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## HEIDEGGER'S AESTHETICS. THE PHILOSOPHY OF FINITE HUMAN FREEDOM AND BASIC MOODS AND EMOTIONS<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The first part of the text poses the question whether for Heidegger's aesthetically relevant thought it is better to use older terms, such as "Heidegger's Doctrine of Art" or "Heidegger's Philosophy of Art", or a more recent term "Heidegger aesthetics"? Does the term "Heidegger's aesthetics" represent an "oxymoron" contrary to the intentions of Heidegger's own philosophy, or does it signify a relevant aesthetic conception that has its own place in contemporary philosophical aesthetics? In order to answer these questions, the text considers Heidegger's understanding of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline and also the problems arising in connection with this designation. It argues that Heidegger's concept of "overcoming aesthetics" represents the (self) interpretation of his own philosophy of art developed in the essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. The second part of the text follows the thesis that the Heidegger's aesthetics contains the definitions of art and work of art, based on Heidegger's analyses of freedom, basic moods, and emotions. This part of text follows a broader thesis, in which Heidegger's philosophy as a whole can be understood as the phenomenology of freedom. Also, it discusses a special thesis that the concept of strife (*Streit*) of Earth and world in *The Origin of the Work of Art* should be understood only on the background of the primordial struggle between concealment and unconcealment in the truth as the unconcealedness of beings. Further, the concept of strife is linked on a deeper level with the determination of finite human freedom and basic human moods. In light of that, Heidegger's aesthetics is not only the heteronomous aesthetics of the work of art, but also the (relatively) autonomous aesthetics of aesthetic experience articulated with respect to finite human freedom. The conclusion is that Heidegger's aesthetics of truth understood as the philosophy of freedom, basic moods, and emotions, according to their inner intentions, is closer to the tradition of the aesthetics of sublime than the aesthetics of the beautiful.

### KEYWORDS

aesthetics, art, freedom, Heidegger, sublime, mood, strife, truth

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## Heidegger's Aesthetics – Overcoming as Foundation of Aesthetics

Heidegger's aesthetically relevant thought permeates the entire corpus of his writings (*Gesamtausgabe*). Heidegger's texts on aesthetics could be divided into three basic groups: writings dedicated to poetry (Heidegger 1994a; Heidegger 1967: 61–78; Heidegger 1994b: 269–320; Heidegger 1987b: 244–247; Heidegger 1987a: 207–213; Heidegger 1965b: 9–33, 35–82, 157–216, 217–238; Heidegger 1999: 67–72; Heidegger 1983b: 153–183), texts concerning visual arts (Heidegger 1983a: 119–121, 203–210; Heidegger 2010: 191–206; Heidegger 1965a: 41, 117, 118; Heidegger 1997: 30–40; Heidegger 1976b: 364, 370) and finally, debates in which aesthetic issues are more or less considered in principle (Heidegger 1994c: 59–60, 392, 503–508; Heidegger 1984: 93–94, 177–181, 189–190; Heidegger 1987a, 200–204, 290–291, 301–302, 364–374; Heidegger 1988: 60–64; Heidegger 1990a: 191; Heidegger 1992: 263–287, 386–400; Heidegger 1989a: 11–225; Heidegger 1990b: 136–160). Heidegger's main essay dedicated to art *The Origin of the Work of Art* (Heidegger 1994b, 1–74) together with the First Draft of the same paper (Heidegger 2020: 565–593; Heidegger 1989b: 5–22) and comments from his written legacy (Heidegger 2018: 463–537) belongs to the third group of writings.

A series of questions were raised in connection with Heidegger's aesthetically relevant thought and his main aesthetic discussion *The Origin of the Work of Art*. Does Heidegger's essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* contain (von Herrmann 1994: 21) or does it not contain (Pöggeler 1994: 207; Pöggeler 1974: 122) the outlines of the philosophy of art? Should Heidegger's aesthetically relevant thought be understood as Heidegger's doctrine of art (Perpeet 1984: 217–241), Heidegger's philosophy of art (von Herrmann 1994: 21; Kockelmans 1985: 82), or Heidegger's aesthetics? (cf. Thomson, internet) How should it one understand that Heidegger's aesthetics is an attempt to articulate an alternative to the aesthetic approach to art, or that Heidegger's aesthetics is against aesthetics, and for art? (cf. Thomson, internet) Finally, is it justifiable to understand Heidegger's aesthetics only and exclusively as the heteronomous aesthetics of the artwork as a place of exceptional and privileged appearance of truth? (Bubner 1989: 11–13, 108–109) The literature on Heidegger's philosophy of art received answers to these questions on the basis of direct interpretation, and often only on the basis of mere paraphrase of Heidegger's aesthetic writings. Most interpretations of Heidegger's aesthetically relevant thought in the last half century have not taken into account Heidegger's understanding of the systematics of philosophy, the problem of the division of philosophical disciplines and the question of aesthetics as philosophical discipline. For these reasons, the answers to above questions should be sought in an understanding of the *The Origin of the Work of Art*, starting from Heidegger's own self-interpretation in the *Contribution to Philosophy* (Heidegger 1994c: 60, 392, 503–506) and, in general, in Heidegger's understanding of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline (Heidegger 1989a: 91–109). It is the main thesis of this text that Heidegger's aesthetics consists in the conceptualization and systematization of art

and other aesthetic problems based on the theory of basic human moods and emotions and finite human freedom and that Heidegger's aesthetics is, in this sense, the one that overcomes aesthetics in the modern, narrow sense, founding at the same time aesthetics in a wider sense.

The traditional division of philosophical disciplines represents for Heidegger the horizon for the understanding of aesthetics. The division of philosophy into logic, physics and ethics corresponds to the nature of philosophy, but it lacks the right principle<sup>2</sup>. Instead of a traditional distinction between the formal and the material aspects of philosophical disciplines or, Kant's distinction between a priori and a posteriori, the principle of the division of philosophical disciplines should be the explication of human existence as a *Dasein* (Heidegger 1976b: 3–5; Heidegger 1987a: 229, 235). In analogy with logic, physics and ethics, Heidegger determines aesthetics as *episteme aisthetike*, that is, as knowledge of human behavior with respect to *aisthesis*, sensations and feelings, which is in its lawfulness determined by natural or artistic beauty (Heidegger 1989a: 92; Kockelmans 1985: 3). This neutral determination of aesthetics has no negative connotation for Heidegger. Only if aesthetics is understood in this wider, trans-epochal sense, can we say that it is as old as logic (Heidegger 1983b: 140) and that the philosophical meditation on the essence of art and the beautiful already begins as aesthetics (Heidegger 1989a: 94; Harries 2009: 13). As long as art directly addresses us and presents the one essential way in which the truth happens for our historical human existence, we do not need aesthetics, art theory, and the literature of art. On the other hand, it was only when the great era of Greek poetry and fine arts approached its end that Aristotle was able to say something about Greek Art (Heidegger 2010: 192, 197; Heidegger 1989b: 95). When does aesthetics start? Aesthetics as art theory arises at a moment when art stops speaking for itself. Aesthetics as well as ethics, physics, logic, and philosophy itself, arises at the moment when our own human self-understanding, which essentially determines our existence, has been put into question and lost its binding character. The problems of aesthetics as well as philosophical problems are the symptoms of the questionable inherent self-understanding of the finitude human existence (Schnädelbach 1998: 22). If Heidegger is dealing with philosophy at all, or contributes to philosophy, then his discussion of *The Origin of the Work of Art* should be understood as a contribution to aesthetics or as the foundation of aesthetics understood in a neutral sense with the corresponding principle of the discipline explicated in the analysis of *Dasein* and on the basis of the thinking of Event (*Ereignis*). However, the foundation of aesthetics in a wider, neutral and trans-epochal sense is based on overcoming the aesthetics in a narrow, modern sense.

Heidegger takes a negative, critical attitude towards aesthetics as a modern philosophical discipline. Modern aesthetics established in the 18th century

2 “Ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences: physics, ethics and logic. This division is perfectly suitable to the nature of the thing and one cannot improve upon it, except only by adding its principle, in order in this way [...]”, Kant 2002: 3.

rests on the foundations of modern philosophy. Although philosophy as a whole had a latent tendency to place human existence at the centre of philosophical enterprises, which is seen in terms such as *nous*, *psyche*, *logos*, modern philosophy has explicitly set up the beings that we ourselves are in the centre of philosophy (Heidegger 1987b: 106, 171). The motive of placing subjectivity in the centre of philosophy consists in the conviction that it is beings, which we ourselves are, to ourselves, that are privileged and remarkable in a cognitive sense. Heidegger, however, thinks that *Dasein*, a being that we ourselves, as beings (ontic) are, are not only close, but closest to us, but that in terms of conceptualization and systematization of the way how we are and what we are (ontological) are not only far, but the furthest from us (Heidegger 1977: 22). The *Dasein* is ontically closest to us, ontologically the furthest, but it is not foreign to us. On the other hand, although modern philosophy puts human existence at the centre of philosophical endeavours it fails to raise the question of the specific mode of existence of human beings (Heidegger 1987b: 171). Modern philosophy should be freed from two misunderstandings (Heidegger 1987b: 91) of the relationship between the human subject placed in the centre of philosophy and the object presented by the subject. The first misunderstanding of the subject-object relationship is the wrong objectification regarding the conviction that independently of each other there is a subject and an object, and the philosophical problem is an explanation of the way in which the relation between the subject and the object is subsequently established. Another misunderstanding of the subject-object relationship is the false subjectivation related to the belief that the subject is closed and encapsulated in the inner sphere of experience, and that the philosophical problem lies in the question how the subject leaves the sphere of immanence and accesses the object. The overcoming of modern aesthetics should be understood as abandoning the misunderstandings that are at the base of modern philosophy and, accordingly, abandoning the conception of aesthetic experience as a subjective experience. The overcoming of modern aesthetics in a narrow sense, whose elements we find in the *The Origin of the Work of Art* represents at the same time the foundation of aesthetics in a wider, neutral and trans-epochal sense. *The Origin of the Work of Art* goes beyond the misunderstanding of the subject-object dichotomy and in accordance with the human basic moods and emotions, and also in accordance with finite human freedom, provides definitions of art, the work of art, receptive and productive aesthetic experience and the category of the beauty.

### **Heidegger's Aesthetics – Philosophy of Freedom, Moods and Emotions**

Heidegger defines art as: the setting-itself-to-work of the truth of beings (Heidegger 1994b: 21). This definition of art is essentially ambiguous because the truth also appears as a subject and as an object of the setting (Heidegger 1994b: 65).

However, this ambiguity arises from the inadequacy of the terms 'subject' and 'object'. Therefore, the true meaning of this definition rests on the overcoming of the subject-object dichotomy and is based on the structure of events as a whole (Heidegger 1994b: 73–74).

In order to understand the real meaning of Heidegger's definition of art as the setting-itself-to-work of the truth of beings, it is necessary to properly understand the term 'beings'. The first possibility is that the beings from the definition of art are understood as beings represented in the work of art. Such possibility is plausible for the representational arts.

Beings, for example, a pair of peasant shoes are represented in Van Gogh's painting. The reliability of the pair of peasant shoes enters into the work of art, i.e. Van Gogh's painting. The task of art does not consist in a more or less faithful reproduction of the beings or the reproduction of the general essence of those beings. Heidegger in the First Draft of the *The Origin of the Work of Art* quite clearly rejects the understanding of art as imitation either in Plato's or in Aristotle's variant (Heidegger 1989b: 14). Another possibility is that the beings from the definition of art are understood as an artwork itself. This feature is relevant for both representational and non-representational arts. A being whose truth is placed in the work of art is exactly the work of art itself. This understanding seems at first glance self-referential and circular: the art is the setting-itself-to-work (of art) the truth of the work of art. However, Heidegger's central aesthetic thought does not exclude this possibility (Heidegger 1994b: 50). On the example of Van Gogh's painting, this would mean that the produced work of art first clears the openness of the open into which it comes forth and through which we can understand what the paint is and in what way the painting itself. The Greek temple presents being which clears the openness of the open in which it appears and together with that reverence allows us to understand what and in what way the temple is itself.

The beings represented in the work of art and the work of art that represents the beings in their mutual relationship and their concreteness can be understood only if we were given to us the beings as a whole. Conversely, only if the being as a whole is essentially given to us, we can specifically understand both the work of art and the beings represented. For this reason, the third possibility is to perceive the beings from the definition of art as beings as a whole.

We have been given beings as a whole (*das Seiende im Ganzen*) in the form of basic moods (*die Grundstimmungen*) and emotions. Heidegger's inaugural lecture, *What is Metaphysics?* (Heidegger 1976a: 110–111), speaks of two moods – moods of boredom and anxiety, and about two emotions – emotions of joy (of love) and fear<sup>3</sup>. The founding mode reveals beings as a whole. We are given nothing through the anxiety (*Das Nichts enthüllt sich in der Angst*) and through boredom and joy we are given beings as a whole (*Die Langeweile offenbart das*

3 "Anger, fear, joy, and sadness are therefore emphasized, and for many [...] possibly with the addition of shame and guilt, this represents the complete list of basic or fundamental emotions" (Konečni 2013: 181).

*Seiende im Ganzen*). Formally observed basic moods and emotions represent the medium in which we aesthetically produce and receive.

Heidegger's definitions of productive and receptive aesthetic experience as creating and preserving the work of art should also be understood in the light of the overcoming of the subject-object relation (Heidegger 1994b: 55). The quest in this context points to a receptive aesthetic act of preserving the work of art. The receptive aesthetic experience understood as preserving the work of art is not only knowledge of beings, but at the same time knowledge of what is one wants to do with beings. It is the knowing that is willing, and the willing that is knowing, both as ecstatic entrance into the unconcealment of beings, and at the same time it is resoluteness (Heidegger 1994b: 55). And the resoluteness of perceiving is not "the decisive action of the subject" (Heidegger 1994b: 55). However, human existence does not imply leaving the enclosed and encapsulated inner sphere in the direction of the pre-existing outer whole, but on the contrary, the essence of human existence consists in the constant standing out amid being as a whole. Both the preservation and creation of the work of art rest on the overcoming of the false subjectivation characteristic of modern philosophy.

On the other hand, Heidegger's thinking of events that represents the thoughtful background of the *The Origin of the Work of Art* relies on several fundamental attunements of thinking: awe (*das Erschrecken*), restraint (*das Verhaltenheit*) as a sort of the presentiment (*die Ahnung*) and, deep awe/diffidence (*die Scheu*) (Heidegger 1994c: 14). The basic moods/attunements have no common name, but their mutual relations are best understood in a particular case of truth (Heidegger 1994c: 14). One such case of truth is the creation and preservation of the work of art. Creation and preservation are the carrying out of the restraint as the fundamental disposition (Heidegger 1994b: 54).

Beauty is for Heidegger one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness of beings in their being. The essential ground for the beauty is the primordial attunement which consists in joy and awe<sup>4</sup>. The primordial mood in which the experience of beauty is founded represents the unity of joy and fear and can be understood as an aesthetic awe that is characteristic of a sublime, and not a beautiful one<sup>5</sup>.

4 "Die Urstimmung als die Innigkeit von Jubel und Schrecken ist der Wesensgrund der Schönheit. Das Schrecken ist als höchste und reinste Befremdung [...] das Berückende, wodurch alles anders wird, den sonst – das Sonstige der Gewöhnlichkeiten und Üblichkeit wird erschüttert. Der Jubel aber [...] ist das Entrückende, wodurch über das in der Befremdung erst als solches erscheinende Seiende hinweg die höchsten Möglichkeiten des Verklärten aufleuchten" (Heidegger 2013: 74; Heidegger 1999b: 9–15; see Schölles 2011: 103).

5 "Aesthetic awe is considered a unique, and fundamental, emotional product of *fear and joy*, a state as primordial from an evolutionary point of view, and as powerful and memorable, as either of these [...] aesthetic awe (is) the prototypical subjective reaction to a *sublime*" (Konečni 2011: 65).

The work of art is the setting up of a world and setting forth of the earth. The world and the earth are in dispute. With those two essential determinations of the work of art, a series of moods and emotions are associated, such as uncomplaining anxiety, trembling before giving birth, wordless joy, fear of death (Heidegger 1994b: 21). All these moods and emotions are experienced on the basis of Van Gogh's picture of a pair of peasant shoes. In other words, the work of art allows us to experience such moods and emotions and, on the basis of them, enables us to see the beings (a pair of shoes) in its being (reliability). These moods and emotions are not arbitrary subjective projections, but contrary to the product of a subjective projection, they point to the dimension of *Dasein* and event that bear the experience of art (Heidegger 1994b: 21).

The relationship of world and earth in the work of art is characterized as battle between world and earth. This battle is not the destruction of these structural moments. The battle between world and earth signifies their inner dynamics and mutual elevation. This battle is founded in strife between (double) concealment and unconcealment in essence of truth as unconcealedness of beings in their being. To understand beings in their being in one way means, at the same time, that they are not understood in a different way.

The decision how to understand beings in their being is based on human freedom. The finality of human freedom implies that beings can be understood in their being in the final number of epoch-given ways of understanding the being. The leading idea of Heidegger's philosophy is to realize that being in its essence is finite, just as human freedom is finite (Barbarić 2016: 54). The terms 'strife' and 'battle' are expressions of the trouble in which there is a being itself that is in its essence finite. The insight into the inner ambivalence of the being as such enables us to understand the nature of the battle between the world and the earth and the strife between concealment and unconcealment in the essence of truth. The concept of the battle of earth and world in *The Origin of the Work of Art* should be understood only against the background of the primordial struggle/strife between concealment and unconcealment in the truth as the unconcealedness of beings. Furthermore, the concept of strife (*Streit*) is linked at a deeper level with the determination of finite human freedom and basic human moods. Only on the basis of finite human freedom can we understand beings in their being and beings as a whole as the background of this understanding.

The finite human freedom is the *ratio essendi* of truth as unconcealedness of beings and at the same time *ratio essendi* of the five ways in which the truth is happening. The first way in which truth establishes itself in the middle of beings is art, "a second way is the act that founds a political state; a third is religious experience; a fourth essential sacrifice; a fifth thinking that confronts being and what renders it so profoundly questionable" (Harries 2009: 145). These five essential ways in which the truth is happening are relatively autonomous and independent and tell us that for Heidegger art is not the unique and exclusive way in which the truth happens as unconcealedness of the beings in their being.

## Conclusion

Heidegger's aesthetics contains a systematized and conceptualized essential definition of art, the work of art, receptive and productive aesthetic experience and category of beauty. These definitions are, on the one hand, a result of the overcoming of modern aesthetics and the subject-object relation, and on the other hand they are reached with a view of the thinking of the events and based on the theory of basic moods and emotions and finite human freedom. Beings as a whole from the definition of art are given to us as basic human moods. The earth as determination of the work of art refers to different moods and emotions. The essential ground for the beauty is the primordial attunement which consists in joy and awe. And finally, the essential strife into truth as unconcealedness of beings is linked at a deeper level with the determination of finite human freedom. These definitions are not contradictory with the foundation of aesthetics as a neutrally perceived philosophical discipline. Heidegger's aesthetic definitions based on the theory of basic moods/attunements and emotions and the theory of the finite human freedom can be invoked as a contribution to the foundations of aesthetics as knowledge of human behavior with respect to sensations and feelings, which is in its lawfulness determined by natural or artistic beauty.

Heidegger's aesthetics from the *The Origin of the Work of Art* is not merely the overcoming of aesthetics but also the founding of aesthetics; *The Origin of the Work of Art* is not (only) an attempt to articulate an alternative to the aesthetic approach to art, but at the same time an attempt to articulate the *Dasein* and *Ereignis* based aesthetics; it is not simply against aesthetics, and for art, for aesthetics capable to systematizing and conceptualizing art which determines our historical existence. Heidegger's aesthetics cannot be considered merely as a heteronomous aesthetics of the work of art and truth, but rather as a relatively autonomous aesthetics, which equally conceptually articulates not only the work of art, but also the productive and receptive experience of art founded in the finite human freedom. Finally, Heidegger, in accordance with the main aesthetic tradition, speaks of the basic moods, attunements and emotions that permeate the experience of the beautiful, but his intentions are close to the theory of mixed emotions in which experience of the sublime is described as a combination of pleasure and fear. This research leads us to the insight that Heidegger's aesthetics of truth understood as the philosophy of freedom, basic moods and emotions, according to their inner intentions is closer to the tradition of the aesthetics of sublime than the aesthetics of the beautiful.



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## Nebojša Grubor

### Hajdegerova estetika. Filozofija konačne ljudske slobode i osnovnih raspoloženja i emocija

#### Apstrakt

U prvom delu teksta postavlja se pitanje: da li je za Hajdegerovu estetički relevantnu misao bolje upotrebljavati starije termine kao to su "Hajdegerovo učenje o umetnosti" i "Hajdegerova filozofija umetnosti" ili savremeniji termin "Hajdegerova estetika"? Da li termin "Hajdegerova estetika" predstavlja 'oksimoron' suprotstavljen intencijama Hajdegerove sopstvene filozofije ili označava relevantnu estetičku koncepciju koja ima svoje sopstveno mesto unutar savremene filozofske estetike? Da bismo odgovorili na ova pitanja razmatračemo Hajdegerovo razumevanje estetike kao filozofske discipline kao i probleme koji su povezani sa tim odredjenjem. Stojimo na stanovištu da Hajdegerova koncepcija "prevazilaženja estetike" predstavlja (samo)interpretaciju njegove sopstvene filozofije u raspravi *Izvor umetničkog dela*. Drugi deo teksta sledi tezu da Hajdegerova estetika sadrži definiciju umetnosti i umetničkog dela, koja je bazirana na Hajdegerovim analizama slobode, osnovnih raspoloženja i emocija. U ovom delu teksta sledimo širu tezu da Hajdegerova filozofija u celini može da bude shvaćena kao fenomenologija slobode. Diskutujemo posebnu tezu da bi pojam spora (*Streit*) zemlje i sveta u *Izvoru umetničkog dela* trebalo da bude shvaćen na pozadini izvorne borbe između skrivanja i raskrivanja unutar istine kao neskrivenosti bivstvujućeg. Nadalje, smatramo da je pojam spora na dubljem nivou povezan sa odredjenjem konačne ljudske slobode i osnovnih ljudskih raspoloženja. Posmatrano iz ove perspektive Hajdegerova estetika nije samo heteronomna estetika umetničkog dela, nego i (relativno) autonomna estetika estetskog iskustva artikulisanog s obzirom na konačnu ljudsku slobodu. Rezultat istraživanja predstavlja uvid da je Hajdegerova estetika istine razumljena kao filozofija konačne ljudske slobode, osnovnih raspoloženja i emocija, prema svojim unutrašnjim intencijama, bliža estetiци uzvišenog, nego estetiци lepog.

Ključne reči: estetika, umetnost, sloboda, M. Hajdeger, uzvišeno, raspoloženja, spor, istina