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The Work of Art and Truth of Being as “Historical”: Reading *Being and Time*, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” and the “Turn” (*Kehre*) in Heidegger’s Philosophy of the 1930s

I. Introducing the Topics of Art, The Event of Being, and the Historical Moment of Heidegger’s Philosophical “Turn” (*Kehre*) of the 1930s

Reading Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” and the 1934-35 lecture courses *Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania” and “The Rhine,”* the aim of this essay is twofold. First, it attempts to elucidate the manner in which the work of art functions as a superlative event of “truth-happening” (*aletheia*), which facilitates the movement of Dasein into the truth of Being as a legitimate member of a community, serving as the origin of culture’s appropriation of their own unique historical destiny. Second, it explains why this notion of art as the historical manifestation of Being is crucial to understanding the shift, or “turn” (*Kehre*), in Heidegger’s philosophy of the 1930s and 1940s, i.e., it examines the philosophical problems Heidegger rectified when moving from *Being and Time*, and the conceptual-linguistic constraints of metaphysics and the subject-centered model of Dasein, to the later works on art and poetry. This analysis of the work of art and the Hölderlin lectures focuses on writings that Heidegger produced during the 1930s, a period known as the “turn.” Thus, a brief explanation of this “turning” in Heidegger’s thought will enhance the reader’s understanding of the importance this had on Heidegger’s philosophy during this historical moment.

In Heidegger scholarship the “turn” refers to a specific historical period marking an event in the development of Heidegger’s thought. As James Risser states, “[The turn] designates a period in his life that begins immediately after the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927 and can be said to end with the work of Nietzsche that consumes Heidegger around the outbreak of World War II.”¹ To refer to the turn as an event, or drastic change in Heidegger’s philosophy of the 1930s, not only suggests that there is a change in the way Heidegger approaches, formulates, and presents his thought, but further suggests that there is a drastic shift in focus during this time, which amounts to the radical change in his fundamental philosophical topic. Thus conceived, the turn represents Heidegger’s leap from Man to Being, a move from seeking the meaning of Being by way of the human Dasein to the search for the truth of Being at Dasein’s exclusion. This suggests that Heidegger during the 1930s, at the exclusion of Dasein, embarks (for the first time) on a full-blown ontological enquiry into Being as such.

This is not the case, however, as is evident from Heidegger’s remarks in the essay, “Letter on Humanism” (1947). When reflecting on the turning in his philosophy from Being and

¹ James Risser, *Heidegger Towards the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, edited James Risser (SUNY: Albany, 2001), 2. Editor’s introduction.

Time to Time and Being, he claims that the central topic and subject-matter of his enquiry from *Being and Time* does not change. “This turning is not a change of standpoint from *Being and Time*, but in it the thinking that was sought first arrives at the location of that dimension out of which Being and Time is examined, that is to say, experienced from the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being.”² Heidegger’s philosophy from *Being and Time* onwards is marked by a reorientation to the problem of how the Being-event occurs, which includes the consideration of a variety of new and unique paradigms. “This reorientation,” states Thomas Sheehan, “is not due to Heidegger alteration, much less abandoning or surrendering the philosophical task he set forth in *Being and Time*.”³ Rather, he is expanding the question of Being through a renewed approach and presentation of the fundamental topic.

There are several significant aspects of the “turn” and the renewed approach to his project which will be detailed in this essay. First, Heidegger comes to realize that the event of Being cannot be adequately understood from the limited, *individuated* perspective of Dasein (as *solus ipse* [alone itself]), and identifies the problem that his model of Dasein in *Being and Time*, as the *transcendental-temporal* locus for understanding the meaning of Being, poses. For it is indeed possible to associate Heidegger’s model with the subject-centered understanding of the human being found in both Kant’s transcendental thought and the traditional metaphysics of Descartes, i.e., a notion of the human subject grounded in the interior-exterior/subject-object dichotomy. Heidegger attempts to address this problem through the “de-centering” of Dasein in the later works on art and poetry, which he feels will allow for “the adequate execution and completion” of another form of philosophical thinking that “abandons subjectivity,” and which originates “from the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being.”⁴ However, this is not to indicate that Heidegger abandons Dasein in the process of the inquiry, but rather as Risser correctly argues, “Heidegger’s realization provided a shift in the emphasis from an analysis of the Being of Dasein to the analysis of the event of Being itself - that occurs in the ‘there’ (Da) of Dasein.” Second, this realization inspires the move beyond the linguistic-conceptual constraints of metaphysics (e.g., the traditional philosophical categories of the *existentiell*-ontic-historical and the *existential*-ontological-ahistorical), which includes the move to pursue alternative paradigms in order to understand the truth of Being, or how Being comes-to-presence.

In all of Heidegger’s later works on art and poetry, the consideration of art is intimately linked with the question of Dasein’s authentic historical existence as a communal being.

² Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” from *Basic Writings*, trans. David Krell (Harper Collins: San Francisco, 1977), 231-232.

³ Thomas Sheehan, “The Turn and *Ereignis*: A Prologomenon to *Introduction to Metaphysics*,” from *The Companion to Heidegger’s Introduction to Metaphysics*, edited Richard Polt & Gregory Fried (Yale: New Hampshire, 2004), 15.

⁴ Heidegger, *op cit.*, 231-232.

Corresponding to this shift in paradigms and the move beyond metaphysics, a new style and approach to the presentation of his philosophy appear. During the turn, his writings become more akin to poetry (as *Dichtung*), than the methodological academic philosophy of *Being and Time*. Analyzing the development in Heidegger's philosophy, namely, the emergence of the language of "poietic saying," Daniela Vallega-Neu describes Heidegger's linguistic-conceptual leap over the problematic "metaphysical" issues, such as the ontological distinction and the notion of Dasein's *transcendence*, as he moves beyond *Being and Time*, which is perhaps most evident in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy: On Ereignis* (1936-37). As Vallega-Nue elucidates, the move, or leap, beyond the constraints of the metaphysical subject-centered model of Dasein happens by means of a literal transformation of language, specifically, "the transformation from a propositional (presentative) language to a poietic (in the sense of the Greek word *poiesis*) saying."⁵ Propositional language in all cases speaks about the things (entities) it addresses in a way that sets up a relationship of opposition between *a thinking or presenting subject*, whereas poietic language is already speaking from out of an immersion in Being, "poietic saying brings beyng [Being] forth in the saying *as* it finds it itself enowned by beyng's [Being's] event. Poietic saying thus is part of beyng's (Being's) event as beyng's (Being's) event occurs in the poietic saying."⁶

It is the aim of this essay to interpret the manner in which art opens and readies Dasein for its authentic communal and historical Being, i.e., its authentic *historicality*. This event occurs in the "work-being" of the great work of art as the *Ereignis*, the lighting and clearing event of truth's happening (*aletheia*), the temporal event of appropriation of the historical destining of Being, which is facilitated by Dasein's participation in and preservation of the great work of art. Therefore, this essay, which is primarily focused on the truth-potential of the great work of art to facilitate the event of Being's disclosure, also works to rethink Heidegger's subject-centered reading of Dasein as it appears in *Being and Time*, as an authentically communal being, in relation to the work of art and the truth of Being as a historical phenomenon. The turn in Heidegger's thought is perhaps best captured by David Krell, whose accurate analysis of the turn, as something other than a drastic event in which Heidegger changed his philosophical topic outright, emphasizes precisely the issues forming the content of this essay:

If there were a dramatic 'turn' of this sort in Heidegger career of thought (and I underscore the 'if' and embrace the subjunctive), then it would be a turn, not from man to being, but from the natural designation of Da-sein to *homo humanus*, to *der Mensch, die Sterblichen*, in other words,

⁵ Daniela Vallega-Neu, "Poietic Saying," from *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, edited Charles Scott, Susan Shoenbohm, Daniella Vallega-Neu, & Alejandro Vallega, (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 2001), 69.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 69.

a turn from Being to man [humankind].⁷

II. Heidegger's *Being and Time*: The Problem of "Historicality" and the Subject-Centered Model of Dasein:

In Division II, Chapter 5, Section 74 (*The Basic Constitution of Historicality*) of *Being and Time*, Heidegger presents his most authoritative rendering of Dasein's authentic existence, the moment of displacement that occurs as the open, resolute Dasein, running ahead to its death as thrown-projection, enacts its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. Significantly, in this section, Heidegger reinterprets Dasein's authenticity, providing an analysis of Dasein in terms of its role as a legitimate historical being. Envisaging Dasein as *Being-towards-death*, Heidegger describes Dasein's authentic worldly comportment, which is a running ahead in resolute openness (*Vorlaufen*) to its own death (which Dasein acknowledges) in terms of temporality and "historicality," a moment of "authentic resoluteness in which Dasein hands itself down to itself, free for death in a possibility it has inherited and chosen."⁸ According to Heidegger, historicality is the living event of Dasein's freedom and happens in praxis as Dasein fatefully enacts its destiny, which entails Dasein taking up and projecting futurally the heritage that has been handed down from its forebears. Historicality involves Dasein accepting responsibility for living out the choices and decisions passed along through its heritage. Heidegger claims that historicality culminates in Dasein's "authentic" destiny, as the essential mode of *Being-with-others* as *Being-in-the-world*.

Heidegger works to convey the notion of destiny as the occurrence of a single historical happening, in a world that Dasein communally inhabits, shares, and in many ways creates through ecumenical comportment. This foregoing analysis encapsulates Heidegger's thinking on authentic Dasein in relation to its authentic destiny, and he curiously refrains from a detailed treatment of this phenomenon, which appears to represent the culmination of his thinking on Dasein's fateful historicality, or the totality of Dasein's existence as a legitimate communal being. Despite the ambiguous nature of Heidegger's presentation of historicality, it is clear that in *Being and Time* he is not conceiving Dasein's destiny (its authentic historicality) as merely representing the collective fates of disparate and isolated individuals. Rather, Heidegger explicitly states that destiny is not "something that puts itself together out of individual fates, any more than Being-with-one-another can be conceived as occurring together of several subjects."⁹ However, it is certainly arguable whether or not Heidegger achieves this aim of presenting

⁷ David Krell, *Intimations of Mortality*, (Penn State Press: University Park, 1986), 29.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated Marquarrie & Robinson (Harper & Row: New York, 1962), 435/384.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 430/378.

Dasein in *Being and Time* in terms of a legitimate communal being. Heidegger's treatment of Dasein's authentic historicality in 1927, in terms of "heritage," "fate," and "destiny," is highly problematic for several important reasons, and these problematic issues relate to the "subject-centered" model of Dasein that emerges from Heidegger's fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*.

Moving to analyze Heidegger's overcoming of traditional metaphysics, I examine the problem with "historicality" in *Being and Time* as related specifically to the following three issues: (1) The notion of Dasein's Time in relation to "originary" Temporality; (2) The understanding of Dasein as the sole disclosure site of Being, or the occurrence of *aletheia* (unconcealedness), and (3) The issue of Dasein's "individuation" for its own death along with the notion of Dasein's "owned" possibilities. This latter issue, being the focus of this essay, will receive the most detailed treatment, for according to William McNeill, it literally "haunts" Heidegger's 1927 interpretation of historicality in *Being and Time*. One way in which the subject-centered model of Dasein can be understood is in terms of time, or temporality. Heidegger reasons that the "care-structure" represents the Being of Dasein, and, as he makes explicit, "[T]ime is the *transcendental* horizon of the question of Being."¹⁰ This notion of "transcendental" knowledge in *Being and Time* suggests that it is Dasein's inherent way of being structured, as "care," that allows for the potential interpretation of Being in a way that is fundamentally linked to a single entity. This appears to suggest that the existential make-up of Dasein holds a privileged status over Being (and the question of Being), as if the "care-structure" held the potential to organize, control, and fix the boundaries of Being's meaning.

These problems stem from the limitations that the metaphysical conceptual-linguistic schema imposes on Heidegger's philosophy of 1927. Daniela Vallega-Neu recognizes Heidegger's bold attempts to de-structure the language and conceptual structure of traditional metaphysics, but suggests that more often than not, due to the way in which we have been attuned to understand and discourse about philosophy, Heidegger's radical reworking of certain ideas lend themselves to misinterpretation. Importantly, Vallega-Nue argues that the notion of *Being-towards-death* as related to temporality gives the impression that Heidegger is in fact presenting Dasein in terms of a subject-centered model of the human, which gives rise to the problem with the attempt to approach the understanding of Being *qua* Being by means of Dasein's "transcendence" and its finite temporal (horizon) structure as the singular site by and through which Being might be understood. If, as Heidegger claims, time is the horizon for understanding Being, then there is a problem with conceiving Dasein's finite temporal structure as a possible means by which to acquire this understanding. As Vallega-Nue points out, in order to understand Being, we must conclude that "temporality is the condition for the possibility of being of such, which is [also] the condition for the possibility of Dasein."¹¹ Vallega-Nue

¹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 436/384.

¹¹ Daniela Vallega-Neu, "Poietic Saying," from *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, 67.

suggests that this fundamental structure for approaching Being - by way of Dasein's temporality - "dissolves" in several ways if we examine finite temporality as disclosed in Dasein's *Being-towards-death*.

It dissolves if we think that the temporality of being as such (the sense of being) is disclosed in Dasein's being towards death, i.e., *in* Dasein's temporality and not beyond it or in distinction to it. The fundamental structure dissolves also, if we acknowledge that what serves to be an ultimate fundament, the temporality of being as such, is not fundament at all but is rather a finite disclosive event.¹²

McNeill provides a detailed analysis of these foregoing issues and concludes that several important changes occur to Heidegger's philosophy during the 1930s, including a shift in concern with Dasein's temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) to a concern with "Temporality" (*Temporalität*). This signifies a philosophical shift from Dasein's "historicality," as the temporal enactment of its "individuated" ownmost-potential-for-Being, to the concern with world history, i.e., "the historical destining of the world conceived as an event (*Ereignis*) of Being."¹³ It is no longer Dasein as willful subject, enacting its destiny by running up against death, as a possibility that is owned, or possessed, that determines the *Augenblick* historically. Rather, Dasein becomes *de-centered* in the later works, and is historical in its openness and responsiveness to Being as *the* "historical phenomenon." For, as McNeill reasons, "The *Augenblick* [the moment of Being's *presencing*] itself is now seen to be historically determined, not primarily by the historicality of Dasein, as was the case in *Being and Time*, but by historicality understood as the happening of Being itself, to which human actions are responsive."¹⁴ Thus, Dasein is historical only when it responds to the way in which Being itself happens, and as related to the work of art, as I will illustrate, the unfolding and *presencing* of Being is possible through the significant (polemic) relationship between the forces of world and Earth, the "work-being" of the great work of art.

There is also a change occurring in the work of the 1930s with respect to the potential disclosure site of Being (and what occurs in this site). This change represents Heidegger's move to *de-center* Dasein in the later works on art and poetry. In *Being and Time*, Dasein is the place and entity where beings presence and recede from disclosure, the locale where entities are defined in their becoming the "there" of Dasein, and it is the Being of Dasein that facilitates such disclosure. In *Being and Time* the exclusive temporality of Dasein remains central to truth as *aletheia* (unconcealedness) in the realm of disclosure in the "open" site of Dasein. For, as

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹³ William McNeill, *The Time of Life: Heidegger and Ethos*, (SUNY: Albany, 2006), 95-6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

Heidegger concludes, “[O]nly with Dasein’s disclosedness is the most primordial phenomenon of truth attained [. . .] *disclosedness in general* embraces the whole of that structure-of-Being which has become explicit through the phenomenon of care.”¹⁵ However, Heidegger’s later disenchantment with the existential analytic of 1927, and his continued push to discern the “truth of Being” as such, caused him to rethink the event of disclosure. In the later writings, Heidegger proposes the “clearing” as a place of disclosure, or threshold, which includes Dasein, but as well, is beyond Dasein. Thus, Heidegger shifts the focus from the Being of Dasein to the event of Being itself, an event within which Dasein participates, an event upon which its Being is dependent. In abandoning the thesis that one must attend to the Being of a singular entity in order to understand the manifestation of Being as such, Heidegger turns to other paradigms that facilitate the interrogation of the “Being event” as a historical mode of *truth-happening*, e.g., the work of art, state-founding political activity, the “essential” sacrifice to an ideal, philosophy, the poetry of Hölderlin, and Dasein in its historical capacity to be authentically communal.

At this point, it is necessary to formalize the question that will determine the path of our enquiry: “Does Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, successfully reconcile his interpretation of the temporal structure of care, anxiety, and Dasein as “individuated” *Being-towards-death* with his claim that Dasein historicizes in a legitimate communal manner through the enactment of its destiny?” Addressing this question will reveal the all-important issue on which McNeill and others have focused, the issue of whether Dasein owns its death (and possibilities) or whether it is the case that Dasein “undergoes appropriation, understanding itself with respect to its potentiality for being under the eyes of death, but a death [and possibilities] that is not its own.”¹⁶ In other words, if Heidegger succeeds only in presenting death in terms of a non-relational phenomenon, belonging to the “individuated” Dasein (as *solus ipse*), then his claim that the power of death legitimizes social relations becomes problematic. Emmanuel Levinas also considers this question when addressing Heidegger’s phenomenological ontology of 1927, and his critique of Heidegger bears directly on the issue of Dasein’s authentic community. Analyzing Levinas’ critique of Heidegger, Robert John Sheffler raises legitimate concerns regarding the success of Heidegger’s attempt (in *Being and Time*) at reconciling Dasein’s authentic relationship to its solitary, owned death with the claim that Dasein historicizes as an authentic *Being-with-others*.

As stated, Heidegger’s analysis of historicity, as the authentic enactment of Dasein’s communal destiny, is grounded in the analytic of *Being-towards-death*. It is clear that Heidegger is not thinking Dasein as a communal being in terms of it possessing an immutable “historical” essence. However, Heidegger is undoubtedly presenting Dasein’s death as the phenomenon, linked with finitude, that grounds communal solidarity. As Heidegger states, “Authentic Being

¹⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, 264/221.

¹⁶ McNeill, William, *Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, (SUNY: Albany, 1999), 301.

toward death - that is to say, the finitude of temporality - is the hidden basis of Dasein's historicity."17 Dasein's relationship to its own death opens Dasein to the authentic possibility of its time and solicitous relations with others, its *Being-with-others*. Heidegger is clear about Dasein's unique relation to death: "When it stands before itself in this way," facing its ownmost extreme and certain possibility of its Being, "all its relationships to any other Dasein have been undone."18 Death is non-relational, no one either shares, experiences, or participates in my death, no one can take death from me, and in addition, no one can assume the burden of enacting the possibilities which are uniquely my own.

Death does not just 'belong' to one's own Dasein in an undifferentiated way; death lays claim to it as an individual Dasein. The non-relational character of death, as understood in anticipation, individualizes Dasein down to itself.19

To understand why the above statement by Heidegger is problematic, I turn to Levinas' text, *Totality and Infinity* (1969), wherein he launches a vehement critique of Heidegger's fundamental ontology in *Being and Time*, which is grounded in Levinas' claim that Heidegger's ontology of Being precludes any authentic thinking on the ethical, which would serve as the original basis for any and all solicitous interpersonal relationships. There are convergences between the two philosophical works, for Levinas undoubtedly works against Heidegger while at once taking up residence within the text. Indeed, the main tenet of Levinas' argument emerges as a result of its proximity to Heidegger's phenomenology, which is as follows: Heidegger wrongly privileges the knowledge of Being above human ethical relationships. Levinas views ethics as representing the primordial origin of first philosophy, as opposed to the quest for the ontological understanding of Being. Levinas argues that by privileging ontology over ethics, the primordial responsibility that we owe the Other, which for Levinas is total and absolute, the solidarity that is at the heart of all authentic ethical relationships can never legitimately be attained or experienced. In the following passage the words of Levinas express this concern:

To affirm the primacy of Being over the existent is to already decide the essence of philosophy; it is to subordinate the relation with someone, who is an existent to a relation with the being of existents, which, impersonal, permits the apprehension, the domination of existents, subordinates justice to freedom.20

¹⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, 438/386.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 294/250.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 309/264.

²⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, translation, A. Lingis, (Duquesne University:

This privileging of ontology over ethics, for Levinas, also holds crucial epistemological implications for the manner in which we conceive of the world and others in knowledge, as an inauthentic form of ontological knowledge that finds its grounds in a totalizing system wherein difference is not only assimilated and taken up into what is the “same,” it is eradicated outright. As Levinas states, “The relation with being that is enacted as ontology consists in neutralizing the existent order to comprehend or grasp it. It is hence not a relation with the other as such but the reduction of the other to the same.”²¹ This results in privileging the knowledge of the Others’ Being over the understanding of our indebtedness and obligation to the Other in terms of original ethics. To assimilate the Other in knowledge eradicates any possibility for authentic ethics, which must always consider the radical difference, and beyond this, the utter “strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possibilities,” and this for Levinas, is a “calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics.”²² Autonomy is not the origin of ethics for Levinas, instead, ethics begins when freedom is restricted and called into question, namely, by the Other who radically transcends any understanding I might have of one who is independent of me, and this, in addition to ethics, as I have indicated, relates for Levinas to the authentic potential for knowledge, which “is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the Other, that is as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge.”²³

Levinas does not think it is possible to refer to such notions as Heidegger’s *Being-with-others* in a solicitous relationship of caring, as representing an instance of authentic human ethical interaction, because it arises in an inauthentic manner from Dasein’s relation with and knowledge of Being, which is intimately linked by Heidegger to the notion of mortality and *existential solipsism* in the mood of *Angst*. The problem that Levinas’ critique reveals, the problems associated with Heidegger’s claim that we historicize as authentic *Being-with-others*, through an ontological understanding of our own individuated mortality, which literally opens our authentic view to the world and others, and these concerns are also raised by other Heidegger scholars. According to Manning, in his reading of Levinas, the only social relationships that Heidegger succeeds in establishing in *Being and Time* occur at the level of the “They-self” in the form of inauthentic social relations that hinder, “Dasein in its solitary task of actualizing its own possibilities,” and not, as was Heidegger’s intention, at the level of the authentic Dasein.²⁴ For

Pittsburgh, 1969), 45-7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 45-7

²² *Ibid.*, 43.

²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴ Robert John Sheffler Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise Than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas’ Ethics as First Philosophy* (Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1993), 85.

Heidegger, social relations are either inauthentic or authentic, and it is Dasein's authentic existence that begins and ends, according to Manning, at the level of the solitary Dasein, when anxiety (*Angst*) individualizes Dasein as *solus ipse*. As Manning concludes, "Death reveals to authentic Dasein its identity as a separate and unique individual," and the individuation of Dasein represents the authentic possibility of appropriating its death, which "brings it back from its lostness in the They to realize itself as a solitary being," and thus Dasein's authenticity "lies in solitude rather than in negative sociality [the "They-self]."25 For Heidegger, *existential solipsism* empowers Dasein's move from inauthentic social interactions that comprise the "They-self," and this occurrence is, first and foremost, grounded in solitary Dasein's relationship to its death, the responsibility to its own mortality.

Why should we accept Heidegger's claim that Dasein's responsibility to its own death, as its ownmost possibility, guarantees Dasein's legitimate responsibility to the Other in a communal relationship in which the Being (and death) of the Other becomes an issue of concern? Attempting to address this question, and show that for Heidegger death is a particular and solitary event and phenomenon, Manning's interpretation of death and its relation to the authentic Dasein is rightfully concerned with the notions of particularity and subjectivity, which he believes are present within Heidegger's account of death. Manning interprets *Being-towards-death* in the following manner: "In addition to establishing Dasein's authentic communal Being, [it] reveals the essence of the future and time itself."26 Manning focuses on Heidegger's use of "*Jemeinigkeit*," or mineness, as the "constitutive" characteristic of death, in the sense that death is unequivocally Dasein's own, it belongs to the individual Dasein. This understanding of death fails, as related to the concern of this essay, to express the universality of the phenomenon. "Death is not only that which will someday be mine," writes Manning, "but it is also that which can never be mine because it has its own reality."27

In order to argue that death represents the phenomenon that thrusts Dasein into its authentic solicitous communal relations as *Being-with-others*, death must assume the form of an ontological power that stands beyond Dasein's own unique claims to its existence, beyond Dasein's personal autonomous power of appropriation. Therefore, as opposed to the certainty of death as that which is owned by the individuated Dasein, Heidegger should have stressed the supreme mystery of death. He should have presented death in terms of a phenomenon that can never be owned or possessed because it is a force that is absolutely unknowable. In other words, to argue convincingly that Dasein authentic communal relationships, as historicity, are grounded in the ontological understanding of the phenomenon of death (and finitude), Heidegger should have presented death in terms of the "quintessential power" that is completely external to

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

Dasein. Death must represent “absolute alterity” the occurrence (and “possibility”) that obliterates any and all notions of individuation or solitude. In short, what death must reveal “is not my own individual authentic possibilities, but the fact that there is something other than myself.”²⁸

Heidegger admits that he is not successful in *Being and Time* at bridging the distance between individuation and communal Dasein with the interpretation of historicity, presenting death convincingly as the force that shatters Dasein’s individuation, making its authentic communal relationships possible. However, this is precisely what Heidegger’s later interpretation of death and finitude accomplishes when he moves from the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* to embrace a more poetic approach to the issue. In the later writings Heidegger attempts to understand temporality in terms of its ground, as opposed to interrogating it in terms of the horizons of Dasein’s experience, and following this line of thought, he links death to the primordial finitude of the Earth, which represents the authentic power of Being and the force which reveals and grants Dasein’s solidarity. Death traverses every individual in advance by exceeding them, uniting Dasein in community beyond the horizon of the individuated Dasein. Hence, death belongs to no one and at once to everyone. In the work of the 1930s Heidegger reexamines the issue of death with a critical eye, in terms of the problem I have outlined with the interpretation of death and Dasein’s authentic historicizing in *Being and Time*. This point is highlighted by McNeill in his analysis of Heidegger’s work after 1927. When discussing the notion of *Being-towards-death* (as conceived in terms of finitude), McNeill writes,

[T]he finitude that was earlier conceived in terms of Dasein’s Being-towards-death, and that could be appropriated as such, as finitude, in a moment of anticipation (*Vorlaufen*), is in the later thinking of *Ereignis* no longer conceived as potentially Dasein’s own.²⁹

III. “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1936) and Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania” and “The Rhine” (1934-1935): How “Great” Art Facilitates the Truth of Being and Dasein’s Authentic Historicity

"The Origin of the Work of Art," presented as three lectures in Frankfurt (1936), is a dense and powerfully poetic work that offers a detailed examination of the temporal occurrence of Dasein's historicizing in the moment of the work of art. It contains, among other important sections, the powerful poetizing of the Greek temple, an example of a cultural founding work of art, the source of Dasein's historical destiny, i.e., its "vocation." The work of art for Heidegger during the period after *Being and Time* serves as a powerful and legitimate mode of “truth-happening”

²⁸ Robert John Sheffler Manning, *Interpreting Otherwise Than Heidegger: Emmanuel Levinas’ Ethics as First Philosophy*, 71.

²⁹ William McNeill, *Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, 301.

(*aletheuein*), or movement into the open region of Being's presencing. Art is the event of disclosure in which Being happens and is revealed to Dasein in its historical manifestation, in what I will describe as the *Ereignis*. According to Heidegger, great art represents a culture's founding force, a temporal phenomenon that facilitates Dasein's movement into the work's revelation of truth, serving as "the origin of a people's authentic historical existence."³⁰ Approaching "The Origin of the Work of Art," the following question arises: What in fact occurs in the moment of the art work, when "great" art happens? Heidegger's response links the authentic historicity of Dasein to the moment of history's eruption, or the "beginning" of a historical people's entrance into their destined "vocation":

Whenever art happens - that is - whenever there is a beginning - a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again. History here means not a sequence in time of events of whatever sort, however important. History is the temporalizing of a people into its appointed task, as entrance into that people's endowment.³¹

Heidegger locates the origin of the work of art in the phenomenon of art itself, and not in the artist as autonomous creator. The essence of art lies in its potential to facilitate the happening of truth as *aletheia*. According to Heidegger, art is by nature "a distinctive way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical."³² McNeill addresses the issue of Dasein's historicity as related to the "readiness" for its vocation as destiny. As McNeill argues, the grounding of Heidegger's philosophy of Being during the period of the turn hinges on the potential of great art to institute (set up) and inaugurate the moment and event of the historical happening of Being, as a creative event in the temporality of the art work as a historical origin, as a new beginning. For Heidegger, creation never indicates the production of that which is already in existence, but rather "creative acts" intimate that which is "yet-to-be," that which is beyond the horizon of the present, arriving in its approach as historical from out of the indeterminate future. As McNeill argues, "Historical," with respect to the work of art, "does not mean happening 'within' history, but refers to the kind of event that first opens, initiates, and 'founds' a subsequent history. Such an event marks an origin, the origination and coming into being of something new."³³

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, translated Albert Höfstadter (Harper & Row: New York, 1971), 76.

³¹ *Ibid*, 77.

³² *Ibid.*, 77.

³³ William McNeill, *Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, 282.

Heidegger is considering art in terms of its cultural founding significance, and cultural-founding art work acts as a paradigm for the event of truth's happening. The happening of truth is described as the projection of truth, and all art is defined by Heidegger as *Dichtung*, or poetry. However, this does not restrict the definition of *Dichtung* to include only the linguistic expression of "poetry." Rather, he envisages *Dichtung* as referencing all creative, projective events of truth's happening. Therefore, *Dichtung* occurs in many forms of art: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and poetry. Due to art's unique nature, it opens the space of disclosure in such a way that it "breaks open an open place, in whose openness everything is other than usual."³⁴ Heidegger stresses the potential of great art to ecstatically displace Dasein from the realm of its everyday, ordinary ways of existing by transforming "anew" its accustomed ties to the world and Earth.

As previously stated, "The Origin of the Work of Art" rethinks the notion of Dasein as the possibility for recognizing its own nature as the "there" of disclosedness. In the writings that constitute the turn, Heidegger is no longer focused on a single, "individuated" entity as accounting for Being. Rather, in addition to Dasein, Heidegger turns to other paradigms that allow for the discussion of Being's presencing in terms of art and poetry, as modes of *aletheuein*. As will be addressed, Heidegger's change in the paradigm for pursuing the meaning of Being is related to the "work-being" of the artwork, the locus of *aletheia*, or vortex of "truth-happening," where the clashing of world and Earth occurs and the struggle between concealedness and unconcealedness is fought. Heidegger arrives at the conclusion that the event of Being cannot be understood from the sole perspective of the "individuated" Dasein, suggesting instead, that the work of art facilitates the authentic moment of Being's disclosure, manifesting Dasein's authentic relation to death in collective moments of human affiliation. However, as Francoise Dastur argues, art as a site of disclosure is not literally beyond or transcendent of Dasein, for Heidegger never abandons the analysis of Dasein as the "there" of the open site, but rather he shifts the emphasis in order to understand the event of Being as it is occurring in the openness of Dasein. Thus, the work of art is thought in its relation to Dasein as the embodied revelation of the "conflict [struggle] that is taking place in Being and not merely in Dasein."³⁵

In 1936, the concept of art as a cultural founding force, which facilitates Dasein's authentic communal relations in the form of a people's (new) historical "beginning," is considered by Heidegger in terms of the historical manifestation of Being, in the *Ereignis*, the "clearing and lighting" in the very midst of beings, "which grants and guarantees to us humans the passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 72.

³⁵ Francoise Dasture, "Heidegger's Freiburg Version of the Origin of the Work of Art," from *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, edited James Risser (SUNY: Albany, 2001), 133.

are.”³⁶ Heidegger is suggesting that the Being of the work of art holds the power to reveal the Being of all other entities as a whole, giving all things their look, delimitation, and meaning. Truth happens in the "work-Being" of the work of art, as the counter-striving forces of world and Earth clash, which is the site of *aletheia*, the vortex of the battle (*polemos*) for the unconcealment of beings. In *Being and Time*, "world" represents the overarching system of meaning(s) that organizes Dasein's activities and identity, the structure within which its life makes sense. However, in "The Origin of the Work of Art," the world does not simply represent the *world as it is*, because art does not simply reveal a world of which it is a part as just another thing; more importantly, art stands within the unique limits that it first establishes and sets forth. When "world worlds" in and through the work-being of the art work, a space is opened and the work erects a world, i.e., it establishes boundaries as it transfigures the world, casting the truth of an authentic historical existence toward the preservers, revealing the potential for the enactment of their destiny. This "worlding of world" occurs as an event, within the work-Being, within the *Ereignis*. McNeill expresses Heidegger's concept of the "world worlding," or world as an event, in the following terms: "World is not to be understood then, as an already existing openness within which the art work, as one particular being would then become accessible. World is rather an event, a happening, and occurrence, whose divine processes unfold in the work of art."³⁷

In addition to setting up a "world," the art work also brings forth the Earth, and these counter-striving forces are the two essential features in the work-being of the work of art. Undoubtedly, the notion of Earth is of supreme importance in Heidegger's work during the turn, derived from, and equated with, Hölderlin's notion of divine "Nature" (Earth). *Being and Time* intimates the divine possibilities of Nature as the force that "assails us" and "stirs and strives,"³⁸ but in "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger develops the concept of Nature more fully, and from his readings of Hölderlin, brings forth the Earth, arguing that "world" cannot be thought outside of its connection with Earth, world cannot exist or arise without it. Dasein cannot dwell authentically without acknowledging its debt to Earth, for Dasein's Being belongs to the Earth, which represents the divine-spiritual aspects of the holy, a force which Dasein must return to in order to transform its life. Earth is for Heidegger the radicalization of *phusis* as the coming-to-presence-of-beings in his thinking the *Ereignis* and the historical revelation and appropriation of Being. The Earth represents the primal ground upon which Dasein works to establish its dwelling, as the native soil upon which it builds its home. Earth is also the supreme spiritual presence, a sublime, inexplicable holy force that is beyond even the gods.

Analyzing two works of art, Van Gogh's post-impressionist painting *Old Shoes* and the ancient Greek temple, Heidegger distinguishes the potential for certain genres of art to reveal

³⁶ Heidegger, *op cit.*, 53.

³⁷ William McNeill, *Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, 285.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 100/70.

truth. This is evident toward the end of the essay when he introduces poetry, as *Dichtung* in the essential sense, with its power to found Being in the word. Van Gogh's painting "speaks" to reveal the truth of the peasant's shoes. By transporting the spectator, in the moment of *aletheia*, the equipmentality of the shoes manifests, and in their Being the world of the peasant woman shines forth, exposing her life's anxieties, the joy and pain of child birth, and the portent of famine and death. However, although truth happens in the painting, it is questionable whether or not it is an example of "great art," or world-founding art, as defined by Heidegger. Although it reveals a world, the painting is not an instance of truth in terms of its historical manifestation, it is not an instance of art in which truth opens a world and then sets that world back again upon the Earth, and thus consecrating the ground of the historical destiny of a people.

Robert Bernasconi suggests this foregoing interpretation as one possible reading of Van Gogh's painting. "It would seem that the Van Gogh painting," he writes, "is supplementary art, rather than great art."³⁹ According to Bernasconi, the painting is not so much an "origin" as it is an example of art that "expresses a world rather than instituting one."⁴⁰ For one reason, the medium of painting is severely restricted in facilitating spectatorship (preservation). The manner in which paintings are exhibited precludes the immediate power of mass, communal settings, which for Heidegger is a crucial aspect of great art. However, in the second work of art that Heidegger analyzes, the religious temple of Hera at Paestum, Heidegger describes the type of great art that facilitates communal participation in and preservation of, because it invites the community into the clearing of the work, into the clearing of Being.

The Greek temple is a monumental work of art that holds the potential to found and ground a culture by bringing the participants into the revelation of Being, which is essentially a historical event. It is because of the god's presencing through the temple that the possibility of dwelling historically arises from religious worship, which guides and shapes the practical and political activities of the Greeks. As they worship, paying tribute to the god, they gather as a devotional community, as members of the *polis*, members of a household and tribe with a living heritage, or "endowment." These intimate historical ties are authenticated within the temple's work-being, as it opens a world and sets forth the Earth. In other words, the world manifests, or is erected, as the sublime power of the Earth rises up through the work in such a way as to first become visible *as* Earth. As the center of worship, the temple "gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire a shape of 'destiny' for human being."⁴¹ The unity of these many and varied

³⁹ Robert Bernasconi, "The Greatness of the Work of Art," from *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, edited James Risser, (SUNY: Albany, 2001), 111

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴¹ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 42.

paths and relations is world, and the world of the classical Greeks represents their culture. The overarching system of reference relations that is world includes the Greeks' habitual practices that are passed down through generations as *ethos*. It is only by way of understanding world, as revealed authentically within the temple's work-being, that the Greeks enter their potential to become a nation, united in the ecumenical enactment of destiny as their proper "vocation" However, an authentic culture is never the equivalent of merely its world, as Heidegger argues. For as stated, the work-being of the temple not only reveals the world of historical Dasein, it also sets the world back on the Earth, and the rising emergence of Dasein's native ground plays a significant role in the revelation and subsequent interpretation of Dasein's historicity. It is the monumental and invaluable role of Earth in founding and historically validating Dasein's world that expresses the temple's true power to clear the ground upon which Dasein establishes an authentic dwelling.

As the temple draws the Earth into the opening of the world, Earth is visible. The raw "earthen" materials of marble and metal acquire a new look as they brilliantly radiate from out of the temple's work-Being, from out of the architectural structure. Marble and metal are transformed within the work, and shine forth in the enigmatic recession and concealment of their presencing. In the work-being, Earth emerges as a powerful spiritual presence, representing the awe-inspiring sublimity of nature, which rises and exceeds humanity. Earth shows itself authentically, in its essence as Earth, when presencing in an "undisclosed and unexplained" manner, demonstrating the essence of existence as a self-concealing phenomenon, a phenomenon of double concealment. The Earth represents primordial concealedness, which grounds the secondary mode of concealedness, the dissembling in which phenomena presence in deceptively curious ways as semblance. Heidegger describes the struggle of world and Earth in the following poetic terms: "The world, in resting upon the Earth, strives to surmount it, as self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The Earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there."⁴² This is not to suggest that Heidegger merely equates world with unconcealedness and Earth with concealedness, for the world also has a propensity toward concealment, and Earth toward self-showing. The double-nature of concealedness is also connected to world, for even in the open space of the *Augenblick*, the possibility of misinterpreting the self-showing of phenomena exists. Importantly, Heidegger envisages Dasein's existence as primordially grounded in "concealedness," and it is because of the Earth's self-secluding nature, as the supreme inexplicable force, that Dasein first approaches its self-understanding, which comes by way of measuring itself against the awesome powers of Being (the Earth), for destiny is grounded in precisely the things that Dasein does not and cannot know, grounded in that which is never mastered with confidence.

To review, Heidegger recognizes several problems with the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*, and as stated, these issues stem from the latent "subjectivity" inherent to the interpretations of Dasein's existence, the prioritization of Dasein's existence over beings and

⁴² Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 46.

Being, as if Dasein's temporality could somehow adequately explain Being *qua* Being as Temporality. "The Origin of the Work of Art" stands at a crucial transitional juncture in Heidegger's work, connecting *Being and Time* with his later *oeuvre*, due to its bold attempt to think art in terms of its potential to reveal the temporal nature of Being as history in the time of the *Ereignis*. Thus, in the later works on art and poetry Dasein is historical only when it responds to the way in which Being itself happens, and as related to the work of art, it is possible to interpret the unfolding of Being in terms of the significant relationship between world and Earth.

When returning to "The Origin of the Work of Art" in 1956 (Addendum), Heidegger reiterates that great art is determined with regard to the question of Being: "Art," writes Heidegger, "is considered neither an area of cultural achievement nor an appearance of spirit; it belongs to the *disclosure of appropriation* [the event of Being as *Ereignis*] by way of which the 'meaning of being' can alone be defined."⁴³ According to Heidegger, the meaning of Being is undeniably related to *originary* temporality as "Temporality" (*Temporalität*). In the moment of the *Ereignis*, within the work-being of the art work, time "temporalizes," which initiates a new historical "beginning." The truth-happening of the work of art induces the primordial phenomenon of the "out-beyond-itself" of ecstatic temporality, the essence of temporality, which occurs within the "free oscillation" of "Temporality." Whenever art occurs as the projective happening of truth, there exists a beginning, and a "thrust enters history." A genuine beginning is always a leap, which occurs as the *ecstases* spring beyond every being to strike open the originary future as such, and this is the primordial thrust of "Temporality," which initiates Dasein's new time as history, its new beginning as an overflowing excess. The oscillation and momentum of this explosive temporal leap enraptures and transports Dasein into its appointed task. This ecstatic displacement marks the entrance of a culture into its authentic endowment as historical, and this occurrence, according to Heidegger, represents art's historical founding as "beginning."

The *Riss*, in which the struggle for unconcealment occurs between the counter-striving forces of world and Earth, is tied intimately to the notion of Temporality as a phenomenon that cracks or "tears" open (*die reissende Zeit*) the *ecstases* of past, present, and future. Heidegger explicates the concept of "originary Time," as *Temporalität*, and its movement and oscillation in the following terms: "Within this prevailing forward of that which has been into the future, which, directed backwards, opens up that which earlier already readied itself as such, there prevails the approach of a coming and a still-presencing (future and having-been [past]) in one: originary time."⁴⁴ As they temporalize, the general and essential "momentum" and "oscillation" of time is set in motion, which is characterized by Temporality's reaching, or stretching out toward the future, and its recession, or the movement of folding back upon itself. This notion of

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, Martin, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania and The Rhine,"* translated William McNeill (Indiana University: Bloomington, 2004), 109-110.

"originary time" as "tearing" or "cracking open," is a theme that Heidegger extracts from Hölderlin's poetry. For according to Heidegger, "The poet [Hölderlin] on a number of occasions names this time the time that 'tears,' because it is within itself the oscillation that tears us away into the future and casts us back into having-been."⁴⁵

The *Riss* ultimately emerges and sets itself back again into the Earth, entrusting itself to the Earth's sheltering and self-concealing nature. In order for world and beings to presence, the *Riss* must reach out, as a coming forth, and then turn back upon itself, and within this movement the temporality of the artwork emerges. According to Christopher Fynsk, the *Riss* traces out the conflict of world and Earth, and "sets forth the openness of the open, holding open the clearing," within which the work of art comes to stand in the limits that it alone establishes, "standing, so to speak, against the outline or horizon that it draws within the *Riss*."⁴⁶ This originary experience of Time, as *Temporalität*, is what first makes the authentic appropriation of Dasein's heritage possible, which must be projected communally into the future, thereby repeating a possibility that it has at once inherited from its forebears and reinterpreted collectively as unique to the Dasein of the people. The *Riss* is related to what has been previously defined as the work of art opening Dasein's world in terms of a new, revelatory experience of originary creation, establishing the context, sketching out the limits, within which Dasein first comes to stand in the moment of unconcealedness. Heidegger writes of the *Riss* as the fixing in place of the strife between world and earth so as to manifest "*figure, shape, Gestalt*," and "what is called figure, *Gestalt*, is always to be thought in terms of the particular placing (*Stellen*) and framing or framework (*Ge-stell*) as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth."⁴⁷

It is clear that a developing concept of the *Ereignis* as the historical event of unconcealedness and appropriation in and through the encounter with primordial concealedness (radical finitude) is present to Heidegger's thesis in, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1936). However, this notion is also present to Heidegger's second version of the essay, which bears the title, "Concerning the Origin of the Work of Art," presented in 1935 at Freiburg. Examining a portion of Dastur's analysis of the 1935 essay, the notion of the happening of truth as a historical event (*Ereignis*) is linked with the notion of Being's recession, or its refusal to come to full-disclosure, for concealedness always belongs to the essence of unconcealedness (as untruth is the essence of truth). Dastur, interpreting Heidegger's reading of Heraclitus' (fragment 123), "Nature loves to hide," reasons that Heidegger finds in this cryptic proclamation the essence of unconcealedness, which is primordial concealedness (as Earth) in the moment of the open

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

⁴⁶ Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity*, (Cornell: Ithaca, 1993), 147-48.

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, Martin, "The Origin of the Work of Art," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 64.

lighting and clearing of the work of art, underscoring that "the drive of the emerging and rising of all things is to keep itself secluded."⁴⁸ The work of art therefore facilitates the Earth's emergence in its self-secluding essence, in its constant recession from unconcealment and full presence. This notion of the "self-concealing" Earth is linked to the "hidden" elements of the art work that always resist complete elucidation and interpretation. In other words, we will never fully understand the work in terms that are categorical in nature. As stated by Kai Hammermeister, Heidegger is here stressing the point that with respect to great art, "no single interpretation will ever suffice."⁴⁹

It is crucial to bear in mind that world is conceived in relation to Earth, which is understood in a twofold manner as representing the native soil beneath Dasein's feet, the "earth" upon which Dasein raises its dwelling, and the supreme authoritative force of primordial concealedness that is always beyond Dasein, which continually rises and recedes as Being, as history, within a variety of cultural instantiations. The historical grounding force of art, with its projection of truth that is thrown toward the coming historical preservers must be, "drawn up from the closed ground" of the Earth and, "expressly set upon this ground"⁵⁰ This particular concept of Earth is already present in Heidegger's 1934 analysis of Hölderlin, for as Heidegger stresses, becoming historical does not occur through "mere settlement," but occurs only when "accompanied by a nurturing of the Earth for the gods."⁵¹ Heidegger contemplates the importance of Earth as related to Dasein's historicity, philosophizing the Earth in terms of historical "ground," in relation to Time and finitude, as the Holy force that shatters Dasein's individuation:

In the Earth's becoming homeland, it opens itself to the power of the gods [...] Where the Earth manifests herself in the disinterestedness of authentic Dasein, she is holy - holy Earth. The holy one, the abyss in which the firmness and individualness of all grounds retreats and where everything yet finds its way to a constantly dawning new beginning.⁵²

⁴⁸ Françoise Dasture, "Heidegger's Freiburg Version of the Origin of the Work of Art," from *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, 123.

⁴⁹ Kai Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, (Cambridge: UK, 2002), 42.

⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 76.

⁵¹ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania and The Rhine"*, 105.

⁵² Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania and The Rhine"*, 105.

As stated, "The Origin of the Work of Art" is an important essay in that it contains Heidegger's developing notion of the *Ereignis* and the philosophizing of the "enabling power" responsible for openness in the lighting-clearing of the disclosure site. To digress briefly, Heidegger's central topic, as presented, is the attempt to understand how Being comes to presence (i.e., what brings about Being), a topic that separates Heidegger from both traditional ontology and phenomenology. Rather than seeking either the "givenness" and availability of entities (which includes the "there" of entities in their presence) or the dative of that availability, Heidegger questions the force responsible for the essential relatedness of these two phenomena. This force, or enabling power, is beyond metaphysics and the ontological distinction, for the enabling power responsible for Being's disclosure facilitates the manifestation of the "unity-in-difference" of Being and beings. What then is this "enabling power"? Arguably, it is the withdrawal or recession of Being in finitude that draws open the *Ereignis*, and this notion has been linked to the concept of Earth, as radical finitude. The alternative paradigm for considering the opening up of Dasein by the manifestation of finitude, as shown thus far in Section III, is the work of art, which draws open Dasein's entryway into the historical manifestation of Being, thus granting Dasein access to itself, other entities, and the Being of those entities through the rise, self-showing, and recession of the Earth (as self-concealedness) in the truth of the art work.

Dasture gives a concise and lucid interpretation of how the Being-event, as philosophized by Heidegger in 1927, differs from the conception of Being in terms of the developing understanding of the *Ereignis*. Dasture writes that with the notion of *Ereignis* in Heidegger's philosophy of the 1930s, comes a

new conception of Being, considered as no longer as the ground of beings (this is why from this period on [Heidegger] would prefer to use the ancient spelling *Seyn*) but as the unfolding of the clearing from an *abyssal* withdrawal and concealment. Because man is no longer the thrown basis of this clearing but rather stands *in* it and is *indebted* to it for his own Being, Dasein will then be written as Da-sein, in order to indicate by this new rendering that the "there" of Being can no longer be understood as the Being Dasein projects through *self*-projection and as *self*-affection, but as the call (*Anspruch*) of Being itself *to* man, a call to which man corresponds (*entspricht*) through thought.⁵³

The *Ereignis*, as the event of Being's presence and appropriation is Dasein's destiny (*Geschick*), and is associated directly with the event of the work of art, which initiates the disclosure of beings in ways that assume meaning for us in a historical sense, in that it involves our participation in the form of "owning," or "appropriation" of what has been sent to us, or made available to us at a particular time and geographic locale, and we have the potential to respond to it in terms of "historizing," i.e., taking what has been given and projecting it ecumenically into the future as a people in terms of our collective destiny. In the *Ereignis*, as

⁵³ Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, translated François Raffoul & David Pettigrew, (Humanity Books: Amherst, 1999), 64.

Dasture argues, a “*co-belonging*” transpires in the “reciprocal relation and constellation of man and Being.”⁵⁴ Being is ours, in a certain sense, because it gives possibilities that are uniquely our own, in terms of the potential to found and ground a new historical time. Conversely, our lives always already belong to Being. In the 1930s, it is the work of art that makes possible the enactment of a peoples’ destiny: “*Being as enowning [Ereignis] is history*,” writes Heidegger in *Contributions to Philosophy: On Ereignis*, “it is from this perspective that what is ownmost to history must be determined, independently of the representation of becoming and development, independently of the historical [as discipline] observation and explanation.”⁵⁵

The truth of art gives to Dasein its historical world and time in the *Ereignis*. As Dasein is ecstatically transported to its new time and history, as the work-being delivers Dasein over to its appointed task, a paradigm shift occurs. For as the extraordinary awareness of Being comes to presence, the ordinary and “long familiar is thrust down,”⁵⁶ and Dasein’s inauthentic ways of perceiving and understanding its existence are reinterpreted in the light of the truth happening in the art work. The participation of a people in the work of art inaugurates the authentic transformation (attunement) of their existence. As they move into the truth of Being as history, they are transported into their appointed task, “as entrance into that people’s endowment.”⁵⁷ According to Heidegger, this is the founding of Being in the *Ereignis*, representing the founding of Dasein’s historical existence in tripartite, linked to the Earth in three integral moments: founding as beginning, bestowal, and grounding. The beginning, as stated above, is the primal Temporal thrust, or leap into history, the moment in which the truth of a historical existence manifests; bestowal is a founding in overflow, or excess, a gift which can, “neither be compensated and made up for by what is already present and available”⁵⁸ in the manifestation of Dasein’s originary *ethos* (heritage); and grounding refers to a people’s historical grounding, which arises through the work as a creative response to an already existing world and people as linked to the Earth, as the supreme authoritative force of concealedness. This change from Dasein’s inauthentic to an authentic existence, or historical paradigm shift that occurs through Dasein’s participation in the work of art, in an important way, as explained by Hammermeister,

⁵⁴ Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, 64.

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning*, Translated Parvis Emad & Kenneth May, (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1999), 348.

⁵⁶ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 77.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

demonstrates that the “art is an indicator of self-transcendence, of the development of the self to its utmost possibilities,”⁵⁹ and these “possibilities” for Heidegger in the 1930s are poetized in terms of Dasein’s utmost possibilities as a communal being in the revelatory moment of “truth” in the great work of art.

This analysis has focused on the issue of historicity as a legitimate communal phenomenon, i.e., the manner in which a people historicize as communal beings, oriented toward the enactment of their historical "vocation" (destiny). However, in the lectures of the 1930s, Heidegger is still working to reconcile the earlier notion of “existential solipsism” (i.e., Dasein as individuated for its own unique possibilities, including the extreme possibility of its own death) with the claim that Dasein is historical, and therefore authentic only as a communal *Being-with-others*. To return to the question posed earlier, If it is the case that Dasein is its own temporality, enacting its own unique possibilities within its ownmost-potentiality-for-Being in relation to death, how is it possible for Dasein to historicize as a legitimate communal being? This question weighs with great import on this analysis, for not even *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935), with its emphatic claim that Dasein belongs to Being, directly addresses and resolves this problematic issue. However, in "The Origin of the Work of Art" and the Hölderlin lectures, Heidegger addresses this concern in a definitive manner, as he is no longer focused on death as a possibility that Dasein claims or owns. As previously outlined, this foregoing notion appears to wrongly emphasize the active power of willing in the process of becoming authentic and fails to explain the legitimate role of death in the communal process of becoming historical. However, in the later philosophy, Heidegger stresses the all-important responsiveness to Being and the resolute manner in which Dasein runs ahead to a collective demise, a possibility which no longer belongs to itself, but to the inexplicable, divine force of the Earth.

Returning to McNeill’s analysis of Heidegger’s philosophy after *Being and Time*, this significant point is emphasized. Regarding Dasein’s originary future, McNeill writes, “The ‘power of death,’ as the site of birth and mortality, is no longer conceived as Dasein’s own, but as belonging to the Earth in the *Ereignis* of its strife with world.”⁶⁰ While one’s death cannot be shared, Heidegger certainly appears to suggest that it is the collective anticipation of death that opens the possibility of a people “temporalizing” (in an authentic moment of *ecstatic temporality*) as a historical culture. No longer is Dasein the “individuated” *Being-towards-death*, but is rather a being-towards the truth of the artwork as the historical manifestation of Being. It appears that Heidegger conceives the pinnacle of authentic existence in terms of a collective relationship to death, which is promised to no one, and yet to everyone. With this reinterpreted view and understanding of death, Heidegger is successfully moving beyond the constraints and problems of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time*. McNeill links the originary power of

⁵⁹ Kai Hammermeister, Kai, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, 56.

⁶⁰ William McNeill, *Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, 301.

the Earth with death, originary future, radical finitude, and the understanding of the Nothingness that pervades Heidegger's poetic analyses.

Christopher Fynsk also analyzes the role of death in the communal historicizing of Dasein. Much like McNeill, Fynsk links the "historical address" of the art work, in the site of disclosure, to finitude, as the primordial phenomenon that authentically unites the Dasein of a people "in relation to the 'holy,' which occurs in terms of absence." As Fynsk describes the *Ereignis*, he rightly points out that finitude is a more fundamental phenomenon for Dasein than even its death. In the moment of the disclosure site,

the opening of Being that Dasein is called to hold open the there or 'da' of Dasein itself - exceeds Dasein's hold. It is a kind of abyss. Finitude, understood in this way, is the limit beyond all limits - even more fundamental to human being than the experience of mortality, insofar as the relation to death becomes a [potential] resource for speculative mastery.⁶¹

Fynsk's reference to the "limit beyond all limits,"⁶² as conceived in terms of Earth and the abyss of finitude, is an epistemological and ontological limit that must always remain beyond Dasein's grasp, beyond philosophy, beyond science, beyond the various ways in which Dasein's world has traditionally been understood. This so-called "limit beyond all limits" is related to the authentic understanding of Dasein's death, or mortality, as opposed to inauthentic interpretations that reduce death to a mere biological fact, an event that modern science can in effect "put off" for a seemingly indefinite time span, thereby stripping death of its primordial immediacy in the moment. The important point that both Fynsk and McNeill agree on is that the Earth and the abyss of finitude ground, or shelter within, Dasein's authentic death as related to the phenomenon of Being.

In *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine,"* Heidegger presents death in terms of the collective *brethren of death - as brethren of the Earth*. This idea is concretized in a powerful description of Dasein's "originary community," the community (heritage) that is given in advance, guided and structured by way of a collective *ethos*, which emerges in the disclosure site as the originary *polis*, the site and locality of history. The notion of historicity in Heidegger's later work of the 1930s appears as a true collective phenomenon in which "each individual is bound in advance to something that binds and determines every individual in exceeding them,"⁶³ and this is Being as historically conceived. Presenting the example of German soldiers locked in combat as comrades, Heidegger poetizes death in communal terms. Much like the preservers of the great work of art, who never experience a subjective, individual reaction, the

⁶¹ Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity*, 144.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 144.

⁶³ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania and The Rhine,"* 74.

soldiers are not merely a group of “enthusiastic” fighters, each enacting a singular, individual fateful destiny. Rather, there exists a cause and a grave collective risk that precedes and towers over the existence of every soldier in advance, bringing them into affiliation with the truth of their mortality as a collective happening (possibility), in relation to the overriding power of Being (and the Nothing). The nearness of death as a “sacrifice,” writes Heidegger, “place[s] everyone in advance into the same nothingness, so that the latter [becomes] the source of an unconditional belonging to one another”⁶⁴ In these passages, Heidegger is thinking death in terms of sacrifice, perhaps the “essential sacrifice” in which truth grounds itself, revealing in advance the “space of that community out of which comradeship emerges.”⁶⁵ There is a collective nearness and closeness in such moments when truth occurs, and relationships are established, but this is not the nearness to things, entities, or even beings, rather, it is a, “nearness to the Being that is most of all.”⁶⁶

Heidegger’s notion of the “originary community” in the Hölderlin lecture elucidates the notion of fundamental *ethos*, as related to Dasein’s heritage and “destiny.” As stated, the work of art “gives to men their outlook on themselves,” i.e., the inherited, habitual ways of life that are passed along from one generation to the next as *ethos*. The fundamental *ethos* of a community marks, or sketches out, the appropriate life for a people. Dasein’s world, its form of life, is above all structured by an integrated system of values, revealing to Dasein what “has-been” the accepted ways of life for the “past” community of which Dasein is a living member. The *ethos* of a historical community situates that community within the change and flux of existence, directing and guiding its “simple” and “essential” deliberations and decisions. However, although Dasein is opened to its heritage, to the fundamental ways and laws of the past, this does not necessarily guarantee its indebtedness or responsibility to its heritage, its originary place of dwelling. Recall that Dasein, as thrown-projection, must demonstrate its accountability to the past in order to historicize, which is to say, authentic Dasein must honor its past, embracing and appropriating its heritage. For this is the only way that heritage can be legitimately accessible for projection, for a unique reinterpretation and retrieval. If an obligation to Dasein’s heritage is to exist, and this is necessary for its authentic historicizing, what is it that places Dasein under the obligation to its heritage? What makes possible the authentic appropriation, as the resoluteness of Dasein’s historical task, in the moment of the *Ereignis*?

According to Heidegger, it is the power of Earth, as a pre-cultural force, rising up through the temple and its ground that acts as the authoritative force that holds the potential to legitimate the fundamental *ethos* of the Greeks. As McNeill reasons, it is the relationship with the “holy,” as Earth, that demands the obligation to a legitimate heritage. In this way, art plays an ethical

⁶⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania and The Rhine,”* 74.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 62.

role, “in the originary sense of *ethos*,” for in the work-Being of art, “human beings are raised beyond themselves toward something greater, something excessive, something that prevails over them.”⁶⁷ The *ethos* of Dasein’s originary community is validated in the projective happening of the truth of art, in the presence of the “holy.” As the radiant, enigmatic holy forces of the Earth rise up through the world, world scintillates and is imbued with meaning and is worthy of esteem, and humans are drawn together in the awesome presence of the formidable force that reveals as it conceals, with the potential to shelter and alienate, nurture and destroy. There is a collective understanding of birth and death that arises: humans spring from the Earth, and return to the Earth in death. Earth is the force which, in advance, serves as the originary site of Dasein’s “ends” - between which Dasein stretches out in the enactment of its temporal, historical existence. As Heidegger states, “The human being, who dwells poetically upon this Earth, he and he alone also *belongs* to the abyss that the Earth carries.”⁶⁸ For Heidegger, the notion of “poetic” dwelling always holds authentic historical implications, but only when dwelling is conceived in terms of the power of art and the event of “truth-happening,” as the historical manifestation of Being, to which authentic Dasein is responsible and beholden as “communal.”

IV. Concluding Remarks: Returning to the “Turn”

In the 1930s, Heidegger considers our potential for historicity through the renewed and intimate relation to Being that undergoes a change and rejuvenation in light of the numerous philosophical encounters with art and poetry, a relationship bound up with the important issue of authentic ethics and legitimate interpersonal relationships, which Heidegger intimated in *Being and Time*, but was unable to think through to completion. It is important to recall Krell’s notion of the “turn” as presented earlier, which denotes Heidegger’s thinking on the Being-event as historical in terms of the movement from Dasein to Humankind. I have attempted to present an interpretation of art in Heidegger as *Dichtung*, or the projection of truth as the clearing lighting space that transforms the human being in such a way that our individual and communal life occurs for the first time, a moment within which the individual’s life, in the happening of the work of art, is no longer a life of “individuation,” i.e., the revelation of the individual’s solitary, “owned” possibilities in relation to death. Rather, in the truth of the work of art the individual becomes *as individual* when and only when authentically communal in strict relation to the truth of Being as history, an aboriginal truth revealed and instituted by art, a truth to which Dasein is always already “destined” in advance. For Being, as Heidegger envisions, unites every individual by exceeding them.

It is interesting to note that when Levinas criticizes Heidegger’s philosophy for failing to

⁶⁷ William McNeill, *Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, 208.

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania and The Rhine,”* 107.

establish a platform for authentic ethical discourse, this critique is focused on the work of 1927, and not the “poetic” philosophy Heidegger produced during the so-called “turn.” Whereas *Being and Time* does not produce a legitimate account of the manner in which Dasein historicizes as a genuine member of a community, it is Heidegger’s writing on the work of art and the truth of Being that rectifies this problem by locating the source of history within the unifying force of great art and the creative moment of the work of art, which affords the potential to bring a living community into existence. Heidegger suggests that by embracing and appropriating our heritage, as the “gift-cum-burden” of its endowment, as related to Earth, a commitment to a shared project, or destiny, becomes an authentic possibility. Authentic historicity occurs in light of the historical revelation of Being and the subsequent appropriation of that which in advance always precedes, and as stated above, exceeds us, e.g., the guiding directives of *ethos*, our thrown-heritage as revealed and bestowed by the self-secluding powers of the Earth.

It should be clarified that the appropriation of historical Being in the *Ereignis* does not denote the forceful, willful taking possession of Being, in the sense of usurping something. Rather, in the *Ereignis*, it is Being that takes possession of us. Heidegger is concerned with our responsiveness and receptivity to Being, the openness that allows for an authentic stance within the enigma of unconcealedness. Heidegger stresses humanity’s acquiescence to Being, for when responding to the call of the Earth, we experience the Earth’s potential as a power that conceals and shelters, as the power of the originary future. Thinking Being in terms of a historical phenomenon in the *Ereignis*, as a moment of truth-happening initiated by the rise and eruption of the Earth in the work-being, is an event that inspires our preservation of and participation in the work of art as “safe-keepers.” As we enter and stand in the midst the work-being, “within the conflict that the work has fitted into the rift (*Riss*),” we approach, for the first time, the potential truth of our (new) historical “beginning.”⁶⁹ Importantly, this is an authentic communal moment, for as Heidegger stresses, preserving the work of art never amounts to an isolated, subjective aesthetic experience, but rather, beyond our “private experiences,” the work of art “brings [us] into the affiliation with the truth happening in the work,” grounding Being for and with one another as the “historical standing out of human existence in reference to unconcealedness.”⁷⁰

Historicity, as presented, is Heidegger’s response to the spiritual crisis in modern Europe, which was (and is still) expanding to have catastrophic global consequences. As philosophized by Heidegger, our historical Being is poetically inspired and emphatically resists and denounces the violent appropriation of other human beings and nature. Poetic philosophizing as understood in the writings that comprise the truth in Heidegger’s thinking Being and authentic historicity, is the non-appropriative antithesis to the intellectualism of modernity, characterized by its absolutist tendency to control and dominate the world and its inhabitants, resulting in a

⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” from *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 72.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

predicament (the loss of Being) that Heidegger first formalizes in *Being and Time* and continues to struggle with into the later days of his career, a nihilistic predicament in which both humans and the environment are reduced to mere objects, things for study, manipulation, and subjugation. For example, Heidegger's criticism of National Socialism in Hölderlin's *Hymn "The Ister"* expresses a disdain for politics embodying this aforementioned nihilistic tendency. Heidegger demonstrates through later writings during the turn that a new style of philosophical-poetizing-thinking is necessary for adopting a thoughtful and poetic approach to life's most difficult quandaries. As opposed to reducing the work of art to the parameters of rational, standardized, calculable thinking, the scope and methodology of Heidegger's philosophy, attuned to the richness of existence by way of an encounter with the work of art and the poetry of Hölderlin grows more sensitive to the aspects of the world that defy the technical explanations of both science and traditional philosophy, and this includes the tradition of aesthetics in philosophy.

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