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Philosophy of Art According to Hegel and Heidegger

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Abstract

Art is a way in which truth is both visible and expressed. For Hegel, among the three ways his philosophical God (Absolute Spirit) manifests itself, art is primary, followed by religion that is intermediate. Transitioning beyond both art and religion, the absolute achievement in manifestation is reached at the stage of philosophy. This transition from art to religion and philosophy takes place upon the popular proclamation associated with it: 'Art is dead'. Heidegger, in the epilogue to "The Origin of the Work of Art", questions Hegel's proclamation as follows: "Is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens... or is art no longer of this character?"¹ For Heidegger, the works of art along with the artist/ audience belong altogether bringing about a creative preservation of truth, and since the artist-artwork audience nexus receives the happening of truth from art itself, art is by nature an origin of truth or simply proclaimed: "Art lets truth originate". Death/origin dualism that exists in the popular proclamations stated above is of utmost significance in regards to the philosophy of art. Bringing to light both proclamations, (a) the death of art and (b) art's gift of originating truth, this article compares and synthesizes them into the following manner: "Either art's death is permanent or art may come back to life and gift the world with its truth originating gift again." This either/or question, available under Hegelian and Heideggerian pronouncements, is put forward in order to (a) give the study of the philosophy of art a direction, in the sense of

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¹ K. Kerimov. "Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Future of Arts". *Philosophy Documentation Center*, (2016).

inceptual thinking, and (b) actualize the rebirth of art, if indeed the death of art has already happened. As the event of the rebirth cannot be resolved by means of an article alone, our only hope is to become sensitive to both the pronouncements regarding art along with the synthesization as mentioned above.

Keywords: Philosophy of Art, Hegel, Heidegger, Death, Origin, Truth

Introduction

Philosophical thinking of an active nature considers a work of art, a construction whose existence brings forward an aesthetic experience. Although all works of art i.e. architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry are perceptible, yet, ordinary perception of the world is not identical to it. While walking in the university, we take notice and are careful of the pedestrians on the sidewalk as well as any obstacles ahead. In addition, upon having a glimpse of a white coloured vehicle full of passengers on the road, we presume it to be the university shuttle service and move on. However, upon beholding, with aesthetic intelligence, a painting or a poem about pedestrians on a sidewalk or a vehicle on the road, we come to realize that we have no ordinary practical relation to them as such. Only careful attention to the picture and poem bestows a meaningful experience, given that a realistic pictorial imitation can trick the eye creating a lifelike illusion, whereas a poetic expression can capture our soul, sentimentally infecting it. In cultivating such careful attention, the philosophy of art reveals its significance not only by showing its concern about the existence, nature and activity of art, but also by elevating the human perception and understanding beyond its ordinary limit. In view of that, this article ventures forth describing and comparing the philosophy of art of two German philosophers, Hegel and Heidegger, with special focus on their famous pronouncements regarding art.

Hegel (1770 -1831) considers art to be the activity and manifestation of the Absolute Spirit in sensuous form. His philosophical system of art is hierarchical in nature beginning with architecture, which is the most materialistic art-form. Since architecture lacks individuality/ spirituality in its expression, Absolute Spirit advances to a more adequate form i.e. sculpture. Afterwards, it turns towards painting due to its unique representation via multiple perspectives, personality shades, and portrayal of events. All three art-forms stated so far are perceived by the eye. Consequently, Absolute

Spirit, in its quest to achieve a more adequate spiritual manifestation, moves beyond the visual realm to reach the stages of music and poetry. Between these two non-visual art-forms, Hegel considers poetry to be the highest and universal art-form as music is perceived by the ear. On top of that, he includes all art-forms within three historical divisions: symbolic or oriental art having a naturalistic imagery, the classical or Greek art, with its anthropomorphic imagery, and romantic or modern art, which focuses upon the subjective free spirit. Reaching its climax in poetry, the highest and universal stage of sensuous knowing, Absolute Spirit no longer finds art to be its adequate manifestation, so it transitions through religion, the stage of pictorial thinking, and reaches its highest stage of manifestation i.e. philosophy (free thinking).

Heidegger (1889 – 1976) believes art lets truth originate. Truth means “unconcealedness” i.e. it is a primal conflict between clearing and concealing, where un-concealment leads to the happening of truth; truth being the denial or refusal to conceal itself. Consequently, truth happens where art is. What’s more, the nature of a work of art is symbolic instead of thing-like. In the creation process, an artist is used up in the task of drawing truth out to the light and bringing an artwork out. In the preservation process, an audience stands together within the light of the truth, receiving an artwork. As a consequence, true works of art let the artist and audience belong together. Like Hegel, Heidegger also believes the climax of art to be poetry. Thus, on account of the artist-artwork-audience nexus: Truth, which for the Greeks is *Aletheia*, happens as a poet is composing a poem, poetry is saying the “un-concealedness” of what is, and the Greek folk are preserving it as their destiny.²

Hegel proclaims, “Art is dead”. Heidegger proclaims, “Art lets truth originate”. Our task is to compare and synthesize the dualism thereof: Hegelian circle of death points towards the completion of Absolute Spirit's stage of self-development. Heideggerian circle of origin (beginning) points towards the presence/permanence of the primordial (circular) relation between art and truth. By synthesizing both circles we get the circle of rebirth, which means, (a) upon a linear reading moving from Hegel to Heidegger: even if Hegel is right in his proclamation, the primordial relation between art and truth still gives hope regarding art’s rebirth. Yet, (b) the

² J. E. Zimmerman. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 18.

event of art's rebirth requires we pay heed to both proclamations holistically: if art is indeed dead, then it is the task of the philosophy of art to be sensitive towards and prepare oneself around the question, "Is art still, even after its death, an essential and necessary way in which truth happens?" Only after we are sensitive to (b) can we hope (a) to happen.

The structure of the article first presents Hegel's position on art and then moves towards Heidegger's viewpoint, finally concluding the debate through comparing and synthesizing both. The section on Hegel's position shall clarify his speculative philosophy of God i.e. Absolute Spirit, whose manifestations are art, religion, and philosophy. Passing from art towards philosophy, the popular proclamation of the "death of art" shall become visible. Afterwards, the same proclamation shall be made visible via a detailed focus on the various divisions of art.

The section on Heidegger's position shall be described in two ways. The first way shall disclose art's relation to truth in a set of statements. The first way confines its examples to an artist/art-work relation. The second way shall distinguish between/give priority to art as symbolic work and/over art's treatment as a thing. The second way opens a world where artist-artwork-audience belong together. Both ways shall converge on the point that art is by nature an "origin of truth". The article is concluded by revising and synthesizing the dual proclamation of the death of art and art's gift of originating truth, which either leads to the circle of death or the circle of rebirth.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Hegel's God is called the Absolute Spirit. It is that which is the absolute activity of his entire philosophical system i.e. cosmology, anthropology, and obviously theology. Absolute Spirit, in a mystical speculative way, for the purpose of being *real* self-knowledge makes distinctions within itself (unity in difference) and becomes the *actual* object of knowledge for the philosopher.³ In order to become the object of knowledge, the Absolute Spirit journeys from unconsciousness (its appearance in nature) to self-consciousness (its appearance in the philosopher) where it establishes itself as 'absolute-knowledge'.

³ Georg W. F. Hegel. *Aesthetics – lectures on Fine Art* (Vol. I) Trans. T. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 94.

God as an infinite being is set at odds against both finite nature and man. Hegel's speculative philosophy ventures to overcome this opposition between the infinite and finite. Theism and pantheism are opposite extremes in theology. In the former, the infinite is set above the finite, excluding it while, in the latter, the finite absorbs the infinite within itself, making the infinite superfluous. Overcoming the deficiency found in theism and the deformity in pantheism, Hegel schemes to bring a union between the difference (between infinite and finite) found in theism and the identity (between infinite and finite) found in pantheism.⁴ For Hegel, all things are 'by God', moments of the *divine labour* but God, as the One, is not simply separate from all things, at the same time, all things are 'in God', moments in the *divine life*. But God, as the One, is not simply reducible to all things, to the many. Productive activity of God is its own self-externalization in its creations, at the same time, the urge to self-knowledge is its own self-discovery in man as a knower. As space, God exists in/creates nature, and as time, God exists in/creates history. God self-externalizes itself in both nature (space) and human civilizations (time); God self-discovers itself passing through unconsciousness in nature towards self-consciousness in man (above all a philosopher).

Absolute Spirit, being a single essence, appears in three different manifestations namely, art, religion, and philosophy. The three manifestations point towards one and the same Absolute Spirit, however, the manifestation of the Absolute Spirit is different in each case. If the essence of the manifestations is the same then only the manifestations of the essence can be attributed inferior/superior. Therefore, first of all comes art, the least adequate manifestation of the Absolute Spirit, next comes religion, and finally, philosophy (as Hegel conceives it) establishes itself as the only absolutely adequate manifestation of the Absolute Spirit. Art holds the same single essence as religion and philosophy but in an inferior form while philosophy holds the same single essence but in a superior form.⁵

According to Hegel, art is expressed by sensuous knowingness, religion by pictorial thinking, and philosophy (as he conceives it) is expressed by free

⁴ J. Collins. *God in Modern Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 235-236.

⁵ G. Magee. *The Hegel Dictionary* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 41-42; See also W. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1924), 441-442.

thinking. Each in its own way is showing the Absolute Spirit in reality.⁶ As far as the manifestations of the Absolute Spirit is concerned, it first self-positions itself as art, and then moves by self-elimination and/or replacement towards religion, finally entering self-elevation in philosophy.

Art, especially poetry, is the highest manifestation in which ancient people (especially the Greeks) represented Gods to themselves, setting in an awareness of truth for themselves. Poetry whose sensuous drawings consist of imagination gathered the people (especially the Greeks) around a divine image whose name was coined by the poets (Hesiod/ Homer) in order to set truth before them.⁷ In ancient times, the works of art did not exhaust imaginative vision so art had not lost its mysteriousness and was adequate to the need of Absolute Spirit's self-manifestation.

Once the Absolute Spirit has positioned itself, it shall find art as an inadequate manifestation of itself thus replacing art with religion. Sensuous knowing of art is objective whose opposite is the pictorial thinking of religion which is subjective. Absolute Spirit frees itself from its objective manifestation and looks inwards to subjectivity. Art paves the way to religion necessarily because the ingredient missing in art is worship which only religion can add.⁸ Greek gods and the Christian God both pictorially take on a human shape, yet only the latter exists as "inner knowledge/ subjective life".⁹ Nonetheless, even religion will be inadequate to the need of Absolute Spirit's self-manifestation according to Hegel,

No matter how excellent we find the statues of the Greek gods, no matter how we see God, the father, Christ, and Mary so estimably and perfectly portrayed: it is no help; we bow the knee no longer [before these artistic and religious portrayals].¹⁰

Again, Absolute Spirit has positioned itself and finds religion to be its inadequate manifestation thus replacing religion with philosophy. Religion was configured by inner subjective worship, whose subjectivity is eliminated

⁶ G. Hegel. *Aesthetics*, 101.

⁷ Ibid, 101-102.

⁸ Ibid, 103-104.

⁹ Ibid, 72.

¹⁰ Ibid, 103.

by philosophy which expresses its content by free thinking or “untrammelled thinking” - a thinking which fabricates/knows its own content conceptually.¹¹ According to Hegel, philosophy contemplates on an object “according to the necessity of its own inner nature”, instead of objective/subjective necessity of art religion.¹²

Although, Absolute Spirit elevates to its absolutely adequate manifestation in philosophy, eliminating both the objectivity of art and the subjectivity of religion. Yet, there is some residue of both art and religion that philosophy holds onto, thus the word ‘elimination’ ought not be taken in the sense of total annihilation. What this means is that Hegel is elevating the philosophy of art above the career of art itself. The philosopher is privileged above the artist (especially the poet). Thus, Hegel states,

The philosophy of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is.¹³

In modern times, as the topic of the works of art does not come from the inner urge dwelling in the artist who manufactures them for a commission carrying each work out only to meet aesthetic requirements, so it is only philosophy that comes to rescue art and studies art for its own sake making, at the same time, the proclamation of the death of art (in the sense of art career) popular in Hegelianism.¹⁴

Art is dead: Reasons

- i. Historically, it is “something past”.
 - The beautiful days of Greek art, like the golden age of the later Middle Ages, are gone.¹⁵
- ii. Its importance vanished as truth lost its existence in it. Thought and reflection have spread their wings above fine art.¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid, 104.

¹² Ibid, 11.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 605-606.

¹⁵ Ibid, 4, 10.

¹⁶ Ibid, 103, 10.

So far, an exhibition of how the superior manifestations of Absolute Spirit (religion and philosophy) leave art behind has been illustrated. What is now required is to elaborate how the transition to poetry occurs within all specific arts that paves the way to religion.

Hegel divides art in three types i.e. symbolic, classical and romantic. Each type of art consists of different relations between spirit and matter. Symbolic art is the result of matter overshadowing spirit, classical art is the result of perfect balance between matter/spirit, and romantic art is the result of spirit overshadowing matter. Furthermore, each type of art is related to specific arts; architecture is symbolic, sculpting is classical while painting, music, and poetry are romantic.¹⁷ Each specific art is configured according to sensuous material regarding which Hegel states,

Architecture is the crystallization and sculpture the organic configuration of matter in its sensuous and spatial totality; Painting is the coloured surface and line; while, in Music, space as such passes over into the inherently filled point of time; until, finally, in Poetry the external material is altogether degraded as worthless.¹⁸

Symbolic art shows the “primitive artistic pantheism of the east”.¹⁹ Hindu, Egyptian, and Chinese architecture reveals the beginning of spiritual awakening out of matter, but, since matter predominates spirit at this point, so either “the artwork is inscrutable, and confronts us as a riddle”²⁰ or it “resorts to grotesqueness and exaggeration in order to suggest the spiritual in natural phenomena”.²¹ Architecture, unable to master true beauty, builds a temple for the Gods through the “laws of mechanics and symmetry”.²²

Classical art as Greek sculpture shows greater spiritual awareness since matter and spirit are in perfect balance.²³ This achievement is made possible

¹⁷ W. Stace. *The Philosophy of Hegel* (London: Macmillan and Co. Limited, 1924), 452-453.

¹⁸ G. Hegel. *Aesthetics*, 89.

¹⁹ Ibid, 77.

²⁰ G. Magee. *The Hegel Dictionary*, 42.

²¹ Israel Knox. *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), 86.

²² Hegel. *Aesthetics*, 87.

²³ Magee. *The Hegel Dictionary*, 42.

as the divine (i.e. Greek God) is presented in human form, a bodily shape, a naive anthropomorphism.²⁴

Romantic art as “painting, music and poetry of the Christian world” shows infinite spirituality which neither can be presented by mechanical law nor the human body because spirit predominates over matter, freeing itself from both “a mass of mere weight” and “three-dimensional representation”.²⁵ Painting displays art on a 2D surface in colour; however, it is statically imprisoned in space. Music is art in its audible form in time; however, its tremor-like sensation is indistinguishable. Beyond the visible space of colour and the time of sound, poetry works upon the stuffiness of imagination to create art. The fire of imagination burns in all the previous specific arts. Thus, there is something poetic in all of them illustrating the universal characteristic of the art of poetry.²⁶

In the end, all attempts of manifesting the Absolute Spirit in sensuous configuration fail. Sensuous knowing of art as the manifestation of Absolute Spirit was adequate if there was “something secret, not revealed, in them” but since “everything is revealed, and nothing obscure or inward is left over any more”,²⁷ Absolute Spirit out of necessity turns back towards the subjective inwardness of religion.²⁸ In the progression of specific arts, the spirit first seeks awakening, attains awareness in greater degree than before, and, finally, upon exhausting its expressive possibilities cuts off its relationship to sensuousness transitioning towards religion.²⁹

Martin Heidegger

The section on Heidegger’s position shall be described in two ways. The first way shall disclose art’s relation to truth in a set of statements. The first way confines its examples to an artist/art-work relation. The second way shall distinguish between/give priority to art as symbolic work and/over art’s treatment as a thing. The second way opens a world where artist-artwork

²⁴ I. Knox. *The Aesthetic Theories of Kant*, 87-88.

²⁵ Hegel. *Aesthetics*, 80. Also see I. Knox. *The Aesthetic Theories*, 89.

²⁶ G. Hegel. *Ibid*, 89. See Knox. *Ibid*, 90-92.

²⁷ Hegel. *Ibid*, 604.

²⁸ G. Magee. *The Hegel Dictionary*, 41-43.

²⁹ W. Maker. *Hegel and Aesthetics* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 14.

audience belong together. Both ways shall converge on the point that art by nature leads to an origin of truth.³⁰

First Way

- i. Art lets truth originate.³¹
 - Truth happens as a denial of concealment, as a refusal.
- ii. Art is truth setting itself to work.
 - Truth is the clearing and concealing of what is.
- iii. Art is the letting happen of the advent (arrival) of the truth of what is.

What does origin mean?

Origin means to point towards the source of the nature/essence of something.³² One may be curious: what does originate mean? It means coming into existence by leaping out of the source of something's nature/essence. Heidegger calls it the "primal leap".³³ Logically a question arises: how does origin and originate relate to art in Heidegger philosophy? Art in its nature has the characteristic of origin and lets truth originate by a primal leap bringing it into existence. What's more, art is prior to and the origin of both the artist/art-work. However, in modern times, understanding art as an 'origin' is lost and in its place the public is accustomed to the dualism of subject/object (i.e. artist/ art-work) that presents the artist as the origin of the art-work and vice-versa.³⁴ Similarly, Heidegger seeks the meaning of truth from the Greek word *Aletheia* (means not-hidden, not forgotten) or "un-concealedness".³⁵ It means that truth happens as a denial of concealment, as a refusal. If truth means "concealing denial" then it points towards an opposition in the nature of truth. This opposition is between clearing and concealing, coming to light and going into the dark so to speak.

Heidegger calls this opposition in the nature of truth a "primal conflict". In modern times, truth means "agreement of knowledge with fact". Truth is defined as correctness and this view begins with Descartes' quest for truth

³⁰ Heidegger. *The Origin of the Work of Art*.

³¹ M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 75.

³² Martin Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. A. Hofstadter (London, New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013), 17.

³³ Ibid, 75.

³⁴ M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 17. See also K. Harries. *Art Matters - A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art"* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2009), 6.

³⁵ Ibid, 50.

as certainty.³⁶ 'Originally', truth is superior to this sense, and, for Heidegger, it is the disclosure of the quality of possible/promised excellence. According to Knockelmans, Heidegger is pointing towards a primal definition of truth which is prior to truth as correctness, certainty or agreement. Truth as "unconcealment" already puts a knowing subject in such an event (happening) that his/her statement agrees with an outside fact.³⁷

"What happens here?"³⁸ What happens when truth happens as a denial of concealment, as a refusal? Happening means the disclosure of what and how something is portrayed by the art-work. In other words, there is a "happening of truth at work" when a painting emerges on the blank canvas via the denial of concealment which discloses what and how that particular being is portrayed. Truth happens in Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes which discloses the usefulness and serviceability of the said shoes as equipment. Therefore, art-works do not present "something true" in the sense of correctness; rather truth as un-concealment is at work in art-works i.e. truth sets an entity, makes it stand in the work of art.³⁹

"Art is truth, setting itself to work".⁴⁰

"Art, as the setting-into-work of truth, is poetry."⁴¹

It has already been established that art is the origin of both the artist and the artwork, consequently, poesy (art of composition of a poem) is the origin of both the poet and the poem. Truth as un-concealment sets itself to work in poesy (art of composition of a poem) gathering together both the artist (poet)/art-work (poem).⁴² It has also been established that truth as unconcealment is the primal conflict between clearing and concealing. Thus, truth, as the clearing and concealing of what is, happens during poesy i.e. while a poet composes a poem.

What does it mean that art is truth setting itself to work as the primal conflict (clearing/concealing)? And why is poetry exemplary here? In modern times,

³⁶ Ibid, 50.

³⁷ J. Knockelmans. *Heidegger on Art and Artworks* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1986), 163-164.

³⁸ M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 35.

³⁹ Ibid, 54.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 38.

⁴¹ Ibid, 72.

⁴² M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 74.

it is customary to think of language as a means of communication, however, if language is understood as an art (essentially poesy), then language as the art of composition of a poem opens up the coming into existence of something as it is. Stone, plant, and animals lack such openness as they lack language as art.⁴³ Therefore, language as poesy is an 'open place' in whose openness truth sets itself to work as a conflict between clearing/concealing and the happening of truth as "un-concealment" determines the presence of everything standing present.

"All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry."⁴⁴

As a final point, art in the first way describes truth as follows:

- i. Truth originates out. (primal leap)
- ii. Truth happens there. (denial of concealment)
- iii. Truth sets itself to work. (poesy – art of composition of a poem)
- iv. Truth is in conflict. (primal conflict between clearing and concealing)
- v. Truth advent. (the synonym of advents is dawn or beginning)

Perhaps, the first way was too tightly knit around the meaning of truth. Let's begin someplace else to highlight truth's elusive nature as *Aletheia* which is disclosed via poetry.⁴⁵ Let's follow the second way, distinguishing between art as a symbol and a thing in addition to revealing art's symbolic importance over its thingly nature.⁴⁶

Second Way

- i. Thing's properties are:
 - Translation
 - Form & matter
 - Aesthetics
 - Equipment
- ii. Symbol representing:
 - Creation
 - Preservation
 - Art is the creative preserving of truth in the work

⁴³ Ibid, 71.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 70.

⁴⁵ M. Watts. *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2011), 199.

⁴⁶ M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 21. See also M. Watts, Ibid, 201.

- Art is the becoming and happening of truth

What is a thing?

A thing is an existing entity having a collection of properties.⁴⁷ Our modern attitude/view of what a thing is comes from various sources: the first is the Greek to Latin translation. Greek words had a native Greek experience rooted in them. When Roman thought dominated over the Greek words, it did so without the authentic Greek experience i.e. without what the Greeks say in that word. According to Heidegger, the translation replaced the Greek experience of the word to a behaviour alien to it.⁴⁸ For example:

- *Hupokeimenon* (underlying thing) translated in Latin as *subiectum* (Subject);
- *Hupostasis* becomes substance and *Sumbebekos* becomes *acciden* in Latin (accident)

The second source is the conceptual schema of form and matter. All things, natural or artificial, are considered to be a combination of form and matter. Moreover, subject-object relation combined with form-matter pair constructs a conceptual schema which can subsume any and every thing.⁴⁹ In the Middle Ages, Christian philosophy, which believes the world to be God's creation, took this conceptual schema from ancient Greek philosophy and made use of it in interpreting biblical faith. Notably, this conceptual schema showed such persistence that long after faith fell off in the modern West, it still had its lasting influence.⁵⁰ *The thing is formed matter* has become commonplace in modern metaphysics which uses this form-matter conceptual schema to study aesthetics.⁵¹

And the third is aesthetics; in Greek it is called *aesthesis* which means perception. Subjectively, aesthetics rests upon a human focused modern metaphysics. Inwood describes it in the following manner, "My own states, the way I feel in the presence of something, determines my view of everything I encounter".⁵² Objectively, the Greek word for a 'thing' from a

⁴⁷ Heidegger, 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 23.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 26-27.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 29.

⁵¹ Ibid, 26-27.

⁵² M. Inwood. *A Heidegger Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 18-19.

perceptual sense is 'aistheton'. According to Heidegger, the routine sense of a thing comes from this source defined as, "the unity of a manifold of what is given in the senses".⁵³ Aesthetics studies an art-work as an object of perception, a perceptual thing. The creation and reception of this perceptual thing, by an artist and audience respectively, is called 'experience' in aesthetics. Just like nothing was capable of withstanding the form-matter conceptual schema, so today everything perceptual is an 'experience'. Thereupon, the death of art is announced by Heidegger, "Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. This dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries".⁵⁴ Aesthetics experiences art-works as things, therefore, the material aspect (stone, wood, colour, tone, and language) of an art-work is considered central as it is the source of perception:

There is something,

- stony in architecture
- wooden in sculpting
- coloured in a painting
- sonorous in a musical score
- spoken in a song.⁵⁵

The fourth source of art is equipment. A piece of equipment is a thing manufactured for usefulness and serviceability. A piece of equipment uses up the matter of which it is made.⁵⁶ The matter disappears into usefulness. For example, in the process of making an axe, stone is used up and disappears into the axe-blade.⁵⁷ Once the axe is made, it is ready for use which means it is serviceable. A thing determined by the attributes of usefulness and serviceability becomes a piece of equipment whose handiness makes its material aspect hidden. The more "equipmental" a thing is, the more its usefulness and serviceability flashes at us and is prominent to sight while the material used up in its making hides away.⁵⁸

If "art as thing" is determined by the above features, then what would "art as symbol" be?

⁵³ M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 25.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 77.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 44.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 28.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 45.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 63.

According to Heidegger,

“Art-work is ‘something else’ over and above the thingly element. This ‘something else’ in the work constitutes its artistic nature. The art-work is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says ‘something other’ than the mere thing itself...The work makes public ‘something other’ than itself; it manifests ‘something other’; it is an allegory (interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning). The work is a symbol.”⁵⁹

Art as a symbol - the source of all true artwork - does not cause the material to disappear, instead, that material flashes in front of us as if it has come forward for the first time.

- The stone comes to *bear and rest*,
- wood come to *chatoyance*,
- colours come to *shine*,
- tones come to *sing*,
- the word comes to *speak*.⁶⁰

Putting a stone on a balance will only give a calculated weight in numbers; similarly, colours may be measured in numerical wavelengths, but in doing so, the burden of the stone and shine of the colours are unnoticeable.⁶¹ Art-work as a symbol neither rationalizes nor uses up the material involved in its creation. The sculptor does not use up the wood, the painter, the colours, and the poet, the words, instead the chatoyance in the statue, the shine in the picture, and the voice in the poem come emblematically into the open.⁶² Creation, according to modern view, is considered to be the result of a subject’s performance; according to Heidegger, in such a case, creation has been misinterpreted.⁶³ If genuine art is to be created, the artist cannot have a set plan in advance of his intended creation; instead, truth is unconcealed in the artwork itself once it is finished. For example, Van Gogh had not seen the “peasant shoes” as they come to sight in his painting before he started that painting; instead, it was only while he was painting that they appeared

⁵⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁶⁰ M. Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 45.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 46.

⁶³ Ibid, 73.

on the canvas. Creation, described by Heidegger, impersonally compels an artist, possesses him, uses him as an opening, so that he may draw out to the light from the well of Being a true work of art.⁶⁴

A thing like a rock is what it is and in no need of spectators. A broom, a piece of equipment, is unnoticeable while being in working order and made use of. However, great works of art require preservers i.e. an audience, spectators. An audience receives the light of an art-work and holds onto the meaning it brings to their lives.⁶⁵ Great art-works illuminate a 'world' when an audience gathers around it, for example, a temple shapes the destiny of the-world-of-a-historical-people. It does so by signifying "birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline" for their generations.⁶⁶ What if an artwork does not find an audience? In such a case, the artwork waits for them, waits for those who shall gather around it to preserve its truth because true works of art are bound to preservation.⁶⁷ Preservation, according to Heidegger, "is a sober standing-within the extraordinary awesomeness of the truth that is happening in the work."

Creation is drawing truth out to the light employing an artist and preservation is a standing-within the light of the truth gathering an audience together. Thus, art as symbol makes possible both the artists (creators) and the audience (preservers). True works of art bestow the nature of creation to the artist and the nature of preservation to the audience. As a river fashions its own bank so a true work of art originating creators and preservers.⁶⁸ It lets those who belong together, the creator and the preserver, originate each in his own nature. For Heidegger, "Thus art is: the creative preserving of truth in the work."⁶⁹

What's more, "Art is the becoming and happening of truth."⁷⁰ Art as poetry has a foundational nature; it is the beginning of truth as "un-concealedness", which happened in the West, primarily in Greece.⁷¹ For the Greeks, truth is *Aletheia* (not forgotten, not hidden), "a reservoir of the not-

⁶⁴ Ibid, 39.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 64-65. See also M. Inwood. *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 18.

⁶⁶ Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 41.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 64-65.

⁶⁸ M. Inwood. *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 19.

⁶⁹ Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 69.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 69.

⁷¹ Ibid, 74. See also J. Kockelmans. *Heidegger on Art and Artworks*, 191.

yet uncovered.”⁷² Truth, as *Aletheia*, happens as a poet is composing a poem, and at the same time, poetry (as poesy) is saying the “un-concealedness” of what is. This means, language, in the sense of poetic composition, is the becoming and happening in which beings un-conceal themselves, come to word and appearance, to the poet. Since linguistic work, especially the composition of a poem, is held in high regard amongst all the arts and truth has a poetic nature, all other arts i.e. architecture, sculpting, painting, and music are bestowed the light of truth by poetry.⁷³ It is for this reason, Heidegger states, “All art as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry.”⁷⁴

The Second path distinguished Art in the following two senses and gave various reasons for each:

Thing

- i. Greek words were translated to Roman language, without giving any consideration to the experience that the Greek associated with the word.
- ii. Conceptual machinery of form-matter representation omnisciently subsumes everything.
- iii. Aesthetics studies anything in presence as an object of perception and/or sensuous experience.
- iv. A practical piece of equipment is exclusively attributed with usefulness and serviceability.

Symbol

- i. Creation is the process that draws truth out to the light, employing an artist for the task of bringing an artwork out.
- ii. Preservation is a standing-within the light of the truth, gathering an audience together for the task of receiving an artwork.
- iii. True works of art let the artist and audience belong together.
- iv. Art essentially is poetry and poetry’s nature is the beginning of truth.

Art is a thing if viewed through Roman instead of Greek experience of words and due to the reduction of beings to the conceptual scheme of form/matter, as aesthetic objects i.e. the experience of perception, and

⁷² Heidegger. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 58.

⁷³ Ibid, 72.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 70.

finally, as a handy piece of equipment that is useful and serviceable. Overcoming this view is necessary to prepare for a serious engagement with art as a symbol. Art, originally, is the opening where truth reveals itself and at the same time gathers around itself the artist-artwork-audience.

Conclusion

Hegel writes about the abandoned relation between the Absolute Spirit (a philosopher's conception of God) and art. He proclaims the death of art.

Due to the Absolute Spirit's historical journey, art no longer remains "the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself". His instruction is to let philosophy examine art as it is the highest manifestation of spirit in our age.

Heidegger writes about the primordial relation between art and truth. He reminisces that art lets truth originate; the West is influenced by 'truth' (i.e. *Alētheia*) which had its beginning in poetry for the first time in ancient Greece. His instruction is to make the subject of the philosophy of art sensitive to the following question: "Is art still an essential and necessary way in which truth happens?"

Hegel's conclusion closes the circle of investigation with the proclamation of art's death. Nothing can happen now; this path leads to the circle of death. Heidegger relates art and truth circularly, declaring that art lets truth originate and truth happens where art is. This path leads to the circle of (the hope of) rebirth. Synthesizing their views, it may be observed that, *either* art's relation to truth is a thing of the past, it has been left behind, and in this sense the death of art has happened which should not be regretted *or* nothing can stop the possibility of the return of art, provided that sensitivity to art's origination of truth is met with preparation.

Optimistically, one can only question, "Is art's rebirth possible?" even if the Hegelian proclamation of its death has already happened.

Our only hope for the event of art's rebirth comes near once we become sensitive to both the pronouncements regarding art along with the synthesized either/or statement above.