

MARTIN HEIDEGGER'S NOTION OF THE WORK OF ART AS *WELTERÖFFNUNG* AND
HIS CRITIQUE OF THE FORM/MATTER AND KNOWING/EXPERIENCING SCHEMATA
IN THE AESTHETIC THINKING OF PLATO AND ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

by

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(Under the Direction of Beatrice Hanssen)

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with Martin Heidegger's approach to the work of art as the 'opening of a world'. By contrast, in the Western aesthetic tradition, the work of art is characterized as a product of schemata such as form/matter and knowing/experiencing. Such characterizations of the work of art are found in philosophies as diverse as those of Plato and Arthur Schopenhauer. The work of art, for Heidegger, resists such schematic interpretations within philosophical systems. The work of art opens a world, or *Welt*, and, by so doing, attests to the unique and particular beings that we are. Heidegger's term for such a being is *Dasein*. Heidegger's notion of the work of art as *Welteröffnung* is examined in depth using examples from 'representational' as well as 'non-representational' art forms.

INDEX WORDS: Martin Heidegger, Arthur Schopenhauer, Plato, Aesthetics

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Stephanie Vanderford. Without her love and moral support, this thesis would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning with Plato, some twenty-three hundred years ago, the work of art has been defined by an aesthetic tradition. This statement may seem strange. Is it possible to characterize a work of art outside of its place in the many and various aesthetic constellations throughout the history of the Western aesthetic tradition?¹ Indeed, as we shall see, the work of art precedes the aesthetic tradition and its philosophical commitments.

But what exactly is ‘philosophical aesthetics’ and what is its relation to the work of art, as such? Philosophical aesthetics is exactly that—*aesthetics defined philosophically*. That is, it is an aesthetic defined from a certain philosophical perspective and within a certain philosophical system. The work of art, after becoming ‘aesthetized’, occupies a certain domain, which is defined internally. This domain prescribes not only what the work of art is said to be, but also its process of creation, its audience, its purpose, the material from which it is made, and its relation to human beings.² If we consider the word ‘aesthetics’ itself, it gives us a clue as to its already philosophically defined pedigree. The word ‘aesthetics’, first coined by the philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714 - 1762), derives its name from the Greek ‘aesthetikos’ (pertaining to sense perception), ‘aistheta’ (perceptible things), and ‘aisthenasthai’ (to perceive).³

Although Baumgarten was the first to coin the philosophical inquiry into the work of art as ‘aesthetics’, the former’s (the work of art’s) relegation to the realms of sense perception and

¹ ‘Western aesthetic tradition’ is not meant to include the works of all philosophers and artists from the Western world. Rather, the term is reserved for aesthetic theories that base themselves in the Platonic theory of perfect Ideas, or Forms.

² For a general overview of aesthetic theory, see Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, eds., Philosophies of Art & Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976).

³ “Aesthetic,” The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. 1981.

sense experience is affected by the philosophy of Plato, marking the beginning of the Western aesthetic tradition. In the next chapter, in seeking to answer the question ‘What is beauty and the beautiful?’, Plato takes as his starting point a certain interpretation, or understanding, of what the work of art is. That is, as said above, the work of art becomes ‘aestheticized’ within a philosophical domain, which defines its conditions of creation, existence, and expression. Or does the work of art reveal a more immediate relation to human beings and what may be said to ‘be’ than its aesthetization within a philosophically driven system?⁴ Does the ‘deaestheticized’ work of art reveal perhaps a ‘knowing’, or commerce with the earth and the world of human beings, that proves to be more uniquely human than the rational being defined by Plato?

In this thesis, Martin Heidegger’s notion of the work of art as *Welteröffnung* will be explored with a view towards such a ‘deaestheticization’ of the aesthetic tradition in the West. In order to arrive at an adequate characterization of the former, it will be necessary, however, to delimit it from what it is not. With a view towards this end, a brief introduction to the notion of Western aesthetics and its foundation in the Platonic Ideas, as well as the latter’s role in Arthur Schopenhauer’s aesthetic thought, will be addressed in Chapter 1. The Platonic Ideas’ centrality in Schopenhauer’s aesthetic will be illustrated from passages taken from Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, where his notion of the aesthetic is discussed most extensively.

In Chapter 2, Heidegger’s critique of what he considers the dominating influence of the Platonic Ideas will be discussed using Arthur Schopenhauer’s aesthetic theory as an example of the intersection of both (Platonic) Idea-founded schemata—form/matter and knowing/experiencing. Introductory remarks and terminological clarifications of some of Heidegger’s key notions concerning the work of art will then be given. Chapter 2 concludes

⁴ For a general overview of this topic, see Terry Eagleton, The Ideology of the Aesthetics (Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell, 1990) Introduction.

with an examination of Martin Heidegger's thought on the work of art as *Welteröffnung*. In this examination, Heidegger's essay on the origin of the work of art, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes", will serve as the primary text. Heidegger's, Nietzsche, will also provide crucial elucidation of certain central notions in his critique of the Western aesthetic.

CHAPTER 1

PLATO AND ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Heidegger characterizes the philosophy of Plato as the beginning of philosophical aesthetics. With Plato's philosophy is ushered in a certain interpretation of what the work of art is, as well as the circumstances surrounding it, such as its creator, its purpose, and its audience. As we stated in the Introduction, philosophical aesthetics does not merely define what the work of art is in and for itself, but rather defines it in relation to a certain interpretational discourse, or worldview.

Plato (c. 427 BC - 347 BC) was interested in the question of true existence—that is, what it means to exist, or to be. Plato wished to know how we could characterize this true being, or existence. He also wished to know how we could all be said to live in a common world—to be able to name and refer to the same things in speech and thought. Plato postulated the existence of perfect Ideas, or Forms, of things in order to account for a common world. These 'perfect' Ideas, or Forms, structure or constitute true being or existence.⁵

A common world is secured, said Plato, by the existence of perfect Ideas that provide a prototype for individual objects falling under a certain Idea. For instance, if we ask how it is that we are able to distinguish various individual things (particulars) in our world as examples of, say, a book, a rose, a chair, a table, and the like, we would in fact be recognizing the perfect Idea of each. More specifically, according to Plato, every particular object or thing in the physical

⁵ The introduction to Plato that is provided in this chapter was informed largely by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, eds., *Philosophies of Art & Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976).

and mental worlds is what it is by virtue of its 'participation' in the Ideas. They provide the genus and species for all objects or things in existence. The 'particularizations' of these Ideas (the individual books, roses, chairs, tables, etc.), however, do not present the Ideas or forms directly. When we perceive (with the senses) an individual chair, for example, we are perceiving a shadowy reflection of the perfect Idea of 'chair'. Indeed, our lives are spent commercing with beings that 'participate' in the Ideas but which are not the Ideas themselves. The particulars occupy the second tier of being; that is, they are one level removed from the nature of things as Idea.

Then Plato asks why we would wish to satisfy ourselves with merely perceiving the shadowy reflections of the perfect Ideas when we could 'know' the Ideas themselves. Plato's philosopher-king does exactly this. She contemplates or stands in a relation to cognitive 'knowledge' of the Ideas. Particular chairs may come and go; they may be created and destroyed. But the Idea of 'chair' is eternal; it was and always will be. Therefore, the realm of the perfect Ideas occupies the first tier of being. To know existence or true being is just to know the perfect Ideas. With the Platonic interpretation of 'reality' as perfect Ideas and of particularizations of them as shadowy reflections, the schemata of knowing/experiencing defines the work of art and its limits.

If we turn to what Plato actually wrote about the work of art, the presuppositions and implications of such a view will become manifest. Plato discusses the arts and their statuses in his philosophy most explicitly in his dialogue, The Republic. There, Plato writes that he will admit the writings of Homer and the other poets into his state, or republic, only if they portray the gods and goddesses 'truly', or 'correctly'. That is, he will admit them only if their poetry 'corresponds' to the true states-of-affairs pertaining to their qualities and attributes. In the same

work, Plato characterizes painting as ‘imitation’ of the perfect Ideas. However, the imitation to which Plato here refers is not an imitation of the Idea itself, but rather an imitation of a particularization of the Idea. When a painter paints a bed or a rose, for example, the painted bed or rose is a copy, or likeness, of the particular bed or rose, which we encounter sensuously. The sensuously encountered bed or rose is a likeness of the Idea of ‘bed’ or ‘rose’, respectively. Thus, the paintings are even further removed from the ‘reality’ of the perfect Ideas than they are from the sensuous things themselves. In our first example, that of Homer and the poets, the mental images evoked from the poetry should always ‘correspond’ to the real states-of-affairs of the gods and goddesses. In our second example, that of painting, although even further removed from ‘reality’ than the bed or rose in its particularity, the painted object is still a painted object ‘of something’.

In all of Plato’s descriptions and critiques of art in his philosophy, its status is already fixed in relation to the Ideas. Poetry is in the service of depicting the qualities of the gods and goddesses ‘correctly’—that is, ‘correspondingly’. The visual arts, while furthest removed from the Ideas, are still in their service. Plato’s understanding of the work of art is circumscribed within an understanding of ‘reality’ (the Ideas) and ‘non-reality’ (particularizations, or instantiations, of those Ideas).

With Plato’s philosophy, as well as his incorporation of the work of art within it, the Ideas define what the work of art is and how it should be created. ‘Matter’, or the material, sensible world, serves as a symbol for, sign of, or image of the Ideas. The schemata form/matter defines the work of art.

The schemata knowing/experiencing and form/matter become definitional for the work of art. The work of art is in the service of the perfect Ideas, the only ‘reality’ there is. As we shall

see later in the thesis, Martin Heidegger contends that, even though these schemata have been reinterpreted throughout the history of the Western philosophical tradition, they, nevertheless, remain unquestioned presuppositions in regard to the proper being of the work of art. And indeed, as we shall see in the next section of this chapter, Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy, some two thousand years after Plato's, while elevating the work of art to a privileged position, still interprets it in relation to the perfect Ideas. These Ideas still constitute 'reality', 'truth', or everything that 'is', in the proper sense of the word.

The Platonic Ideas figure prominently in Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy of the aesthetic.⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer (1788 - 1860) developed a philosophical system in which he postulated the will as ultimate reality. However, the will is also, for Schopenhauer, the seat of misery for human beings. We constantly will, desire, strive, and long for creature comforts, scientific enlightenment, fame, glory, riches, and the like. Schopenhauer sees this ceaseless and unabatingly constant willing as a torturous condition for human beings. Indeed, even scientific enlightenment is inextricably interwoven in a web of motivation and anticipation.

Schopenhauer's philosophy of the work of art offers a release from this condition by lifting us out of the world of will and into a realm of Ideas, which he characterizes as Platonic.

According to Schopenhauer, the experiencer's, or subject's, individuality, as well as the individuality of the thing or things depicted in the work of art, is bracketed, and the experiencer comes to be in a state of knowledge with the Ideas of these objects of sense perception.

According to Schopenhauer, we experience a sense of calm and discover beauty in the Ideas so contemplated. Since the work of art's function is to bring the Platonic Ideas to contemplation,

⁶ The introduction to Schopenhauer that is provided in this chapter was informed by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns, eds., Philosophies of Art & Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976).

every Idea capable of being presented artistically is ‘beautiful’. Yet even though Schopenhauer’s aesthetic philosophy widens the scope of what can be termed ‘beautiful’, it still remains within the Western aesthetic of the ‘beautiful’.

How exactly, though, is Schopenhauer’s aesthetic grounded in the schemata of form/matter and knowing/experiencing? To answer this question, we must first ask ourselves how Schopenhauer characterizes the work of art itself. Working backward from this characterization, the presuppositions it involves will become more evident. After providing a more in-depth characterization of the role of the Ideas in Schopenhauer’s aesthetic, we will continue the analysis with a brief description of how the Ideas embedded in the work of art are experienced. More specifically, we will examine the modes of access to the work of art, according to Schopenhauer? Finally, Schopenhauer’s notion of the experiencer herself will be examined.

For Schopenhauer, the work of art expresses “...das innerste Wesen alles Lebens und Daseyns” (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II 2: 542). That is, the work of art expresses, to a greater or lesser extent, the Idea or Ideas embodied in it. Schopenhauer characterizes his notion of Idea as “die Erkenntnis des Objekts, nicht als einzelnen Dinges, sondern als Platonischer Idee, d.h. als beharrender Form dieser ganzen Gattung von Dingen” (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 295).

The Ideas are “Urformen aller Dinge,” and, as such, they are “wahrhaft seiend” (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 262). For example, there are many different kinds of trees of many different heights, shapes, and widths. There are also different species of trees, such as elms, poplars, oaks, redwoods, cedars, and birches. For Schopenhauer, the Idea ‘tree’ lends

being to all trees. The Idea of the genus 'tree' also has Ideas under it. The Ideas are the structure of 'reality' for Schopenhauer. He writes,

Daher, wenn ich z.B. einen Baum ästhetisch, d.h. mit künstlerischen Augen betrachte, also nicht ihn, sondern seine Idee erkenne, es sofort ohne Bedeutung ist, ob es dieser Baum oder sein vor tausend Jahren blühender Vorfahr ist, und ebenso ob der Betrachter dieses, oder irgend ein anderes, irgendwann und irgendwo lebendes Individuum ist...(1: 314)

The work of art embodies qualities that are universal, timeless, and transcultural for Schopenhauer.

Moreover, Schopenhauer postulates grades of Ideas, which are exhibited in various mediums of artwork. For instance, architecture exhibits lower-grade Ideas, such as gravity, cohesion, rigidity, and hardness. Sculpture, on the other hand, exhibits higher-grade Ideas, such as movement and rest. Painting exhibits lower- or higher-grade Ideas, such as hue, color, and brightness or trees and human beings, respectively.

Ideas also include those of relations. Thus Schopenhauer claims,

...Dem Gesagten gemäß ist es zum Verständniß und ästhetischen Genuß eines Werkes der Architektur unumgänglich nöthig, von seiner Materie, nach ihrem Gewicht, ihrer Starrheit und Kohäsion, eine unmittelbare, anschauliche Kenntniß zu haben; und unsere Freude an einem solchen Werke würde plötzlich sehr verringert werden, durch die Eröffnung, daß Bimmstein das Baumaterial sei: denn da würde es uns wie eine Art Scheingebäude vorkommen. (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 322)

For Schopenhauer, the relations among the various Ideas in a work of art are an important consideration for the artist while creating it. In architecture, for instance, the Ideas of balance and proportion are crucial for the particular architectural structure. Any poorly conceived relation among various Ideas by the architect would diminish the aesthetic experience arising from their interaction in a given architectural structure. To recapitulate the above, Ideas admit of

degrees; they are universal and timeless; and they may be expressed more or less clearly in the work of art, depending upon the art medium and the materials used.

Having some sense of Schopenhauer's notion of the end, or purpose, of the work of art, as exhibiting the Ideas, we are now in a position to ask how Schopenhauer characterizes the effect of the Ideas upon the perceiver. For it is through this effect that the work of art is distinguishable from other artifacts and objects. Throughout the discussion of his aesthetic, Schopenhauer describes the aesthetic effect in a variety of ways. For instance, the aesthetic object, for the perceiver or subject, is "schön" (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 315). Not only, however, does the work of art elicit the judgement 'schön' in us, but it also elicits feelings that Schopenhauer describes as having "anregende Kraft" (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II 2: 546). The beholder, while contemplating Ideas in the work of art, becomes transfixed by those Ideas. The subject, who is contemplating the Ideas themselves, feels a sense of tranquillity and repose.

After having discussed what the work of art embodies and its effects upon the perceiver, we now turn to the faculties in the perceiver requisite for aesthetic experiences. How does Schopenhauer characterize these? And no less important, how does he describe the mode of access required of the perceiver in order to appreciate an object aesthetically? The Ideas may be liberated, or brought to cognition, by many different mediums of art. For instance, Schopenhauer discusses painting, in particular the Dutch still-life masters; architecture; and literature separately, according to their respective abilities to manifest their Idea(s). Yet even though they present the Ideas through different mediums, the various art forms all have something in common in Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory—they are all in the service of bringing

the Ideas to cognition. For that reason, the only mode of aesthetic access, for Schopenhauer, is that of knowing. He writes,

In folge der vorhergegangenen Kapitel und meiner ganzen Ansicht von der Kunst, ist ihr Zweck die Erleichterung der Erkenntniß der Ideen der Welt (im platonischen Sinn, dem einzigen, den ich für das Wort Idee anerkenne). (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II 2: 544-5)

The perceiver, through a particular medium of art, comes to be in a state of knowledge of the Idea.

While knowing is the only mode of access to the Ideas that Schopenhauer recognizes as capable of eliciting an aesthetic response in us, perception (that is, sensory perception) is, nevertheless, essential to contemplation and, with it, the aesthetic effect. Continuing the quote immediately above, Schopenhauer writes,

Die Ideen aber sind wesentlich ein Anschauliches und daher, in seinen nähern Bestimmungen, Uerschöpfliches. Die Mittheilung eines solchen kann daher nur auf dem Wege der Anschauung geschehen, welches der der Kunst ist. (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II 2: 545)

Through sense perception of the object, which is determined by the art medium, the subject is brought into a state of contemplation of the Idea. Schopenhauer, when discussing the aesthetically peculiar relation between perception and knowledge, uses the term *Erkenntniß* in reference to our state of knowledge of the Ideas. The verb form of *Erkenntniß*, *erkennen*, is used typically with *als*. This usage implies the recognition of something as something. And indeed, Schopenhauer's use of *Erkenntniß* would appear to stress the relation between perceiving and knowing very well indeed. This visually perceived something in front of us is taken (cognized) as something (an Idea).

The modes of contemplation and perception, though, are, by no means, the only prerequisites for access to the Ideas and the aesthetic experience. In his discussion of the inner

nature of the work of art in Chapter 34 of the Third Book of Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Schopenhauer also considers the imagination as necessary for an aesthetic experience arising from the Idea.

...Die oben zum Genuß eines Kunstwerkes verlangte Mitwirkung des Beschauers beruht zum Theil darauf, daß jedes Kunstwerk nur durch das Medium der Phantasie wirken kann, daher es diese anregen muß und sie nie aus dem Spiel gelassen werden und unthätig bleiben darf. (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung II 2: 543)

Perception alone only gives us access to objects of everyday experience, objects of the will—of desire, want, and, ultimately, pain. Since every work of art, to a greater or lesser extent, obscures its enmattered Ideas—that is, presents them to the perceiver unclearly—the imagination must also be in play while viewing works of art. For Schopenhauer, the imagination seems to be a comparative faculty. And in this respect, it provides us the most insight into Schopenhauer's division of the perceptive and cognitive faculties. The imagination takes the perception of what is 'given' and brings it on the 'right path' to knowledge of the Ideas.

Lastly, Schopenhauer claims that the memory provides access to the Idea embedded in the work of art. This mode of access, for Schopenhauer, works almost exclusively in the absence of the work of art itself. At first glance, this appears somewhat paradoxical. How could a memory give rise to an aesthetic experience? However, Schopenhauer grounds this mode of access in the three previously discussed perceptual, imaginative, and cognitive modes and, as a result, secures the possibility of such an experience through the already perceptually, imaginatively, and cognitively experienced aesthetic object (*i.e.*, the Idea). In regard to the memory's role in the aesthetic, Schopenhauer states,

Daher kommt es, daß besonders wann mehr als gewöhnlich irgend eine Noth uns beängstiget, die plötzliche Erinnerung an Scenen der Vergangenheit und Entfernung wie ein verlorenes Paradies an uns vorüberfliegt. Bloß das Objektive, nicht das individuell-Subjektive ruft die Phantasie zurück, und wir

bilden uns ein, daß jenes Objektive damals eben so rein, von keiner Beziehung auf den Willen getrübt vor uns gestanden habe, wie jetzt sein Bild in der Phantasie... (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 299)

We can sum up the above and say that the Ideas, in a manner of speaking, lend themselves to cognition, perception, imagination, and memory. And similarly, cognition, perception, imagination, and memory lend themselves to the Ideas.

How does Schopenhauer characterize the perceiver of the Platonic Idea? The quote shown immediately above gives us a clue as to what Schopenhauer has in mind. For Schopenhauer, the subject of the aesthetic experience is “das Selbstbewußtseyn des Erkennenden, nicht als Individuums, sondern als reinen, willenlosen Subjekts der Erkenntniß” (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 295). Whenever the subject is in the act of perceiving (*i.e.*, perceiving in the broad sense, even perceiving while remembering), the individual will—and along with it, drives, wants, desires, and pains, in which it rejoices and from which it suffers—is suspended. The aesthetic perceiver is the subject of pure consciousness and, as such, is an abstraction. Schopenhauer continues,

Jenes Freiwerden der Erkenntniß hebt uns aus dem Allen eben so sehr und ganz heraus, wie der Schlaf und der Traum: Glück und Unglück sind verschwunden: wir sind nicht mehr das Individuum, es ist vergessen, sondern nur noch reines Subjekt der Erkenntniß: wir sind nur noch da als das eine Weltauge, was aus allen erkennenden Wesen blickt, im Menschen allein aber völlig frei vom Dienste des Willens werden kann... (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 298)

The pure will-less, abstract subject is the aesthetic experiencer for Schopenhauer. The subject, or experiencer, no longer relates to the world of will and of matter. Likewise, the Ideas brought to contemplation are only in relation to one other.

To summarize, for Schopenhauer, knowing, perceiving, imagining, and remembering are crucial for the aesthetic experience. Paramount, however, is the cognitive mode of access.

Through the other faculties, the subject is placed in a state of knowledge of the Ideas.

Perceiving, imagining, and remembering are always for the sake of knowing the Idea(s) and, as a result, being affected aesthetically. Moreover, for Schopenhauer, the subject and the Idea are relation-less to the world while they are contemplating and being contemplated, respectively.

In conclusion, even though Plato's and Schopenhauer's views on the work of art represent two very different positions, they both, however, begin with the same 'reality' as the perfect Ideas, or Forms. For Plato, the being of the work of art is the furthest removed from the true being or 'reality' of the Ideas. Works of art become, with Plato, symbols, signs, and images pointing to the Ideas. Since the Ideas are only knowable through cognition, the work of art, because of its very nature as sensible, is excluded from such revealing of true being. Indeed, with Plato, the division between knowing and experiencing is first brought into being. Because the work of art has to do with sense experience, it cannot reveal true being. With Plato, works of art 'truly' or 'falsely' represent or 'correspond to' their intended Ideas. While the workings of Schopenhauer's aesthetic differ quite a bit from those of Plato, Schopenhauer, too, defines the work of art in relation to the perfect Ideas, or Forms. And even though the work of art for Schopenhauer is given an exalted status, it still remains in the confines of sensory experience and cognitive knowledge.

CHAPTER 2

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Throughout his professional career, Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976) concerned himself with the question, ‘What is Being?’⁷ Indeed, the stages of his thought may be seen as continually evolving meditations upon this one question. But isn’t the answer to this question quite obvious? Beings surround us. We see them, think about them, hear them, touch them, feel them, and remember them constantly. Further, we classify them, analyze them, synthesize them again, and expect their continued existence from day to day. The question is simply one a child would ask. Beings are the most self-evident of the self-evident. However, could it be that the answers to the question ‘What is Being?’ in every case already presuppose certain interpretations of what and how Being ‘is’?

For Heidegger, what Being is has been forgotten. Human beings find themselves in what he calls *Seinsvergessenheit* (the forgetting of Being). The problem of *Seinsvergessenheit*, for Heidegger, is a question of the tendency of human beings to forget or overlook their own mode of being. Heidegger characterizes human beings as *Dasein* (a being-there). As *Dasein*, human beings commerce with the world in a very particular way. That is to say, only beings such as *Dasein* have a *Welt*, or world. Heidegger also characterizes *Dasein*’s being as *in-der-Welt-sein*. This second characterization gives us a clue as to how *Dasein* and *Welt* belong to one another.

⁷ For excellent introductions to Martin Heidegger’s thought, see: David Farrell Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 1977). George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987). Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heidegger’s Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

In our everyday dealings with the world, we are constantly encountering *Welt*. The world we encounter, though, is not one of objects standing over against us, as mere objectifications. We encounter things of importance, things of a critical nature, and things of no importance. We anticipate, we wish, we hope for things in the future, and we weep and feel sorrow for things in the past. As George Steiner states,

Heidegger is saying that the notion of existential identity [*Dasein*] and that of world [*Welt*] are completely wedded. To be at all is to be *worldly*. The everyday is the enveloping wholeness of being. The “meeting up” of *Dasein* and the world, which gives definition to both, comes under the humble but immensely important headings of *Tatsächlichkeit* and *Facticity*. English “facticity” covers only thinly and awkwardly the vehement concreteness of the two terms. We overlook the all-determining centrality of our being-in-the-world because the everyday actualities of this inhabiting are so various and seemingly banal. They consist, says Heidegger, of having to do with something, producing something, attending to and looking after something, making use of something, giving up something, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining, and knowing something. (85)

This passage proves particularly illustrative for our purposes. As Steiner observes, *Dasein* and *Welt* are “wedded” to one another (85). They lend meaning to one another. According to Heidegger, *Dasein* dwells in the world ‘primordially’ in the above manner. That is, *Dasein*’s origin or primordial *Seinsverständnis* (understanding of Being), its answer to the question ‘What is Being?’, is its everyday dealings with *Welt*. Steiner continues the quote above, “This last way [knowing] of being-in-the-world is especially noteworthy. Knowing ... is a kind of being. Knowledge is not some mysterious leap from the subject to object and back again” (85). Not only are *Dasein* and its *Welt* co-founding, but also the former’s mode of knowing.

A particular instance of this ‘knowing’ is Heidegger’s description, in his work, Sein und Zeit, of *Werkzeugsein* (the Being of a tool totality). The carpenter, as she makes a cabinet, commences in a very particular way with her tools and her materials, in order to actually make the cabinet. All tools and materials are gathered around her in order to make the cabinet. Their

location in space is determined, not geometrically, but according to the reach of her arms, the stance of her legs, the tools' weights and sizes, and so on. She knows them in this sense of their serviceability or non-serviceability, and not in an objectifying sense of mathematical determinability. *Dasein* 'knows' its *Welt* in the sense of commercing with it, losing itself in it. Only because *Dasein* knows its *Welt* in a primordial sense, does it have the possibility of losing itself.

As *Dasein* commerces in *Welt*, Heidegger maintains, it 'loses itself' in the latter? This point is extremely important for our later analysis of Heidegger's rejection of the Western aesthetic tradition and its philosophical commitments. Heidegger alleges that, even though *Welt* is 'there' for *Dasein*, it is 'there' in a very special way. His general term for being 'there' is *Anwesenheit*, or in English, 'presencing'. When *Dasein* is authentically engaged in *Welt*, it does not 'presence' as an object standing over against a subject. Authentically, *Welt* 'presences' as a referential totality of meanings. *Welt*, however, when 'presencing', does so in a manner in accordance with *Dasein*'s mode of being. That is, *Welt* 'presences' as a temporal whole, so to speak. *Dasein* is constantly in the midst of beings and, as such, constantly plans, anticipates, looks forward to, dreads, fears, and the like. Likewise, *Dasein* gives things up, forgoes bad habits, and makes promises. All *Dasein*'s engagements or interactions in its *Welt* 'presence' in a 'co-presencing' structure of *Gewesenheit* (the past) – *Gegenwart* (the present) – *Zukunft* (the future). Heidegger's point seems to be that, for example, while working on a project, *Dasein* is directed toward the project's completion in the future, is guided by progress made in the past, and makes decisions about both in the present. This temporality in all three dimensions is the essence of *Dasein*.⁸

⁸ For an introduction to many of Heidegger's basic notions, including *Dasein*, *Welt*, and 'temporality', see: George Steiner, Martin Heidegger (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987) Chapters i and ii.

Heidegger now poses the question, ‘if *Dasein* does indeed dwell primordially in the world in this fashion (*in-der-Welt-sein*), isn’t this notion of being more ‘true’ than objectified, world-estranged, and ‘qualified’ *Gegenstände*—objects that have been reified from everydayness?’ Heidegger answers this question with a resounding ‘Ja’. When *Welt* is opened up, *Wahrheit* (truth) occurs. Our everyday comportment with the world is, however, not the only way in which *Welt* is open for *Dasein*. *Welteröffnung*, or opening up of world, also characterizes, for Heidegger, the being of the work of art.

With the advent of the Western aesthetic via Plato’s perfect Ideas, the status of the work of art, that is its relegation to mere appearance and mimesis (of the Ideas), conceals the essence of the work of art as *Welteröffnung*. Indeed, for Martin Heidegger, Western aesthetics begins with Plato’s Theory of Ideas and the schemata form/matter and knowing/experiencing, which were discussed in Chapter 1. More specifically, Heidegger contends that with the dawn of metaphysics, via the Ideas, comes an understanding of the work of art that is grounded in sensory experience and a certain type of *Wissen*, or knowledge. As we have seen, such characterizations of art as ‘mimesis’, or imitation (of perfect Ideas), and the artwork’s inability to reveal ‘reality’ to us (in Plato’s philosophy), for Heidegger, already presuppose a certain domain, in which the being of the work of art resides. The work of art’s modes of expression as fine art (‘representative’ and ‘non-representative’ art), its process of creation as Ideas preconceived by the artist, its origination in the perceptible, and its audience are already understood. For Heidegger, these interpretations, or *Auslegungen*, conceal the essence of the work of art as world-disclosure, or *Welteröffnung*.

One of Heidegger’s most sustained criticisms of the metaphysics of the aesthetic is found in his two-volume work, Nietzsche. In the first essay in Volume One, “Der Wille zur Macht als

Kunst”, Heidegger enumerates six *Grundtatsachen*, which have characterized the presuppositions of Western aesthetic thought since the time of Plato. In the second of these, Heidegger writes,

Die Ästhetik beginnt bei den Griechen erst in dem Augenblick, da die große Kunst, aber auch die gleichlaufende große Philosophie zu ihrem Ende gehen. In dieser Zeit, dem Zeitalter Platons und des Aristoteles, werden im Zusammenhang der Ausgestaltung der Philosophie diejenigen Grundbegriffe geprägt, die künftig den Gesichtskreis für alle Fragen nach der Kunst abstecken. Das ist einmal das Begriffspaar...materia – forma, Stoff – Form. (Nietzsche I 95)

In the passage above, Heidegger is referring to the metaphysical distinction between form (the Platonic Idea) and matter. For Heidegger, this *Auslegung*, or ‘interpretation’, of the being of the work of art marks the beginning of the Western metaphysical tradition and, with it, the foundations of both the Platonic and the Schopenhauerian aesthetic. In his essay, “Die Metaphysik als Geschichte des Seins”, in the second volume of Nietzsche, Heidegger elaborates upon the distinction between matter and form more thoroughly when he writes, “Die Unterscheidung in Was-sein und Daß-sein enthält nicht nur ein Lehrstück des metaphysischen Denkens. Sie zeigt auf ein Ereignis in der Geschichte des Seins” (Nietzsche II 402). The *Anwesenheit*, or ‘presencing’, of the Platonic Ideas marks an *Ereignis* in the history of Being. Being is, from then on, characterized as “Anwesenheit und Beständigkeit im Sinne des Verweilens...” (403).

But what does the term *Anwesenheit* mean here? And what exactly does *Beständigkeit* mean? In regard to the term *Anwesenheit*, Heidegger differentiates between *Anwesenheit* understood nominally and verbally.⁹ Heidegger refers to the *Anwesen* in *Anwesenheit* as a *Her-vor-bringen*, or ‘bringing to the fore’. This *Her-vor-bringen*, interpreted nominally (as

⁹ See Gerhard Faden, Der Schein der Kunst: Zu Heideggers Kritik der Ästhetik (Würzburg [Ger.]: Königshausen, 1986) 49.

Beständigkeit), ‘presences’ or is *anwesend* to *Dasein* as something *her- und vor- gestellt*. That is, *Dasein*’s *Welt* now becomes objectified. With this objectification of *Welt* comes the subjectification of *Dasein* as, in Plato’s philosophy, the soul, and in Schopenhauer’s, the will-less subject of aesthetic contemplation. Heidegger seems to mean here that the Ideas, or Forms, (objectifications) do violence to the ‘presencing’, or the manner of revealing being of *Dasein*’s non-objectified, non-subjectified *Welt*.

William Richardson, in his discussion of *Beständigkeit* in Heidegger, through Phenomenology to Thought, states,

...The sense here is that beings [the Ideas] somehow strive to refuse the negativity that is proper to them and to become constant in their revealment, as if this were possible. This is what is meant by ... [Beständigkeit] ... constancy. (518)

The *Beständigkeit* of Ideas, which is the *Ereignis* in the history of Being, is the cornerstone of Western aesthetics for Heidegger. The Platonic Ideas have no negativity because they are pure presence. They are prototypes constituting ‘reality’ and, as such, structuring it as *Waß-sein* (what-ness) and *Daß-sein* (how-ness). Richardson continues,

Once the essence of a being’s Being consists in its *waß* ([Platonic Idea] its what-ness), then it is the what-ness of the being that most authentically *is*. Hence the *waß* is raised to the level of what alone authentically is (*waßt* ??). The things of experience properly speaking are not, they only ‘participate’ in that being which is pure what-ness. (307)

In the quote above, what does Richardson mean when he asserts that the “...things of experience properly speaking are not, they only ‘participate’ in that being which is pure what-ness”? As we recall from Chapter 1, the objects of perception are, for Plato, only unclear images of the Ideas. With the Platonic turn toward the Ideas, the arts are placed in the service of creating likenesses of the things of experience, which, in turn, only ‘participate’ in the Ideas.

The *Ereignis*, as ‘presencing’ through a constant ‘what-ness’, as we have said, is the cornerstone of aesthetics. It is this, however, in several respects. First, according to Heidegger, after Plato, Being ‘is’ in two ways; it ‘presences’ as *Beständigkeit* (constancy) and, properly speaking, it is only knowable. That is to say, the relation between man and what ‘is’ is mediated only through knowing and retained only as ‘Idea known’. Notice here that both Plato and Schopenhauer say as much about the Ideas. Secondly, ‘presencing’ as *Beständigkeit*, the Ideas become subject to classifications predicated on their ‘what-ness’. ‘Reality’ is now analyzable into qualities or predicates. Thirdly, sensory experience becomes the medium through which the Ideas are known and is, in the process, defined by them. Sense experience, as we have seen, for Schopenhauer, is indeed crucial for the aesthetic. However, it is important only insofar as it enmatters the Ideas. Commenting on this subordination, Heidegger writes,

Der Name »Ästhetik« ist entsprechend gebildet wie »Logik« und »Ethik«. Zu ergänzen ist immer $\mu\sigma\tau\eta\sigma$, Wissen. Logik: $\mu\sigma\tau\eta\sigma$: Wissen vom $\mu\sigma\tau\eta\sigma$, d.h. Lehre vom Aussagen, Urteilen als der Grundform des Denkens. Logik: Wissen vom Denken, von Denkformen und Denkregeln. Ethik...Wissen vom..., von der inneren Haltung des Menschen und der Weise, wie sie sich Verhalten bestimmt...Entsprechend ist das Wort »Ästhetik« gebildet...Wissen vom sinnlichen, empfindungs- und gefühlsmäßigen Verhalten des Menschen und von dem, wodurch es bestimmt wird. (Nietzsche I 92)

The work of art, defined in relation to an aesthetic in the service of the Ideas, becomes relegated to the status of a method and a body of facts. Just as with logic and ethics, aesthetics becomes relegated to a certain region in which its perimeters are fixed. Its medium and goals become likewise firmly established. Heidegger continues,

Das Wesen der $\tau\epsilon\chi\eta$ [techne] erfährt nun mit dem Aufkommen der Unterscheidung von Stoff und Form [the Ideas] eine bestimmt gerichtete Auslegung und verliert die ursprüngliche und weite Bedeutungskraft...Sofern aber die $\tau\epsilon\chi\eta$ dann ausdrücklich zur Herstellung von schönen Dingen und ihrer Vorstellung in Bezug gebracht wird, rückt die Besinnung auf die Kunst auf dem Wege über das Schöne in den Bereich der Ästhetik. (97-8)

The Ideas, as well as their resultant form/matter and knowing/experiencing schemata, are “eine bestimmt gerichtete Auslegung” of Being (97). The Platonic notion of truth has derailed the original sense of the term *techne*, and the latter loses or forfeits its “ursprüngliche und weite Bedeutungskraft...” (97). For Heidegger, the word *ursprünglich* is crucial. The original sense of what makes *Dasein* itself, *techne* as a bringing forth of truth, becomes lost.

Heidegger elaborates upon this “ursprüngliche und weite Bedeutungskraft...” (Nietzsche I 98) of *techne*, before the Platonic turn, when he writes,

Das Wort [*techne*] ist von vorhinein nicht und nie die Bezeichnung für ein »Machen« und Hervorbringen, sondern für dasjenige Wissen, das allen menschlichen Aufbruch inmitten des Seienden trägt und führt. Deshalb ist *techne* oft die Bezeichnung für das menschliche Wissen schlechthin. Im besondern gilt dann jenes Wissen als *techne*, das diejenige Auseinandersetzung und Bewältigung des Seienden leitet und begründet, in der eigens zu dem schon gewachsenen Seienden... hinzu und auf dessen Grund neues und anderes Seiendes hergestellt und erzeugt wird, das Gebrauchszeug und die Werke der Kunst. Aber auch hier meint *techne* nie ein Machen und das handwerkliche Tun als solches, sondern immer das Wissen, das Aufschließen des Seienden als solchen, in der Art der wissenden Leitung eines Hervorbringens... Der Künstler ist nicht deshalb ein *techne*, weil er auch ein Handwerker ist, sondern weil sowohl das Hervorbringen von Werken als auch das Hervorbringen von Gebrauchszeug ein Aufbruch des wissenden und vorgehenden Menschen ist inmitten der *techne* und auf dem Grunde der *techne*. Das griechisch zu denkende »Vorgehen« ist jedoch nicht Angriff, sondern Ankommenlassen: das schon Anwesende. (Nietzsche I 97)

Techne (*techne*) was originally used by the Greeks to describe the process of bringing forth truth. The truth of *techne*, however, lay in letting a being ‘be’ what it was. In this sense, art and hand-trades, or *Handwerke*, were indistinguishable from one another. Indeed, they both sprang from a bringing forth of truth peculiar to human beings, who possess “dasjenige Wissen, das allen menschlichen Aufbruch inmitten des Seienden trägt und führt” (97). However, the word ‘possess’ should be used cautiously here. Heidegger’s notion of *Wissen*, a *Wissen* that is characterized by *Dasein*, as we have said, is not that of a subject possessing mental attributes or

standing over against objects. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that this *Wissen* 'is' *Dasein*. Indeed, according to Heidegger's interpretation of *techne* in the pre-Platonic sense, the bringing forth of truth, this *Wissen* refused every 'methodizing' of it.

We can sum up Heidegger's critique of the Western aesthetic tradition by saying that it is structured around being as, what he terms, *Beständigkeit*. We need only consider Schopenhauer's understanding of the art-making process itself in order to better grasp the difference between art as 'realized Idea' and Heidegger's notion of *Welteröffnung*.

Schopenhauer writes,

Allen unsern bisherigen Betrachtungen über die Kunst liegt überall die Wahrheit zum Grunde, daß das Objekt der Kunst, dessen Darstellung der Zweck des Künstlers ist, dessen Erkenntniß folglich seinem Werk als Keim und Ursprung vorhergehen muß, – eine Idee, in Platons Sinne, ist und durchaus nichts Anderes: nicht das einzelne Ding, das Objekt der gemeinen Auffassung; auch nicht der Begriff, das Objekt des vernünftigen Denkens und der Wissenschaft. (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 347)

This passage is salient for three reasons. First, it illustrates the arts' subordination to the Ideas. Art, for Schopenhauer, exists to represent the Ideas. Its value resides in its ability to present 'reality' as it really 'is' and, thereby, elicit an aesthetic response from a 'will-less subject' or 'experiencer'. Second, it characterizes Schopenhauer's understanding of the creative process. The artist's job is to embody the Idea in the work of art as well as possible. The artist begins her work with the Idea 'in mind' and, through the manipulation of a medium and the use of her imagination, forms the material in such a way that the Ideas become, if the work succeeds, readily manifest. Art is based teleologically in the Ideas. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the passage illustrates the relation that exists between the work of art and "das Objekt des vernünftigen Denkens und der Wissenschaft" (1: 347). In the work of art, for Schopenhauer, the Idea is grasped in the absence of all connections or relations to objects conditioned by the law of

sufficient reason. That is to say, the work of art has become objectified. The Ideas apprehended in and through it are timeless, relation-less, and transcultural. However, if the Ideas represent the domination of a certain interpretation of Being, and if those Ideas have served as the foundation of philosophical aesthetics since Plato, how, then, are we to understand Heidegger's thinking concerning art?

In regard to what the work of art is, Gerhard Faden, commenting on and quoting from Heidegger's essay "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," writes, "Das Werk richtet den Streit von Lichtung und Verbergung als solchen ein. Damit ergibt sich als Kriterium des Kunstwerkes: ,Wo die Hervorbringung eigens die Offenheit des Seienden, die Wahrheit, bringt, ist das Hervorgebrachte ein Werk' " (61). The work of art is the happening of *Wahrheit* (truth), grounded in the *Unverborgenheit*, or \aleph (unconcealment), of Being. As such, "Wahrheit west nur als der Streit zwischen Lichtung [Unverborgenheit] und Verbergung in der Gegenwendigkeit von Welt und Erde" (Holzwege 51). For Heidegger, *Lichtung*, or *Unverborgenheit*, and *Verbergung*, as well as *Welt* and *Erde*, are essential to being of the work of art. We shall examine each pair in turn.

In his essay, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," Heidegger expounds upon his notion of the work of art as the bringing forth of *Wahrheit* using an example taken from the medium of painting—van Gogh's Peasant Shoes. In his commentary on the painting, Heidegger writes, "Das Kunstwerk gab zu wissen, was das Schuhzeug in Wahrheit ist" (Holzwege 24). He continues,

Was geschieht hier? Was ist im Werk am Werk? Van Goghs Gemälde ist die Eröffnung [Lichtung] dessen, was das Zeug, das Paar Bauernschuhe, in Wahrheit *ist*. Dieses Seiende tritt in die Unverborgenheit seines Seins heraus. Die Unverborgenheit des Seienden nannten die Griechen \aleph . Wir sagen Wahrheit und denken wenig genug bei diesem Wort. Im Werk ist, wenn da

eine Eröffnung des Seienden geschieht, in dem was und wie es ist, ein
geschehen der Wahrheit am Werk. (25)

Heidegger alludes to the fact that *Wahrheit*, when thought upon at all, is usually regarded as agreement, or correspondence, between a statement (a logical proposition) or a mental image and the ‘actual’, or ‘real’, state-of-affairs or object, to which the former ‘refers’. Heidegger’s notion of the being of the work of art as a bringing forth of *Wahrheit*, through *Unverborgenheit*, in its original meaning, is anything but the traditional view of truth (and art) as *Übereinstimmung*, or *Anmessung* with an Idea, which is merely “Die Wiedergabe des Vorhandenen” (25). The Greek notion of ‘unconcealment’, upon which Heidegger elaborates in his thinking on the work of art, does not distort that which is unconcealed, but rather lets it shine forth and ‘be’ as that which it ‘is’.

Wahrheit, however, ‘presences’ not only as *Lichtung* or *Unverborgenheit*, but also as *Verbergung*. These terms, *Unverborgenheit* and *Verbergung*, are not opposites, but rather they presuppose one another. Heidegger writes, “Die Wahrheit ist ihrem Wesen nach Un-Wahrheit” (*Holzwege* 43). Heidegger characterizes *Verbergung* as either a *Versagen* or a *Verstellen*. *Verbergung* as *Versagen* characterizes Being as ‘refusal’. That is, Being announces itself in and through its absence. *Verbergung* as *Verstellen*, on the other hand, announces itself as dissembling or dissimulating (Kockelmans 183-184). Beings appear or purport to be that which they are not.

Returning to our example, how are the shoes in the van Gogh painting ‘unconcealed’ to the peasant woman? Heidegger maintains that, for the peasant woman, the shoes are ‘unconcealed’ in their artifactual being, exactly when they are not ‘presencing’ as objectifications to the peasant woman; that is, when they are not *Gegenstände*. In like manner, the artist’s task is to ‘unconceal’ the being of the shoes through a particular art medium, not as an

object of artistic portrayal, but as *Werkzeugsein*, in the ‘presencing’ manner of a *Werkzeug*. According to Heidegger, the artist, in this case van Gogh, does not consider the shoes as one object among many or, that is to say, as *vorhanden*. Much less does he have the shoes ‘in mind’ while sketching them beforehand or painting them as the Idea ‘shoe’, which he must ‘particularize’ in the work. Rather, the essence of the work of art resides in ‘unconcealing’ and preserving *Wahrheit*, in other words, letting the thing be what it ‘is’. This is the true task of art, according to Heidegger.

Wahrheit, as letting beings be what they ‘are’, literally is van Gogh’s painting.

Heidegger continues his description from above,

Aus der dunklen Öffnung des ausgetretenen Inwendigen des Schuhzeuges starrt die Mühsal der Arbeitsschritte. In der derbgediegenen Schwere des Schuhzeugs ist aufgestaut die Zähigkeit des langsamen Ganges durch die weithin gestreckten und immer gleichen Furchen des Ackers, über dem ein rauher Wind steht. Auf dem Leder liegt das Feuchte und Satte des Bodens. Unter den Sohlen schiebt sich hin die Einsamkeit des Feldweges durch den sinkenden Abend. In dem Schuhzeug schwingt der verschwiegene Zuruf der Erde, ihr stilles Verschenken des reifenden Kornes und ihr unerklärtes Sichversagen in der öden Brache des winterlichen Feldes. Durch dieses Zeug zieht das klaglose Bangen um die Sicherheit des Brotes, die wortlose Freude des Wiederüberstehens der Not, das Beben in der Ankunft der Geburt und das Zittern in der Umdrohung des Todes. Zur Erde gehört dieses Zeug und in der Welt der Bäuerin ist es behütet. Aus diesem behüteten Zugehören ersteht das Zeug selbst zu seinem Insichruhen. (Holzwege 22-3)

We have said that the *Wahrheit* of the painting does not lie in the faithfulness of a representation to an Idea. Instead, it ‘is’ in the midst of the *Streit* between *Lichtung*, or *Unverborgenheit*, and *Verbergung*, through which the shoes are ‘unconcealed’ in their usefulness and do not become objectified. The *Welt* of the peasant woman incorporates the shoes by ‘unconcealing’ them as *Werkzeuge*. The shoes are not cognized as objects possessing attributes that are, more or less, well represented by van Gogh in the painting. Rather, they are experienced through the world, or *Welt*, of the peasant woman. To say that ‘they’ (the shoes) are ‘experienced’ is just to have

already overlooked them as *Werkzeuge* in the *Welt* of the peasant woman. To notice them in this fashion is to have them ‘presencing’ as things simply *vorhanden*, or objectified.

In order to arrive at a better understanding of the Heideggerian terms *Welt* and *Erde*, and their relation to the work of art, we should begin with a description of what they are not. In regard to the usual understanding of the terms, Heidegger writes disqualifyingly, “Welt ist nicht die bloße Ansammlung der vorhandenen abzählbaren oder unabzählbaren, bekannten und unbekanntem Dinge” (Holzwege 33). Nor is it “ein nur eingebildeter, zur Summe des Vorhandenen hinzu vorgestellter Rahmen,” but rather, “das immer Ungegenständliche, dem wir unterstehen, solange die Bahnen von Geburt und Tod, Segen und Fluch uns in das Sein entrückt halten” (33).

As the two quotes above make clear, *Welt* has nothing to do with “abzählbaren oder unabzählbaren ...Dinge[n],” which ‘presence’ as *Vorhandenheit* (Holzwege 33). Notice that Heidegger’s notion of *Welt* cannot be thought of as a totality in the sense of a mere enumeration of everything or every ontic entity that ‘is’ in the sense of *Gegenstand*. Nor can *Welt* be thought of as a set containing members. Unlike a set, *Welt* cannot be characterized as something over and above its members. Rather, *Welt* is “das Ungegenständliche” (33). Heidegger writes, “Welt...ist seiender als das Greifbare und Vernehmbare, worin wir uns heimisch glauben. Welt ist nie ein Gegenstand, der vor uns steht und angeschaut werden kann” (33). In the moment that ‘objects’ appear, *Welt* recedes. Heidegger writes, “Indem eine Welt sich öffnet [through and in the work of art], bekommen alle Dinge ihre Weile und Eile, ihre Ferne und Nähe, ihre Weite und Enge” (34).

In the case of our example, *Welt* ‘presences’ for the peasant woman in “der derbgediegenen Schwere des Schuhzeugs,” in “[der] Zähigkeit des langsamen Ganges durch die

weithin gestreckten und immer gleichen Furchen des Ackers, über dem ein rauher Wind steht,” in “[dem] verschwiegene[n] Zuruf der Erde, ihr[em] stille[n] Verschenken des reifenden Kornes und ihr[em] unerklärte[n] Sichversagen in der öden Brache des winterlichen Feldes,” and in “[dem] klaglose[n] Bangen um die Sicherheit des Brotes, [der] wortlose[n] Freude des Wiederüberstehens der Not, [dem] Beben in der Ankunft der Geburt und [dem] Zittern in der Umdrohung des Todes” (Holzwege 22-3). If we recall how we characterized *Dasein* in relation to its *Welt* at the beginning of this chapter, Heidegger’s statements above become more comprehensible. The descriptions of *Welt* that Heidegger supplies are temporally extended into the future and the past. The *Welt* of the peasant woman ‘presences’ as a non-objectified, referential totality of meanings, which necessarily includes temporality as a whole.

We now turn to Heidegger’s notion of *Erde*. At first glance, it looks as if this notion would be borrowed from the Western aesthetic tradition and would mean something like the material or matter, from which the work of art is created. Paradoxically, this characterization of *Erde* as ‘useable’ or ‘raw’ material, something in which an Idea is enmattered, for Heidegger, completely obscures its unique place in his thought on art. In regard to Heidegger’s notion of *Erde*, Gerhard Faden writes,

Die Erde kommt also nur unter der Bedingung zum Vorschein, daß sie in der ihr wesenhaft zugehörigen Verborgenheit gelassen wird... Was Farbe in Wahrheit ist, das zeigt sich allein, wo im Zusammenklang der Farben die Lichtung zum Aufschein kommt: Ebendies ist das „Nur-Leuchten“ der Farbe. Die Farbe nur leuchten zu lassen, erfordert eine dem Wesen nach andere Anstrengung als das Eindringen: Es ist das Einfachste und deshalb das Schwierigste. (20)

In this passage, Faden stresses the fact that *Erde* is itself when it is “das Einfachste” (20). *Erde*, understood as matter or material in which Ideas are brought to cognition, becomes a raw material that is, according to the Western aesthetic tradition, common to all works of art.

As with his notion of *Welt*, Heidegger's description of 'Peasant Shoes' gives us a clue as to the significance of *Erde*. In the passage above, he describes it as a "verschwiegene[r] Zuruf," as a "stilles Verschenken," and as an "unerklärtes Sichversagen" (Holzwege 22-3). The last of these descriptions provides perhaps the most insight into the notion of *Erde*. As long as *Erde* remains something 'unerklärtes', then and only then is it properly itself. Heidegger writes in this regard, "Die Erde ist das zu nichts gedrängte Hervorkommen des ständig Sichverschließenden und dergestalt Bergenden" (37). The *Erde* as 'zu nichts gedrängt' and 'unerklärt' 'is' properly itself when it "durchragt die Welt" (37).

The work of art, as a bringing forth of truth, grounds the *Streit* between *Lichtung* and *Verbergung* in the *Gegenwendigkeit* between *Welt* and *Erde*. As Heidegger points out by the term *Gegenwendigkeit*, *Welt* and *Erde* represent at the same time mutual inclusivity and exclusivity in their respective tendencies in the work of art. Only when *Welt* is most properly itself, is *Erde* most properly itself. The work of art allows both *Welt* and *Erde* to be themselves. Heidegger writes, "Aufstellend eine Welt und herstellend die Erde vollbringt das Werk diesen Streit. Das Werksein des Werkes besteht in der Bestreitung des Streites zwischen Welt und Erde" (Holzwege 38). The work of art opens up a world ("...Welt weltet") and at the same time allows the earth to be what it is, a dwelling place for *Dasein* (34). In both their respective tendencies—that is, as *aufstellend* and *herstellend*—a tension as well as a mutual grounding 'presences'. "Erde durchragt nur die Welt, Welt gründet sich nur auf die Erde..." (44).

A passage from Gerhard Faden's book, Der Schein der Kunst: Zu Heideggers Kritik der Ästhetik, illustrates the interplay of *Welt* and *Erde* and their centrality in Heidegger's thought on art quite well. Faden writes,

Cézanne kommt einmal im Gespräch mit Gasquet darauf zu sprechen – gültig auch für van Gogh und Heidegger –, daß sein Bezug zur Natur ein anderer als

der der einheimischen provençalischen Bauern und ihm doch wiederum nah verwandt ist. Von einem Bauern, der Cézanne ein Stück weit begleitet hatte, sagt er: „Er hatte den Sainte-Victoire niemals wirklich gesehen“ (Cézanne, *Über die Kunst* 24). Die Leute wissen, „was da gesätt ist“, „wie morgen das Wetter sein wird“ usw. „allein nach ihren Bedürfnissen, aber daß die Bäume grün sind, und daß dieses Grün ein Baum ist, daß die Erde rot ist, und daß dieses rote Geröll Hügel sind, ich glaube wirklich, daß die meisten es nicht fühlen, daß sie es nicht wissen, außerhalb ihres unbewußten Gefühls für das Nützliche“ (ebd. 24f.). Überraschenderweise betrachtet Cézanne gerade dieses Naturverhältnis als vorbildlich für sich selber: „Ohne etwas von mir selbst zu verlieren, muß ich diesen Instinkt wieder erreichen... Sie empfinden spontan vor einem Gelb die Gebärde der Ernte, die beginnen muß, wie ich aus Instinkt angesichts des gleichen reifen Tons in der Lage sein sollte, auf meine Leinwand die entsprechende Farbe zu setzen, die ein Getreidefeld in wogende Bewegung bringt“ (ebd. 25). (47)¹⁰

In the passage above, Cézanne describes a way of seeing, a way of commercing with beings that is pre-reflective. “Was Cézannes Naturverhältnis mit dem scheinbar so ganz unkünstlerischen Naturverhältnis der provençalischen Bauern verbindet, ist das Fehlen des genießenden, analysierenden und reflektierenden Davorstehens” (Faden 47). Faden continues, in regard to the artist and the work of art,

Der Künstler gebraucht das Zeug [the shoes] nicht, solange er es malt. Er steht dem Zeug somit ferner als die es unmittelbar Gebrauchenden, und diese Ferne ist die notwendige Bedingung seines Schaffens. Aber das Zeug ist für ihn weder Gegenstand rationaler Analyse noch Gegenstand ästhetischen Genusses, sondern er steht zum Zeug wesentlich in demselben Bezug wie die es Gebrauchenden, indem er nämlich nichts anderes tut als eigens zum Vorschein bringen, was jene immer schon wußten. (47)

Indeed, the world of the farmer that Cézanne tries to capture in his painting is anything but an isolated configuration of Ideas eliciting an aesthetic response in an isolated world-estranged will-less ‘subject’ or ‘experiencer’. Rather, the painting ‘unconceals’ beings in their true mode of Being. Cézanne does not see his task as artist in bringing the Ideas in the landscape (*e.g.*, of trees, branches, grass, motion, rest, color, hue, tint, human figures, proportion, etc.) to cognition.

¹⁰ Original source: Cézanne, Paul, *Über die Kunst: Gespräche mit Gasquet, Briefe* (Mittenwald: Hrsg. W. Hess, 1980).

Rather, Cézanne seeks that mode of access to the landscape that would allow him to paint the *Welt* of the farmer as just that—the world as it ‘is’ to the farmer. In the *Welt* of the farmer, his *Wissen* is “was da gesätt ist” and “wie morgen das Wetter sein wird” (47). “Wie morgen das Wetter sein wird” ‘means’ to the farmer the continued growth of the crops or their devastation, crops that nourish his family, a family that has been and continually is on earth and sheltered by it (47).

Similarly, with traditionally so-called ‘non-representational’ art forms, such as architecture, if we regard a structure before us as merely a conglomeration of Ideas, we would not be encountering the structure in its true Being, as that which it ‘is’. Here, too, when *Wahrheit* grounds *Unverborgenheit*, or ‘unconcealment’, a *Welt* is opened up, or ‘presences’, yet not as an objectified conglomeration of qualities that the particular architectural structure manifests more or less clearly, but rather in its true being—in its being as temple. Also, in our present case, with the opening up of *Welt*, *Erde* becomes properly received by it. That is to say, *Erde* ‘presences’ as closure. Heidegger writes,

Ein Bauwerk, ein griechischer Tempel, bildet nichts ab. Er steht einfach da inmitten des zerklüfteten Felsentales. Das Bauwerk umschließt die Gestalt des Gottes und läßt sie in dieser Verbergung durch die offene Säulenhalle hinausstehen in den heiligen Bezirk. Durch den Tempel west der Gott im Tempel an. Dieses Anwesen des Gottes ist in sich die Ausbreitung und Ausgrenzung des Bezirkes als eines Heiligen. Der Tempel und sein Bezirk verschweben aber nicht in das Unbestimmte. Das Tempelwerk fügt erst und sammelt zugleich um sich die Einheit jener Bahnen und Bezüge, in denen Geburt und Tod, Unheil und Segen, Sieg und Schmach, Ausharren und Verfall die Gestalt und den Lauf des Menschenwesens in seinem Geschick gewinnen. (Holzwege 30-1)

And again,

Dastehend hält das Bauwerk dem über es wegrasenden Sturm stand und zeigt so erst den Sturm selbst in seiner Gewalt. Der Glanz und das Leuchten des Gesteins, anscheinend selbst nur von Gnaden der Sonne, bringt doch erst das Lichte des Tages, die Weite des Himmels, die Finsternis der Nacht zum Vor-

schein. Das sichere Ragen macht den unsichtbaren Raum der Luft sichtbar. Das Unerschütterte des Werkes steht ab gegen das Wogen der Meerflut und läßt aus seiner Ruhe deren Toben erscheinen. Der Baum und das Gras, der Adler und der Stier, die Schlange und die Grille gehen erst in ihre abgehobene Gestalt ein und kommen so als das zum Vorschein, was sie sind. (31)

The temple, in its being as temple, is anything but a conglomeration of higher- and lower-grade Ideas, manifesting in a particular structure. The Being of the temple, for Heidegger, is its being situated “inmitten des zerklüfteten Felsentales,” its ‘gathering presence’ as it “sammelt zugleich um sich die Einheit jener Bahnen und Bezüge in denen Geburt und Tod, Unheil und Segen, Sieg und Schmach, Ausharren und Verfall die Gestalt und den Lauf des Menschwesens in seinem Geschick gewinnen” (30-1). In the descriptions immediately above, the constant *Gegenwändigkeit* between *Welt* and *Erde* can be seen very clearly. In the *Welt* opened up by the temple, the Gods ‘are’ the storm, and they ‘presence’ as the halls of the temple.

In the *Streit*, which is the *Gegenwändigkeit* between *Welt* and *Erde*, a *Riss*, or ‘rupture’, ‘presences’ in two ways, or modes. First, the *Riss* ‘presences’ as *Auf-Riss*, in that it ‘presences’ in and through the tension, or *Streit*, between *Welt* and *Erde*. Second, it ‘presences’ as a *Grund-Riss*. Heidegger also characterizes the second tendency of this *Riss* as a *Durch-Riss* and *Um-Riss*. However, the *Riss*, as *Grund-Riss* and *Durch/Um-Riss*, must be placed back or must recede again in the *Erde*, the *Sich-verschließende*, from whence it originated. The *Riss*, situated or placed back in the *Erde*, is the *Gestalt*. Heidegger writes, “Der in den Riss gebrachte und so in die Erde zurückgestellte...ist die Gestalt” (Holzwege 52). Heidegger seems to mean here that in order for the work of art not to become objectified and ‘presence’ as materials used in its construction, the *Gestalt* must be situated back in the *Erde*, as the “zu nichts gedrängte,” as “unerklärt,” and as “[das] ständig[e] Sichverschließende...” (37). “Der Riss [as the *Gestalt*] muß sich in die ziehende Schwere des Steins [in our architecture example], in die stumme Härte des

Holzes, in die Dunkle Glut der Farben [in our painting example] zurückstellen” (52). In the work of art, “...Welt weltet” (33) only when the *Gestalt* is placed or situated back in the *Erde*. The more *Welt* is *Welt*, the more *Erde* is *Erde*, and vice versa.

For Heidegger then, the temple is never a conglomeration of qualities that realize Ideas more or less well. Indeed, we can talk about the temple as a whole, via its ‘properties’. However, notice that, in theory, Schopenhauer’s Ideas may be isolated from the whole and analyzed in and of themselves. Schopenhauer writes,

...so können wir ihr keine andere Absicht unterlegen, als die, einige von jenen Ideen, welche die niedrigsten Stufen der Objektivität des Willens sind, zu deutlicher Anschaulichkeit zu bringen: nämlich Schwere, Kohäsion, Starrheit, Härte, diese allgemeinen Eigenschaften des Steines... (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung I 1: 320)

Properties such as gravity, cohesion, rigidity, and hardness are universal and demonstrable in many different types of architecture. Heidegger’s characterization of the temple, on the other hand, refuses the possibility of such an analysis.

However, if the artist does not work with an Idea or does not work to ‘realize’ an Idea in the work of art before and while creating it, how does Heidegger characterize the process of creating art? Heidegger tells us that the creation of the work of art begins with an *Entwurf*, or “Geschehen-lassen der Ankunft der Wahrheit” (qtd. in Faden 63). Heidegger further characterizes this process as an “Ins-Werk-Setzen der Wahrheit” (59). The process is essentially a *Stiften* (62). The verb *stiften* means to donate, support or found something. However, Heidegger uses the term *stiften* primarily in the sense of supporting something in order for something else to happen or to be founded. *Stiften* ‘presences’ in a threefold manner. Heidegger writes,

Das Stiften verstehen wir hier in einem dreifachen Sinne: Stiften als Schenken, Stiften als Gründen und Stiften als Anfangen. Stiftung ist aber nur in der

Bewahrung wirklich. So entspricht jeder Weise des Stiftens eine solche des Bewahrens. (Holzwege 62)

The process is the beginning of the ‘presencing’ of *Wahrheit*, in the sense of revealing the thing in its particular being. Heidegger characterizes the process as a *Gründen*, an *Anfangen*, and a *Schenken*. In regard to this process, Faden writes,

Die eigentliche Vorbereitung ist nicht die handwerkliche Übung (die natürlich auch notwendig ist), sondern die hörende Offenheit, die „Inständigkeit“ in der her- vor- zubringenden Welt. Das Werk ist ein „Anfang“ als Vollendung einer ausdauernden Bewahrung. (63-4)

Faden continues, quoting from Heidegger,

Das Werk setzt, als Geschenk, einen Reichtum voraus, dem es entstammt. Hier berührt sich Heideggers Denken mit einem zentralen Gedanken Nietzsches, der auch in der Vorlesung „Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst“ angesprochen wird (N I 156ff.), daß nämlich die große Kunst aus dem Reichtum, dem Überfluß hervorgeht...Somit ist das Werk, als Geschenk, ein Dank: Es ist die Antwort auf die Gabe des „Es gibt“. Das eigentliche Danken ist nicht das Abgelten und Lohnen, sondern das Denken, dies verstanden als „ein Entgegentragen, wodurch wir Jenes, was eigentlich zu denken gibt, erst eigens in seinem Wesen belassen“ (WD 158). (64)

The work of art is an attestation to the fact that *Wahrheit* happens. It is also an attestation to the unique position in which *Dasein* finds itself in the ‘unconcealing’ of Being. *Stiften* ‘presences’ as a *Gründen* (or *Ursprung*), as a *Schenken* (*Überfluß*), and as an *Anfangen* (*Vorsprung*). *Stiften* ‘presences’ in the creative act, firstly, as unearthing or founding; secondly, as bestowing or giving; and thirdly, as a beginning.

Turning now to the creative process itself, the artist must surely have something in mind, as she begins and fashions the work of art. The artist must also know when her creation is complete. The artist must have the intended finished work of art in mind, not only beforehand, but also, of course, throughout the creative process. Indeed, the relation between the artist and the to-be-created work of art is all-important for Heidegger. However, as we have seen, the artist has, by no means, an Idea of the finished work before her mind’s eye. This is the uniqueness and

brilliance of Heidegger's thought concerning art. The work of art, we will recall, is *Wahrheit* as *Unverborgenheit* and *Verbergung*. The work of art and the creative act have this in common: they both preserve *Wahrheit* in and for the work.

Gerhard Faden comments on the relation between *Schaffen*, or the producing of the work of art, and the *Bewahren* of *Wahrheit* in the work as follows: "Das Schaffen des Künstlers ist ein gesammeltes Hören auf das zu-Bewahrende und darin ein Hervorgehenlassen des zu-Bewahrenden" (64). And again, "Der Künstler holt das zu-Bewahrende aus der Verborgenheit hervor und wahrt (birgt) es in [der] Unverborgenheit" (65). The artist preserves the *Unverborgenheit* of the work of art throughout the creative process by letting the object, scene, site, etc. be the way they 'are'. The notion of *Bewahren* here can really be envisaged from two points of view. George Steiner, in his book, Martin Heidegger, translates the term *Bewahren* or *Bewahrung* as "custodianship" (136). On the one hand, the artist is the 'custodian' or 'safekeeper' of *Wahrheit*. On the other, *Dasein*, the being-there, safeguards itself by recognizing that only it is in the midst of beings. Only it deals or commerces with beings. That is, only *Dasein* has *Welt*.

Heidegger calls the *Grundzug* of both *Schaffen* and *Bewahren* a *Lassen* (Faden 65). The process of creation is the gradual 'unconcealment', *Unverborgenheit*, of Being (by letting it be) for the sake of revealing the being as what it 'is'. *Bewahren* 'presences' constantly in the creative process as well as in the work of art itself. Indeed, the work of art is for the sake of the *Bewahrung* of the *Unverborgenheit* of Being in the work of art itself.

Unlike Schopenhauer's characterization of the creating process as a manipulation of matter and forms (Ideas) in order to elicit an aesthetic response from the viewer or experiencer, the Heideggerian act of creating, as a *Schaffen* and as a *Bewahren* of *Wahrheit*, refuses such

instrumentality. Heidegger, discussing the creating process of the artist in “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” writes,

Dieses Brauchen aber verbraucht und mißbraucht die Erde nicht als einen Stoff, sondern es befreit sie gerade zu ihr selbst... Wohl aber bleibt es immer ein Brauchen der Erde im Feststellen der Wahrheit in die Gestalt. (Holzwege 52)

Indeed, Heidegger concedes that *Schaffen* is a *Brauchen* of the *Erde*. However, *Schaffen* is not an instrumental or abusive use. Indeed, as we have seen, the artist creates the work of art in such a way that the *Gestalt* is situated back in the *Erde*, in order for *Welt* to ‘world’.

In conclusion, Heidegger’s notion of the being of the work of art as *Welteröffnung* is only possible for *Dasein*, which Heidegger characterizes as *in-der-Welt-sein*. *Dasein* is unique in its commercing with beings in its *Welt*. It is not merely an isolated, objectified entity among other objectified entities. Rather, it is essentially temporal. That is to say, *Dasein* has a past, a present, and a future, toward which it comports itself. Further, *Dasein* has its world in the sense of losing itself in it. In answering the question, ‘What is the work of art?’, Heidegger rejects its traditional answer in terms of a philosophical aesthetic. In attempting to answer the question posed above in terms of schemata such as form/matter and knowing/experiencing, understood traditionally, the work of art becomes objectified and transformed into a body of knowledge and a method. That is, the being of the work of art becomes obscured.

For Heidegger, the work of art as *Welteröffnung* is an attestation to the fact that *Dasein* has a *Welt*. It is also an attestation to the fact that *Wahrheit* is only possible for a being such as *Dasein*. Truth as correspondence or imitation is indeed one form of truth that has held sway in Western aesthetics for quite some time. However, truth as correspondence or imitation is only possible in the *Streit* between *Unverborgenheit* and *Verbergung* in the *Gegenwändigkeit* between *Welt* and *Erde* for a being such as *Dasein*. The work of art opens a *Welt* for *Dasein* and conceals

the *Erde* in order for it to be what it 'is'—'das Sichverschließende'. Further, the work of art is a *Stiften* (understood as a *Gründen*), a *Schenken*, and an *Anfangen*. Its creation lies in a *Lassen* that is grounded in the mutual interplay of *Schaffen* and *Bewahren*. That is, a *Lassen* that does not do violence to the being, but rather lets it shine forth, or 'presence', as what it 'is'.

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY

In this thesis, Martin Heidegger's notion of the work of art as *Welteröffnung* has been examined. Since the Platonic turn to the Ideas, the work of art has been subsumed under philosophical categories that distort what it properly 'is'. With Plato's philosophical musings on the nature of art and its production, art forfeits its pre-Platonic being as an extraordinary attestation to Being. With Plato, the work of art becomes aestheticized. Its domain of inquiry, its subject matter, its production, its mediums, and its audience become circumscribed within a philosophical system. Any attempts to extricate the work of art from from this aesthetic straitjacket must fail as long as it is defined within these perimeters.

Arthur Schopenhauer's aesthetic, some two thousand years after Plato, remains within this Western aesthetic tradition. Schopenhauer's entire view of art is predicated upon its aesthetic value, that is, its ability to place the subject, the timeless experiencer, in a relation of knowledge to the Ideas. When this occurs, aesthetic appreciation also occurs. The work of art, according to Schopenhauer, is to be judged by its ability to produce an aesthetic effect. The artist, beginning the creative process with an Idea in her mind's eye, forms the raw material or matter into a perceptual form that, through the imaginative faculty of the viewer, is cognized, or recognized, as Idea. The schemata form/matter and knowing/experiencing have not been abandoned in Schopenhauer's aesthetic, but rather have been brought into their full reign.

For Heidegger, by contrast, such approaches to the being of the work of art that seek to define it in a philosophical system conceal its being as *Welteröffnung*. The work of art is what it

is only for *Dasein*, which has a *Welt*. Indeed, for Heidegger, the work of art opens a world in which *Wahrheit* is properly itself. That is to say, the work of art as *Wahrheit* in the manner of *Unverborgenheit* and *Verbergung*, allows for the possibility of *Welt* ‘worlding’. The work of art comes to ‘be’ as *Wahrheit* through a *Schaffen* and *Bewahren* that have in common a *Lassen*. *Schaffen* is for the sake of a *Bewahren* of *Wahrheit*, or truth, in the work. The creative process is not for the sake of creating a work that evokes an emotional or aesthetic response from a subject, but rather for the sake of keeping its own essence continually ‘there’ for *Dasein*, a being-there.

Only because the work of art creates and preserves *Wahrheit* for *Dasein* can it be a *Gründen*, a *Schenken*, and an *Anfangen*. The work of art is a founding, in the sense that it reestablishes or reclaims its proper being. It is a bestowal, or overflowing, in the sense that it refuses any and all objectifications of its being. It is a beginning in the sense that it allows *Dasein* to reclaim the meaning of its own being.

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