

# ENG- LISH SUM- MA- RIES

## HEIDEGGER AND ART

### Introduction

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Below we present a set of texts inspired by the way Heidegger interpreted art. The perspective here is wide, and apart from his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, it encompasses his whole philosophical output. Thus, we follow here all the aesthetic implications possibly arising from the philosopher's research on metaphysics, epistemology and ontology. In short, we are focused not solely on what the philosopher explicitly said or wrote about art, but also on what he could have or even should have said about it that stemmed from his more general philosophical reflections.

Still, what should remain widely interesting to contemporary critics and artists is the reflection upon the status of the artistic object itself. Since, having observed that a work of art remains a work of art as long as its creator calls it one, a whole new perspective has been thrown upon aesthetics, and it resigns from restricting artworks to static objects. This makes it possible to use discursive methods when analyzing contemporary performance art as well as various

manifestations of ephemeral art. This perspective is tempting and it is definitely worthy of reflecting upon. But is there anyone who can actually live up to it?

For what are van Gogh's famous shoes which Heidegger wrote about in *The Origin of the Work of Art*? They cannot only be a certain object of art, a certain depiction of form and colour - as there is a whole story connected with the object. Thus, Heidegger emphatically described the toil of the simple woman who worked in the field every single day in order to feed her family - pointing out the truth that lives within the crooked and soiled material of her shoes. That is how a certain story, in itself not artistic, becomes part of a work of art. Does it not remind one of contemporary and conceptual art? What then becomes of a work of art: does it remain what we can see, or it may also be what we know, even think of it? These are undoubtedly fascinating questions which in this very form have – most probably – eluded the scholars researching the philosophy of Heidegger.

This selection of materials on Heidegger includes a new translation of *The Origin of the Work of Art* that is distributed along with each copy of the *Art and Documentation* no. 24. All

texts in this issue tackle *strictly* aesthetic questions introducing the reader to the whole of Heidegger's philosophy, which forms a background highlighting the outlines of those questions.

### **Bogusław JASIŃSKI**

#### MARTIN HEIDEGGER - PHILOSOPHER OF BEING IN HIS JOURNEY TO ART

The aim of the dissertation is the theoretical analysis of Martin Heidegger's philosophical work after the famous turn to radically-perceived philosophy of being (the so called "Kehre"). The author presents a completely new paradigm of doing philosophy, which Heidegger himself began with his publication. It is a paradigm outside the traditional Cartesian subject-object divisions. However, it was not continued in the tradition of modern philosophy, as it went beyond commonly understood rationalism.

Another current of philosophical tradition to which my ethosology relates is the development of modern transcendentalism, marked by such names as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Husserl. Descartes, as we know, posed the overriding question of modern philosophy: the relation between thought and being. By this he set the modern version of the traditional subject-object dualism and substantiated it in his system. Contemporary transcendentalism best accommodated this dichotomy, breaking it down by building up the subject sphere. This is the way Kant followed and Husserl took to its end—so it would appear—in his transcendental idealism.

The essence of this philosophical program was such a buildup of the subject sphere so as to see through—as though from outside—this entire subject-object dualism. Yet this point of view of transcendental idealism by no means fully eliminates this dualism but, on the contrary, in a way cements it further. Its negation is purely declarative. Within the limits of this theoretical perspective, such an observational position is constructed which as its counter-element encompasses both the subject and the object, and more specifically the relation which links them. By

the same token, this original dualism reemerges, only on a different qualitative plane, which on the one hand includes this transcendental point, and on the other has this relation linking the studied and the studying spheres. Obviously, it is possible to eliminate this level again by constructing a new, much more general, point of observation, transcendental to the earlier. This procedure may proceed *ad infinitum*, without really eliminating this original dualism. In reality, such was the course of this current in modern transcendental philosophy—from Descartes, through Hegel all the way to Husserl. There is yet another answer to the central problem that Descartes posed. This is an attempt to break up this subject-object dualism from within by expanding the object sphere. The best known theoretical solutions within this current of modern philosophy are the proposals that Marx and Heidegger advanced. While the transcendental idealism of the type Husserl proposed built up the external point of view of the traditional subject-object division of philosophy, an internal point of view of this division marks the current of transcendentalism in which the high-water-marks were the names of Marx and Heidegger and which, in contrast to the former, could qualify as realistic. This comes about by up-valuing the object sphere. The solution Husserl proposed was, as indicated earlier, illusory. The solution Marx and Heidegger reached is real, as it reveals the rules behind the constitution of such a dual manner of thinking about the world. Both of these philosophers show this dualism as illusory. Ethosology expands on this point of view.

### **Ryszard RÓŻANOWSKI**

#### LOOKING INSIDE HEIDEGGER

Martin Heidegger's lecture *The Origin of the Work of Art*, presented on November 13th, 1935 in Freiburg, marked a significant turn in its author's philosophical thought. Earlier Heidegger had immersed himself in politics, yet when it proved to be a blind alley or simply a mistake, he turned to aesthetics. And although he never endeavoured to form a systematic theory of art or aesthetics, art

does hold a solid position within his philosophical output. When certain researchers tackle the issue of Heidegger's specific, metaphorical language, they point out that the philosopher addressed well known issues that, in fact, had already been widely discussed beforehand. While analyzing art, he asked a basic question about its substance. The provided answer would also remain on the traditional side: only art, as opposed to thinking with the use of certain terms, saliently relates to being – here Heidegger's thought finds its common ground with those of philosophers as different as Schelling, Nietzsche or Adorno. Heidegger himself found his idea of art very much opposed to traditional aesthetics - to what focused on artistic experience and on experiencing art. In his opinion, all attempts to interpret a work of art that were based on the term "experience," using it then to construct a whole concept of modern aesthetics, were deleterious effects of the old philosophy focused on subjectivity, where aesthetics is inevitably degenerated – not only by promoting the wrong idea of the spheres belonging to the artist and the viewer, but also by losing sight of the work of art being the highest, essential instance. Thus, solely a work of art remains the object of his specific metaphysics, since it embodies the substance of art. And so, the desire to "see through Heidegger," focusing on his key opus - *The Origin of the Work of Art* - follows the perspective drawn by Hermann Mörchen who aimed at breaking the philosophical refusal to make connections between Heidegger and Adorno, as well as confronting the output that each of them had left after their deaths. Within that perspective, a significant role is played, next to Adorno, by Walter Benjamin – as there are certain remarkable aesthetic problems that at times set the two adversaries closer to each other, and at times further apart. Benjamin's letters involve a critique of Heidegger's work. According to Adorno, every attempt to justify aesthetics by invoking the origin of art as its core, must lead to a disappointment. Whereas Benjamin, in an essay that was supposed to earn him a degree, mused about the "origin of German Trauerspiel;" and like Heidegger, he also wrote about van Gogh. Thus, the presented conclusions may not only

imply differences, but also correspondence and compliance of certain philosophical assumptions made by the philosophers.

### **Agata STRONCIWILK**

#### **A PAIR OF ROUGH PEASANT SHOES, NOTHING ELSE. HEIDEGGER–SCHAPIRO– DERRIDA**

One of the most famous parts of Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* is the passage in which he refers to the painting by van Gogh, which represents a pair of worn-out shoes. Considering the artist's *oeuvre*, the aforementioned painting did not seem to have a crucial significance, yet it elicited the most attention. The non-canonical and poetic interpretation by Heidegger has led to fierce criticism by art historian Meyer Schapiro. The discussion between the philosopher and art historian was understood as a collision of different methodologies. Schapiro accused Heidegger of a misinterpretation as he attributed the painted shoes to a peasant woman. In Schapiro's view, Heidegger's interpretation was a type of false projection that was not *grounded* in facts. Schapiro proposes the reading in which the painted object is intertwined (or interlaced) with the artist to the extent that it becomes a metonymic self-portrait. Schapiro's reattribution changes the painting's interpretation in the context of the origins of the represented object but also the class and gender of its owner. Also, by referring to a "relic," Schapiro seemed to open up the possibility of a theological interpretation; however, he did not elaborate on this matter. In his "polylogue" Derrida reflected on both interpretations, tracing their inconsistencies and accusing both authors of violence. The present article takes into account each of these texts to reflect on the ethics and limitations of interpretation, the origins of truth in painting, and the origin of the shoes depicted in van Gogh's artwork – as in this particular matter, all of those issues seem *interlaced*.