself a phenomenon that gives itself in its possibility or non-possibility of giving itself. But the physical non-possibility of a phenomenon does not project it in the nothingness of non-existence, rather it is doomed to be the evident expression of an apparent tension, a strife, calling upon our witnessing gaze which recognises it in its very tension. In other words, truth is no longer a subjective appreciation of a judgement's accuracy but, rather, it stands as the presentation of the thing-in-itself. Heidegger operates a shift from truth as adequacy to truth as evidence, as Husserl had done it before him in the sixth *Logical Investigation*. Knowledge therefore takes a radically different connotation. It no longer necessitates the comparison between two predicates enabling the realisation of their reciprocal adequacy but it stands in and as the revelation of the entity itself. A statement is now true inasmuch as it discovers, reveals and makes see an entity in its sense of belonging to itself. Husserl called this phenomenon the "*ideal adequation*" behind which Heidegger perceived his notion of the hidden truth.

It is of course this notion that we have tried to cast into light through the phenomenon of the work of art. We have shown how it enabled the identification of the thing-in-itself therefore perceived in its absence of concealment, that is to say in its truth. Let us recall that truth in Greek was *aletheia*, a-concealment. We have also stressed the fact that the thing, as it is in truth, shows itself from itself as it is in itself and that it therefore is a necessity for the truth of this entity to make itself manifest. Truth can only appear as such if it precisely appears. Hence, the work of art, by presenting the thing as it is in truth shows that which already shows itself. The work of art is responsible for truth originating outside its frame and yet being fully itself within the frame only. Indeed the work of art, functioning as a *make see*, enables the visualisation and the realisation of that which needs to be visualised for it to be realised. By considering the passage from truth as adequacy to truth as a-concealment, we have also cast into light truth as an originary and discovering agent which in the work of art discovers itself in its having to be at work. We now guess why Heidegger is so closely interested in the work of art as far as his investigation about ontology is concerned. Let us quote him again; his path is "*a travel along phenomenology down to the thinking of Being*". The work of art's function is to be re-searched in the visual identification of truth. In other words, the work of art is a functional activity whose original principle is to be found elsewhere. The work of art expresses itself in the name of truth.

## 2. *Truth Echoing Within Itself*

These considerations therefore lead us to the understanding of the work of art as a medium, a transient illumination of truth communicating with itself. In *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger mentions many a time that our gaze is fully absorbed by the object of its preoccupations, and that it is always lost in the supports of its contemplation which are a constant reality for any of us. We are always imprisoned within the frame of the world's reality: "*When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always outside alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered*" (SZ 62). This quotation expresses the idea that the whole of my preoccupations is always rooted within a context from which I cannot escape. I constantly evolve inside and through a personal cultural background which is itself conditioned by a historical whole. I always am the organising consciousness of this horizon of which I am myself an element. We have previously developed this idea with the concept of equipmental world evoked by the thing in itself claiming its belonging to that world. The thing takes its meaning within its own world of signification to which it belongs and from which it comes. It is through the identification of the thing deprived from its *usefulness* that it expressed itself in the light of the entirety of its configurations. In that respect, the work of art puts us into the essential presence of the world, of the worldhood of the world, and reveals itself both as a statue and a mirror of this non-apparent phenomenon

which we have cast into light. We have then seen how the work of art is itself sustained within the duality of that which it sets forth, that is to say the thing in itself withdrawn within the immanent presence of its essence, and the magnitude of the world to which it is itself submitted. It is within this constant tension, that is to say this constant *strife*, that the work of art both gives life to its function, that is to say to set up an object and its world, and to its nature, that is providing the functional frame that will stand as a receptacle for the happening of the thing in truth. This tension has to be seen as the dwelling in which truth echoes and shows itself as the conscious projection of its own light onto that which it frames. In this moment of consummation, the work of art digs in between the two layers that it brings forth, one being the ontological ground on which the notion of happening comes to be possible, the other being the surface of the phenomenon being actively framed and essentially at work in the existence of its "there". To put it differently, the work of art dissociates from itself by providing both a dwelling and a dweller and by being alternatively being one or the other; it fundamentally appears as an intermediary between two layers that it itself provides, as the eye of the spectator which travels and commutes within that space and, there, hears the work of art echo with itself. It is essentially within this depth that the work of art fully becomes itself. It reaches this moment of fulfilment when its function expresses the purpose of its nature, that is to say when the two come to a matching point letting forth the work of art's Being in the process of being.

Again, it appears to us that the distinction between the subject and the object is totally inadequate since the work of art, expressing itself in the

name of truth, enables the visualisation and therefore the actualisation of that which is itself the subject of its own self-legitimation (*Selbstausweisung*) and therefore the condition of possibility of its own being there. For that reason, a phenomenological analysis of the work of art does not ask about the artist and thus eradicates the traditional concept of representation justifying the aesthetic and ethic theories usually applied to art.

That which is at work in the work of art is truth as self-presentation. It is the reflective relation of belonging to an historical and cultural background that the work of art expresses. In that sense, it does not ask about the artist as the one who gave a life to the work of art, but, rather, it mirrors the existential modes of living of all those who have to do with it, and that is indifferently the artist and the spectator no longer being perceived as such but being fundamentally considered as Dasein. Yet this is merely possible because the work of art bears within itself the capacity, as well as the obligation, to reset its own presence within the world that it *worlds*, that it stages as an articulated system, a horizontal scheme enabling Dasein to recognise itself as the organising and comprising entity that it belongs to him to be. The work of art is in its essence a work articulating that which is already essentially articulated by it and shows itself as such in it: *"La composante figurative de la religion n'est pas seulement tirée en avant par le moment spéculatif de la philosophie, elle renvoie en arrière d'elle même à toutes les configurations (Gestalten) culturelles qui la précèdent sur le parcours de l'esprit humain allant de la nature à la culture*



*et de la culture à l'autopresentation de l'absolu.*"<sup>54</sup>. We are therefore not dealing with a representation but indeed with a presentation, a figuring of truth showing the whole of *es gibt* in its articulating and articulated mode: "*True, there lies hidden in nature a rift-design, a measure and a boundary and, tied to it, a capacity for bringing forth - that is, art. But it is equally certain that this art hidden in nature becomes manifest only through the work, because it lies originally in the work*"<sup>55</sup>. The work of art turns out to be a space in between holding within its frame the essence of a world from which it cannot escape lest it should lose its signification and its meaning. In other words, the work of art functions as a revealing passage between the here and there of a world which, through the signification that it grants to all that constitutes it, is essentially gathered within the thing precisely deprived of its significant world. The whole of a world can only be fully present in total absence which expresses itself as the absence of a whole and not a merely partial one. For that reason, the totality of the whole figures itself in its being essentially *Vorhandenheit*. Because it is essentially presentation and not representation, truth can be itself since it is respected in its mode of donation which precisely consists in its being present in the whole and the nothing of the world. Truth is then "*preserved*"<sup>56</sup> in the possible integrality of all the different choices since none of them is ontically and empirically chosen. The difference between figuring and representing is here crucial for our analysis of the work of art. With Paul Ricoeur, we understand figuring

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<sup>54</sup>Ricoeur Paul, « Aux frontières de la philosophie », *Lectures* 3, Ed. Seuil, (La couleur des idées, 1992) p. 43.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, p. 195.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid, p. 191.

(*Vorstellung*) in its opposing parity to conceptualisation (*Begriff*)<sup>57</sup>. To conceptualize implies an engagement along a certain ontical path which is chosen among others. It presupposes the presence of a previous image of an object held in the distance of non-understanding. Such a conception implies truth as a commuting apparatus enabling the subject to fill in the gap in-between. Through the adequation between the object and the related judgement, the alienating distance is broken because the object is held within our cognitive and therefore subjective equipment. This space of justification of the judgement, in which the object stands and allows an experience based on the equation value = validity, is, as far as Husserl is concerned, called "intuition". Nevertheless, the Husserlian intuition, which functions on the mode of truth as adequation, is based on sensible perception. It is a matter of seeing that which is before our eyes: "*Zu den Sachen selbst*"<sup>58</sup>. Husserl's philosophy keeps the thing away from any theoretical construction and consequently settles the whole of knowledge on experience (judgement plus intuition), that is on the thing given in the intuition: "*Toute intuition donatrice originaire est une source de droit pour la connaissance; tout ce qui s'offre à nous dans l'intuition de façon originaire (dans sa réalité corporelle pour ainsi dire) doit être simplement reçu pour ce qu'il se donne, mais sans non plus outrepasser les limites dans lesquelles il se donne alors*"<sup>59</sup>. In *Ideen*, a come back to positivism is operated and behind truth as equation is hidden and announced truth as unconcealment, that is to say truth as *aletheia*. Here is where Heidegger's philosophy begins, that is in the

<sup>57</sup>Ricoeur Paul, « Aux frontières de la philosophie », *Lectures 3*, Ed. Seuil, (La couleur des idées, 1992) p. 41.

<sup>58</sup>Husserl Edmund, *Ideen*, 24.

<sup>59</sup>Husserl Edmund, *Ideen*, 24.

consideration of truth as already presupposed in its logical adequacy. For him, the notion of conceptualisation rests on the presence of figuring perceived as self-legitimate and self-represented. It stands as that which is always pre-given and pre-perceived and that on which a conceptual representation can take place. In that sense, Heidegger is a typical parricidal philosopher. By perceiving truth as an originary revealing agent, the Husserlian theory of the doubt becomes radically inadequate inasmuch as the existence of the world is no longer questioned. The task for him is to cast into light our belonging to this world not in order to prove its existence but in order to figure out how to understand it, how to grasp the ontological enigma dwelling in the fact that it is always and already there. We have seen how the world and its worldhood are immediately present in our thinking being, also we have cast into light the work of art as a revelatory mediation between truth and itself, as an eye-witness of the world and an articulated system in which all that *is* stands in the open of its articulating being.

### ***3. Facticity Within Factuality***

The artwork is not about "*telling a story*" (SZ 6), and it should no longer be understood only as the personal expression of an aesthetic trace which, because it was born in the workshop of the artist, simply belongs to the universe of the artist. Through the artist it is the more general exposition of a cultural background that comes to our conscience. The work of art, in that respect, functions, as already mentioned, as a "*wanting-to-have-*

*conscience*" of the essential conditions of possibility by which it is constituted. Within itself stands its Being, and within itself stands the expression of its Being. The work of art, because it is exclusively about presentation and figuring, is therefore exclusively about expression through which the essence becomes apparent in its having to exist. The purpose of ontological phenomenology has to pierce through the artwork's aesthetic manifestation which is no longer perceived as the original expression of an artistic talent but as the expression of an origin which it carries within itself. The work of art is automatically devitalised, de-animated for the fundamental sake of a primary origin which is at work in the work of art. The aesthetic dimension appears as a delivery system conveying the Being of its ontical "there", that is the condition of possibility for its empirical realisation to happen. In other words, the work of art makes manifest its conditions of possibility, it questions them, that is to say that it projects into the light of its "*work-being*" its having to be a work. It is responsible for its Being about which it always is conscious since, through its what and its how, that which it shows is the why and the who that it is. In that sense, the work of art engages in a dialogue with itself. It puts itself into a dialogical perspective in which it encounters itself and in which it can freely see that to which it is doomed to be doing as a work of art, that is to say its having to show, to understand and to see its Being. As already stated above, the work of art is factive insofar as its factuality is an issue for itself. It questions its factuality, that is its being there, its being preoccupied by its own conditions of possibility of being a work of art. It questions itself, it sets itself into question because it is its own condition of possibility of its existence. By

questioning its existence (that is to say by showing how it shows itself as a work of art, by making see how it can be seen) the work of art previously appeared to us as self-presentation and self-legitimation . It gives itself as a presence within its frame as well as it frames that which it gives; it is both an *in* and an *around*, it is essentially the constant framing of the un-framable, a perpetual tension between an inside-out and an outside-in relationship. The work of art welcomes us in its epiphany, it makes us see and therefore dwell within the "there" of the whole of the world, the whole of fundamental truth, gathered inside a perspectival frame. Truth is figured within a concentrating frame which spontaneously evaporates in the absolute scope of that which it presents. In that sense, the work of art celebrates the apology as well as the death of the frame, both walking hand in hand along the phenomenological path down to the thinking of Being. To see Being means to see it as it shows itself, that is to say as "*the most universal and the emptiest concepts*" (SZ 1), the concept whose definition has to be relocated within the scope of the indefinable. To define Being comes back to the recognition of its resistance to any attempt to define it since any definition, perceived as a being that is, would automatically fall back into the always wider realm of that which it defines. To have a definition of Being would always mean not to have one. The work of art, aiming at fundamental ontology, that is to say at the presentation of Being as an expression of itself, has to preserve its absolute integrity, its necessary presence in the "*naked that in the nothing of the world*". A definition of Being would therefore require the existence of a meta-language which, because it would exist, could never be one. Heidegger must be understood in that sense when,

in the *Origin of the Work of Art*, he asserts that *"Each answer remains in force as an answer only as long as it is rooted in questioning."*<sup>60</sup> In the essay, the work of art presents itself as *"a becoming and a happening of truth"*, an institution and a constitution (*Ge-stell*) of truth. Truth *"is to be thought in terms of the particular placing and enframing as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth"*<sup>61</sup>. To show Truth by the means of the phenomenological method implies the necessity to show it as it itself shows itself. Therefore, to bring truth to that which it essentially is, that is un-concealment, implies to show it in the light of its having to be concealed. If truth is truth only when it is an expression of Being, that is to say when it is Being in its essential truth (a-concealment), then truth must be preserved in its being *"the most universal and hence indefinable concept"* (SZ 2). *"Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-revealed"*<sup>62</sup>. Truth bears in itself the force of a question since it preserves within itself the *reservoir of the not-yet-revealed* answers. To respond to Being in its having to be the whole that it always is means to celebrate it in the all and the nothing of the question: *"L'idée d'ouverture signifie que les multiples singularités philosophiques -Platon, Descartes, Spinoza- sont a priori accessibles l'une à l'autre, que tout dialogue est possible a-priori, parce que l'être est cet acte qui, précédant et fondant toute possibilité de questionner, fonde la mutualité des intentions philosophiques les plus singulières. C'est une ouverture, cette clairière, ce lumen naturelle, que l'imagination naïve projette dans les Champs-Élysées où les dialogues*

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

*des morts sont possibles. Aux Champs-Élysées tous les philosophes sont contemporains et toutes les communications réversibles: Platon peut répondre à Descartes son cadet; les Champs-Élysées figurent l'ouverture préalable à l'histoire et qui rend possible tout dialogue dans le temps. Alors la pluralité n'est pas la réalité dernière... L'être de toute question ouvre originairement chacun à chacun et fonde la vérité historique et polémique de la communication*"<sup>63</sup>. The plurality of that which can be seen or that which can be said is not ultimate. Rather it always indicates a foundational principle which is common to all that is empirically present. Phenomenology turns out to be a philosophy responding to presence itself. As we have seen in the introductory chapters of our reflection, the thing has to be approached in its singularity, in the there of its presence cut from all ties interfering with it in the articulation of its signification. Then, the thing is perceived as that which it is only for itself, as the thing in itself. It stops being the *sign* or the *reference* that it always has to be in a *meaningful* context, which means that it is no longer read as the element serving the purpose of a larger and non-apparent phenomenon (for instance, the shoes being associated to the walk), but it is seen as that which it shows from itself and in itself. The *as-structure* (*als-Struktur* SZ 143) no longer connects the thing to something else according to the rules of the equipmental *in-order-to*, but it connects it to itself and penetrates the withdrawal of its intimacy. The thing can then be freed from the edifice of usefulness of which it only is a constitutive element. The plurality of its « *can-be* » is gathered within the singularity of its having-to-be the thing that it is in itself. In other words, it is considered in the "there" of its individual presence.

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<sup>63</sup>Ricoeur Paul, *Histoire et Vérité*, troisième édition du Seuil, collection Esprit / Seuil, p. 59.

The work of art maintains the thing in the entirety of its *not-yet-revealed* signification. The thing is no longer justified by the equipmental whole of which it is part but it is reduced to that which it shows as itself in itself. That which it shows in itself is always the necessity to exist within the world where it takes place, where it takes its organic place. It will always take a different place according to that which is aimed in the it. As for the shoes, they can be either the shoes for the walk or the shoes for the labour in the field. In both cases, the shoes will show themselves in the light of their respective usefulness. They will be perceived as that which they are made for and, in most cases, will be forgotten as shoes by the revealing light of the project in question. Effectively, the shoes for the walk will immediately be seen as appropriate or as inappropriate for such or such terrain or surface. The confection of the shoes implies for the designer to take into account all the various parameters of the walk; as for the shoes, they will have to respond to these external criteria and their success will depend on their ability to fuse into their environments, that is to say their ability not to resist it. The roughness of the leather as well as the hostility of the ground both have to disappear within the comfort and the security of the shoes. The shoes have to make themselves forgotten in the absence of sensation, the shoes have to disappear as shoes. A child can joyfully recall the presence of his new shoes every fifty yards because they fit him so well that he forgets about them. They can periodically warm up his heart because they do not hurt his feet. Through this instance, we need to see that the shoes were in fact born in the mountains, or in the forest, depending on their usefulness. They might have been made in the workshop of the designer, but it is quite unlikely that



the designer himself was body and soul in his workshop when he was working on them. Rather, he was projected in the "there" of his own experience of the walk, that is to say in the holes, the bumps, the gravel, in all that could previously resist his progression and that the *not-yet-revealed* shoes have to overcome. It is always in the light of their environment that shoes can find a signification; the shoes are never where we empirically see them but always in the "there" where they ask to be projected. We see them in the *why* of their being there, we understand them as the *why* their being there. In other words, we never leave the shoes alone, we always perceive them in their having to exist, in their having to be part of a larger edifice in which they are projected. To see the shoes always implies understanding them as such or such piece of equipment: *"Understanding of Being has already been taken for granted in projecting upon possibilities"* (SZ 148). For Heidegger, to see is already to understand and the *to see* is ruled by the consistency of the *as-structure*: *"That which is disclosed in understanding - that which is understood - is already accessible in such a way that its as which can be made to stand out explicitly"*. (SZ 149).

To see the shoes in themselves therefore means to understand them as that which they are in themselves as they show themselves. To see the shoes in their singularity means to understand them as if they did not have any usefulness, as if they did not belong to any environment but their own, as if they exclusively belonged to themselves. The light of the *as-structure* is no longer projected on the *in-order-to* of its usefulness but on the thing in question: *"That which has been circumspectively taken apart with regard to its in-order-to, and taken apart as such - that which is explicitly understood*

- *has the structure of something as something*" (SZ 149). This quotation shows how the notion of *as-structure* is part and parcel of the thing. To see the thing in itself does not mean to dispossess it from that which precisely enables it to behave like a thing. Rather, to see the thing in the entirety of its constitution also means to perceive it in the light of the whole of its environment. Because the thing is always connected to something else, its essential definition has to reflect the whole to which it might always be connected. In that case, the thing is no longer ontically projected in another ontical edifice but it is projected in the whole of the possibilities which belongs to itself and to itself only. Hence, the *as-structure* does not appear as an external agent to which the thing submits, but it stands as an intrinsic quality of the thing which, as soon as it is, is *as* (including as itself). The thing becomes itself: it is projected into the whole of its possibilities as if it was projected into another ontical environment, and it exists by dwelling within itself. In other words, the thing encounters itself in the space of projection which essentially belongs to itself. The perceived entirety of the thing swallows up all and each of the various ontical manifestation suddenly reduced to a possibility which becomes the factual reality of the phenomenon itself. This possibility preserves within itself the unconsumed, the undissipated strength of the *not-yet-revealed* and therefore of the always yet having to be. The ontical reality is then submerged by this revealed and revealing essential entity which appears as the expression of its Being:

*"And yet - beyond beings, not away from them but before them, there is still something else that happens. In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing. Thought of in reference to beings,*

*this clearing is more in being than are beings. This open centre is therefore not surrounded by beings; rather, the clearing centre itself encircles all that is, as does the nothing, which we scarcely know.*"<sup>64</sup>

#### **4. Truth as Self-Presentation**

The quotation at the end of the last paragraph stages the happening of truth, that is to say that it describes the *disclosedness of Being* setting itself into work through the work of art which maintains truth in its revelatory presence. As I have showed it earlier on, the work of art is primarily that to which I can respond inasmuch as it originates in a world, inasmuch as it responds to a world no longer seen as the sum of all the entities but perceived as a system articulated by a consciousness called Being-in-the-world of Dasein. The work of art responds to that consciousness for the simple reason that it was born in that world and was therefore an expression of that consciousness. The work of art took its form in a cultural horizon, in a referential context, in the worldhood of the world. It took its form in it but also was in-formed by it. The work of art worlds the world because it carries in itself the sense of Being, the essential source of the Being-in-contact-with. The work of art, in that respect, works both as a statue and a mirror; it is an entity brought forth by its world and a reflection of this world. It functions as the presentation of the thing in the world as well as the whole of the world in the thing. It stages this constant tension between the two, the

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 178.

strife between the multiple and the one. The work of art in its epiphany calls into question the passage from the thing within the world to the thing containing the world as an infinite field of possibility. This passage is cast into light in the open of the work of art which can present it inasmuch as it is itself present in this passage: it comes to light in a world which it contains and maintains within itself. The work of art always stands and holds both within the thing in itself which it presents and the world in which it presents itself as itself: *"But concealment, though of another sort, to be sure, at the same time also occurs within what is cleared. One being places itself in front of another being, the one helps to hide the other, the former obscures the latter, a few obstruct many, one denies all. Here concealment is not simple refusal. Rather, a being appears, but presents itself as other than it is."*<sup>65</sup> By operating a perpetual return upon itself, a being is perpetually more the being that it has to be in the signification of its contextual environment. The thing does not only evoke the world in its clustering externality but it truly holds it in its thingly constitution. In the thing in itself holds all that constitutes it as a thing, that is to say its the world from which it can extirpate its *matter-form structure*, its *"substance and accidents"*<sup>66</sup>, its origin, its signification, in brief, its quiddity, its essence. The thing as it is shown in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, that is the thing as it is in itself, *"depends on nothing external for its intelligibility"*<sup>67</sup>. It is at work in the work of art, it shows itself in the light of truth which is placed and framed in the work. The work of art, in its ontical reality, is entirely thrown into its

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid, p. 179.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, p. 149.

<sup>67</sup>Gerald L. Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language Truth and Poetry in the Later Writings*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, p. 37.

having to be a work, that is a presentation of truth, a figuring of Being as an expression of itself. The work of art which is there before our eyes is then perceived as a work of art, it withdraws within its having to be a work, within its having to let truth figure itself in the totality of its realm. Functioning on the mode of the *make see*, it enables the visualisation of the passage from the ontical to the ontological in which that which is empirically there before our eyes is suddenly cast into the light of its ontological essence. This passage turns out to be what Heidegger calls the "*happening*" of truth in which the work of art, as a being that is, happens in its work-being. What I mean by that is that the work of art can only be itself fully with regard to its ontological epiphany. It revisits the fundamental presence of Being (which sets itself into presence in the artwork) in which all that *is* has to dwell under its *most general and universal* form and, of course, this includes the work of art as well. In order for it to be considered as such, the work of art must sacrifice its ontical reality for the sake of the ontological truth that it aims at revealing. It projects truth within the heart of its Being which can only welcome it because, as a being that is, Being already constitutes it: *"But truth does not exist in itself beforehand, somewhere among the stars, only subsequently to descend elsewhere among beings. This is impossible for the reason alone that it is after all only the openness of beings that first affords the possibility of a somewhere and of sites filled by present beings. Clearing of openness and establishment in the open region belong together. They are the same single essence of the happening of truth"*<sup>68</sup>. The work of art is the mediation between Being in the work and Being at work in the work. It presents itself as the revealing ontical support

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

in which Being can recognise itself within itself, in which Being can respond to its presence as an expression of itself. For that matter, the work of art withdraws within the whole of expression (and that includes the artistic expression), it celebrates the rising of Being which also means its own carnal sacrifice in which it witnesses its own condition of possibility, that is Being as its own possibility of being. In that sense, the work of art engages into a dialogical tension with itself. It discovers itself in its being *thrown into* the world that it presents, it is *turned towards* the world that it is itself, it *deals* (*Umgang*: SZ 73) with itself. The work of art is an *issue* for itself. Because the work of art is a revealing agent functioning on the mode of the *make see*, it also has the capacity to relocate itself within the light of its revealing scope and to be revealed as such. It is itself that from which and by which it can be seen as a work of art. It places and frames the thing in itself which, to be seen as such, constantly *refers* to its having to be placed and framed. The work of art finds its essential truth in the thing that it figures and the thing remains the thing that it is in the revealing function (the epiphany) of the placing and framing work of art in which it can be and be kept at work. Again, "*Art then is a becoming and happening of truth*"<sup>69</sup>. Both express the complementarity of their respective modes of being: truth is self-presentation and the work of art is presentation. In more technical terms, the work of art has to be conceived as a factor participating in the possibility for the thing to be the thing that it has to be. Indeed, by maintaining the thing within its frame, it preserves and retains it in the privileged position of being shown and therefore seen. The work of art constantly sends us back to what is framed. It sees to it that the thing that it presents does not fall into

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

oblivion. It always is the *preserver* of the thing which reveals it as a work of art. It preserves by keeping the thing in the open of its Being, it is that which indicates to us that the thing has to be read *as* the thing that it is. By the simple act of placing and framing, the work of art works as a guideline, a recipe conducting us along the path of the phenomenon down to the thinking of its Being. It is part and parcel of the thing inasmuch as it is the *as-structure* that the thing needs for it to be a thing. For a thing to be a thing, it always has to project itself among a specific field of possibilities by which it confirms its welcomed presence as *this* thing and not another one. In the case of the work of art, the thing can be read as a thing in itself because its projection is constantly guided by the fact that it is placed and framed and, therefore, by the fact that it cannot escape this frame that constitutes it. To frame a thing means to show it in the limit of its own boundaries in which it can freely exist within itself. Without the frame, the thing would evaporate into its disparate environment in which it would surely be forgotten. The frame is the condition of possibility for the thing not to be forgotten, that is to say for the thing to be read as a thing. The work of art must be seen as *Als-Struktur*, it is the reason why a thing can be read only as the thing that it is.

Are we then trespassing the rules imposed by our method which, for the sake of the respect of the thing, has to be exclusively descriptive? How can the work of art show the thing as it shows itself from itself and yet be essentially functioning on the mode of the *as-structure*? Indeed, the *as-structure* presupposes a comparison and therefore an interpretative activity by the means of which something can appear *as* something. It appears that

the *as-structure* operates, in our case, as a *making manifest* (*Aufzeigung* in German and *apophansis* in Greek), that is to say to show being from itself. We had already encountered this problem when dealing with the difference between *Vorstellung* and *Begriff*, between presentation and conceptualisation. We had seen that the first level of knowledge did not take place in the reconstructive appropriation of a phenomenon, but in the realisation of its having to be seen *in order* for it to show itself as that which shows itself from itself. Yet, we have not made clear how much conceptualisation relies on presentation, how much, in Heideggerian language, a "*reference*" relies on an "*indication*": "*Every reference is a relation, but not every relation is a reference. Every indication is a reference, but not every referring is an indicating. This implies at the same time that every indication is a relation but not every relation is an indicating*" (SZ 78). Heidegger opens a path of thinking along which we come to grasping the thing as it shows itself in such or such ontical context. An order has to be respected. All that we think we know is knowable because it exists under a certain mode of expression that is indicated by its Being. That which the thing shows in its existing is at least itself. We have seen, for example with a piece of equipment, that a thing can be more than the singularity by which it is characterized as a thing; a thing always travels among the field of signification in which it takes a meaning. In that sense, and this is that which the thing shows when it is at work in the work of art, it refers to an external element and relates to it. The thing shows itself by referring to something, which poses the existence of a *relation* between something and something. The thing has "*the character of the in-order-to*",



"it is for indicating" (SZ 78). Because the thing is in relation with something else, it stops being the thing that it is in itself from itself; we are dealing with a new phenomenon comprising two separate elements. The relating therefore leads us away from the initial thing *in-order-to* focus on something else. A relation implies an agreement between two elements which, in the scope of this relation, take their value from the validity of the relation. In such a conception of the thing, to see it means to see it as that which it indicates in order to refer and relate to something else; it is essentially equipment. The essential constitution of the *as* is here hermeneutic, it implies a technical activity of interpretation which parts us from the thing in itself.

In the work of art, the thing always refers to the field of possibilities belonging to itself and which, because they are only possibilities, are concentrated within the thing itself. To perceive the entirety of these possibilities rests on the fact that the thing is placed and framed within the limits of its own boundaries. The thing that we see is always the thing-at-work because only in the work it can be maintained in its having to be a thing. The thing refers to itself and relates to its having to be in the work of art. The thing is therefore preserved in the expression of its Being, that is to say in the apophantic permanence of the work as *as-structure*. The equipmentality of the thing serves the purpose of the thing; it refers and relates to itself and to itself only. We stand on a revealing circle whose essence is descriptively hermeneutic. For Heidegger, to see means to understand and, in case of an apophantic *as-structure*, to understand that we always understand on the mode of seeing. It is therefore in the expression of

the *to see* that understanding can understand itself as such. Only then does it fully become itself. In the same way, the work of art understands itself in the visualisation of its essential mode of being which is to *make see* that which already shows itself from itself. The German for *to understand* is *verstehen* which literally means to “stand ahead”, to stand before. To understand must then be understood in the sense of projecting oneself within the “there” of our preoccupation which is itself defined by the act of projecting itself. By projecting itself in its having to be seen, the work of art allows the thing to show itself in relation to the whole of the possibilities in which it is projected and which constitutes it. To see the thing means to understand it in its having to be itself. The thing at work, dwelling in its essence, is always an expression of itself in which it sees and understands itself as being the thing that it has to be and see. The expression is for the thing the condition of possibility to show itself and therefore the condition of possibility for any ontological enquiry to take place. There can be an ontology because Being shows itself through an expressive medium. Indeed, expression is always an ex-pression, an act of drawing out to the light that which, in its essence, calls for being drawn out. That which can be expressed always is always a phenomenon that can be seen and therefore understood in the light of the whole of the world in which it takes its signification. The expression always presupposes the possible perception of an understood phenomenon which, because it is expressed, is recognized as understood and seen. In other words, an ontological analysis of the *to see* implies an analysis of its condition of possibility which are to be found in Being that offers itself to our eyes. To see means to see something that is and the *to see* understands

itself as such in itself, that is in the *to see*. In that respect, the work of art travels along its phenomenological path down to the thinking of Being which is to be found in its own mode of existence which is to be given to be seen.



Together with Heidegger and in the light of the work of art, we have travelled along the path of thinking. Reaching Being in its true establishment and sustained mode of happening meant for us to re-question the theme of fundamental ontology as it is primarily and originally developed in *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger's phenomenology remains a constant endeavour to determine the conditions of possibility of an encounter with Being revealed in truth. Is it enough to ask the question of Being for it to open itself to the considerations of the philosopher? Indeed, both the *Origin of the Work of Art* and *Sein und Zeit* proved it necessary to access Being in its objectivity as a visible phenomenon. And yet, how can it be that what phenomenology describes is the actual phenomenality of Being and not our relation to Being? How should the question of Being be asked? In other words, how can the question itself be self-included within that which it targets and, therefore annihilate the distance between itself as a subject and the questioned object? For that reason, we need to find a question that goes beyond all entity. As stated in *Sein und Zeit*, phenomenology is a matter of « *wanting-to-have-a-conscience* » of that which goes « *without saying* ». Being stands as a holding and omnipresent energy enabling all things to take their shapes, to be in-formed, and therefore to happen. The very presence of our question, of our supposing the possibility of the question, remains the indubitable and ineluctable proof of Being's actuality and capacity to receive all things. It is inherent to all that claims a right to expression, the steps of a staircase underlying anything that in manifesting itself is given a name and a signification. If it stands as the starting point of any thought as a fundamental ground of anything that stands, how can the question of Being -or even more so, the work of art- pretend to overtake Being in its originality? Being has to remain the core of all things lest it be but a mirror of itself which, as it is, is a contradiction. The *Origin of the Work of Art* proposes to catch Being red-handed in the process of being, that is in the process

of withdrawing and resisting to any attempt of unveiling it. To reach Being and to define it are in themselves a contradiction, an insult to that which has to remain inaccessible for its fundamental nature to be preserved. Being appears both as the ground and as the happening expression of things taking place on that ground. To agree with this statement comes back to the recognition of a depth between the ground and surface of what becomes the Heideggerian phenomenon. This depth does not mean that behind the physical phenomenon stands something else but, rather, it induces that the appearance of any phenomenon implies the very depth constituting the path along which we have travelled. Therefore, the phenomenon does not open itself from and by the help of phenomenology but it signifies itself in its own presence, its own *thereness* through the conscious recognition of phenomenology. This was the door that *Sein und Zeit* first located and then entered, and the world that the *Origin of the Work of Art* managed to draw a map of. As a matter of fact, the *Origin of the Work of Art*, written in 1935, brings forth a point of coherence between the two layers of the phenomenon entering within itself. This is in no way an *insult*, a transgression of Being happening in truth, but it has to be seen and considered as a come back to things themselves. The work of art implies for the spectator a reading which is prompted by the artist who, beforehand, opened the doors of the depicted world. From the phenomenon to the world it evokes there is but one step. For Heidegger, this transcendental world (transcendental in the sense that it overtakes the physical boundaries of the frame) is in no way overwhelming the immanence of the phenomenon. Consequently, that which some might consider as an *insult* is in fact that which sets itself at work in the phenomenon. From then on, the piercing through the work of art as a phenomenon is not synonymous to moving away from the entity but means its unveiling and understanding in depth to catch sight of its Being. The depth therefore constitutes the space of donation of the

work of art whose presence echoes the world in which it happens. The work of art claims its quiddity, its naked *thing-being* framing a horizon that is at work within its *work-being*. Being at work, it never ceases to commute between its ontical reality and the ontological world within which it now echoes itself. The depth of the work of art as a phenomenon here reaches a moment of stand still embodied within the incessant movement which it itself opens. The work of art manifests itself in the communication that it sustains with itself. It pictures itself always claiming to be what it's not and yet what is deep to its core. In that sense, the work of art reveals and unveils the conditions of possibility for any phenomenon to be phenomenal, that is to happen and appear. The work of art frames the celebration of the moment happening and telling itself in its factuality. It frames the interpretation of its own being there, it gives to be seen what condition the possibility of being seen, that is to say the phenomenality of the phenomenon. The work of art entertains a constant discourse between the things and their essential ground and erects itself as the messenger of its being there. The *Origin of the Work of Art* comes to be read as an application of *Sein und Zeit's* hermeneutics of facticity to the work of art which suddenly becomes the word giving itself to be heard, the light giving itself to be seen. It is as well a celebration of *Aletheia's* Greek meaning, that is to say *un-concealment*, self-revelation, an epiphany staging its incoative capacity to spring into a sublime explosion, the facticity within factuality.

We have then endeavoured in this dissertation to dig further towards the withdrawal of Being receding into the darkness of its dwelling. As Wordsworth puts it in *Tintern Abbey*, we have stepped into a presentifying presence whose "*dwelling is the light of setting suns*". We have, thanks to the work of art staging Being in the process of being, tried to give a name to that which whose identity remains fundamentally anonymous. This name essentially became *phenomenology*, expressing itself as the matrix of any

possible ontology, of any theory of the object. Even though, at first sight, the phenomenological method appears to be but a screen filtering our approach to the ontological core of the object, we have shown here at length that the very notion of screen, or frame, belongs to the conditions of possibility for an object to express itself as such, that is to say for an object to be spotted within its objectivity. Indeed, we have mainly focused in the course of this thesis on Being as a movement in the process of happening. The object therefore shows itself because it essentially provides its content with the possibility of being perceived as such. It is not only a substantial shape standing in the light of a distinct entity, but it constitutes the very apparatus enabling its own staging. In that sense we have kept showing how phenomenology emanates from the echoing depth residing within the capacity of the object to be one. Heidegger's philosophy remains essentially a philosophy of the non-distance, of the primacy of the object being found and understood in its objectivity. For that matter we conclude on the idea that this method is in itself a formality rather than a science. It is, as it were, an "objectology" telling the object as it has always claimed to be. It requires no scientific background but merely the acceptance of the object's objectivity and its general possibility. With Heidegger, and more particularly with *The Origin of the Work of Art*, ontology comes to its fundamental ground as objectivity conjuring itself up through its ways of being. The existential analytic, as we find it firstly in *Sein und Zeit* and as it then comes to mirror itself in the work of art, therefore proposes a philosophy at the service of totality now rendered possible through the finitude of facticity. Although it directly engages in the actual capacity for any entity to be, –in the most usual sense of the word- it can yet not follow the path of any ideology. There appears to be no militancy or cause that would echo within the world of phenomenological ideas which now show themselves as phenomena in the depth of which there is nothing but a factual



capability and commitment to exist. Heidegger might stand as a guide towards a possible encounter with the world in its essence, nevertheless his guidance remains spiritual and could in no way be ideological since his philosophy does not prepare the ground for the elaboration of an ethical perspective. As already stated in the course of our development, things when perceived through phenomenological glasses lose their substantiality in order to let forth the happening glow residing within them. Here, the reflection and study come to a point of contact with a sphere that would cast a transverse light through a universe that I have tried to sense in its totality. Such an approach, because with Heidegger it seeks the deep heart's core of things, also shelters within a frame that absorbs and swallows the shout of those questions claiming their necessity. It therefore gives birth to a whole series of interrogations – above all ethical and moral interrogations - awakening from their phenomenological sleep. These last considerations sprout from Heidegger's philosophy and show, maybe, that being "Heideggerian" might not provide the best tools to understand the spirit and the limits of his edifice.

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## **Visual Art**

Magritte René, *The Void of Space*

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Escher M.C. , *Drawing Hands*

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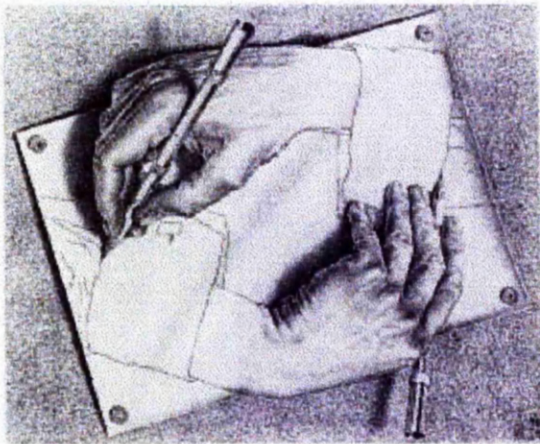
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