

Vattimo 'symbolic operator' with a clear awareness of what he is doing. I don't know if, for example, the court architects that built the hunting villa of the Dukes of Savoy in Turin were conscious of expressing in their work the aesthetic expectations of a monarch. They probably believed they were conforming to the classical models they had taken as guides for their activity. Today, this conception of architectonic creation, more even than poetic or literary creation, is no longer possible. The architect is no longer the functionary of humanity, just as the philosopher no longer thinks of him or herself as a functionary of humanity or interpreter of a common vision of the world, despite having more reason for doing so. The philosopher is always the interpreter of a community. Yet this does not mean referring back to an ethnicity, to groups or places. The real problem of the post-modern condition is that one can no longer make any appeal to these 'realities', in however naive a manner. Even when one is said to refer back to a community, one no longer does; the innocence is lost and one has to be able to work in an intermediary zone between an enrootedness in a place – in a community – and an explicit consciousness of multiplicity. This is what I mean by a 'new monumentality': building cities where one recognizes oneself, not only in the sense that there is a perception of shared values, but also in the sense that one recognizes where one is, that there are distinguishing 'marks'. We need to be able to build in such a way that these marks are there from the beginning, and do not become marks only subsequently, like the monuments of present cities that are, so to speak, 'reduced' to being territorial markers, whereas originally they were or wished to be the incarnation of the idea in the sensible, as Hegel would say. We are in a situation of conscious historicity that could even block creativity – as Nietzsche said in one of his essays, the second *Untimely Meditations* – yet it is precisely this that we need. We need the ability to engage in building and in urban structure projects that satisfy these two 'conditions': an enrootedness in a place, and an explicit awareness of multiplicity.

I realize that these conclusions are not sufficient in themselves, but they may open up discussion. Once the architect is no longer the functionary of humanity, nor the deductive rationalist, nor the gifted interpreter of a worldview, but the functionary of a society made up of communities, then projection must become something both more complex and more indefinite. This means, for example, that there is a rhetorical aspect to urban planning (and perhaps also to architectural projection) that is not merely a response to the need to provide persuasive justifications to the listening public. Instead, it reveals the problem of links with non-technical cultural traditions – in the city, the regions or the state – that must be heard and which condition the creation and development of the plan. In this sense a plan is a contract, not something that the city can simply apply straight away. It has the form of a utopia, so to speak, that guides the real future project, but which will itself never actually be realized as a project 'put into action' and 'applied' on the landscape. Gathered together in this statutory form of the project are all the conditions of rhetoric, persuasion and argumentation regarding the cultural traditions of the place in question, those different cultural traditions within the community that significantly modify and redefine the activity of the contemporary architect and planner.

ORNAMENT/MONUMENT

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A relatively little known and minor text by Heidegger dedicated to sculpture – his lecture on 'Art and Space' (1969)¹ – ends with these words: 'it is not always necessary for the true to be embodied; it is enough if it flutters nearby as spirit and generates a sort of concord, like when the sound of bells floats as a friend in the air and as a bearer of peace'. If on the one hand this lecture seems simplistically to return to the basic concepts of 'The Origin of the Work of Art',² applying them this time to sculpture and the plastic arts, a careful reading reveals that this 'application' gives rise to important modifications, or rather to a new 'declension', as it were, of the definition of the work of art as a 'setting-into-work of truth'. No doubt this can be understood as a part of the general process of transformation of Heidegger's thought, and it is all the more interesting to us because it is not just a marginal aspect of the so-called *Kehre* said to separate *Sein und Zeit* from the post-1930 works. Rather, it marks a movement which takes place in the writings that are positioned after this 'turning-point' in Heidegger's work. This is not, though, the place to examine this question in such general terms.³ In any event, it can be agreed that the 1969 lecture signals the climactic moment of a process of rediscovery of 'spatiality' by Heidegger, and thus a distancing not only from *Sein und Zeit* (in which temporality is the key dimension for the repositioning of the problem of Being), but from a number of subsequent ontological inquiries into the same problem. It is difficult to decide exactly what this rediscovery of spatiality might mean for the whole of Heidegger's thought, especially because there is a risk of seeing it as opening onto possibilities which are too clearly mystical, or so it would seem. Certainly, however, this emphasis on space in the so-called 'second period' of Heidegger's work cannot be reductively interpreted as the mere stylistic predominance of spatial metaphors, ranging from the *Lichtung* (or 'glade') to the *Geviert* (or 'four fold' of earth and sky, mortals and divinities).⁴

In specific connection to Heidegger's concept of art and the aesthetic implications of his thought, the lecture on 'Art and Space' and the new attention that it pays to spatiality appear to lead to an important clarification of the concept of the work of art as a 'setting-into-work of truth' which also bears on the Heideggerian concept of Being and the true. I propose to show that all this has significant consequences for the aesthetic analysis of ornament.

Heidegger's theory of art would seem to be opposed to a recognition of the legitimacy of ornament and decoration – at least, in its insistence on the truthfulness of the work of art, it has generally been interpreted in this way. The work as a 'setting-into-work of truth' and as an inauguration of historical worlds (as 'epochal' poetry) seems conceived above all on the model of the great classical works – at least in the ordinary sense of this term, rather than in the Hegelian one. This is the case because the 'setting-into-work of truth', as Heidegger defines it, is realized not through a harmonization and perfect matching of inside and outside, idea and appearance, but rather through the persistence of the conflict between 'world' and 'earth' within the work. In spite of this radical difference from the theory of Hegel, Heideggerian aesthetics seems to consider the work to be 'classical' inasmuch as it conceives of the work as founding history and as inaugurating and instituting models of

Vattimo historical/*geschichtlich* existence: this constitutes precisely the work as the occurrence of truth, even if, as we shall see, it is not simply this alone.

The inaugural function of the work as a truth-event may occur, according to Heidegger, insofar as in the work the 'exhibition of a world',⁵ along with the 'production of the earth', takes place. As long as these concepts are considered in regard to poetry, they tend to give rise to a predilection for a 'strong' notion of the inaugurality of art – and it seems likely that Heidegger thinks of the relation between the interpretative tradition and the great poetic works of the past in terms of the model provided by the relation between the Christian tradition and the Holy Scriptures. What happens if the exhibition of a world and the production of the earth are instead considered in relation to an art such as sculpture? Before the lecture on 'Art and Space', certain passages of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* take a first step towards providing us with some possible answers to this question. Gadamer reconsiders Heidegger's conclusions about the work of art as the occurrence of truth in an optic that assigns to architecture a sort of 'foundational' function in regard to all other arts, at least in the sense that it makes a 'place' for them and thus also 'embraces' them.⁶ The words with which Heidegger's 1969 lecture ends, over and beyond their obvious spatial implications, appear difficult to fathom in reference to his concept of poetry. Precisely the fact that Heidegger here conceives of the 'opening' function of art with reference to a *spatial* art qualifies and clarifies at last what the conflict – in a positive sense – between world and earth means, together with the very significance of the term 'earth'. 'Art and Space', therefore, by no means restricts itself to applying the ideas of Heidegger's 1936 essay to the plastic arts, but provides a decisive explanation of the meaning of that essay – which is perhaps analogous to what occurs to the notion of being – towards death in the transition from *Sein und Zeit* to the ontological and hermeneutic works of Heidegger's final phase.⁷ As is well known, in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' Heidegger theorizes a *dichterisch* essence of all the arts, both in the sense in which *dichten* means to 'create' and to 'invent', and in the more specific sense in which it indicates poetry as the art of the word. It is not entirely clear in this essay, however, how the conflict between world and earth is brought about in poetry as the art of the word; one of the clearest of the 'concrete' examples that Heidegger provides, after all, is taken from the plastic arts, namely the Greek temple (and, earlier in the essay, on Van Gogh's painting). If we agree with Heidegger that earth and world are not identifiable with the matter and form of the work, then their meaning in his 1936 essay appears to be that of the 'thematized' (or 'thematizable' – that is, the world) and the 'non-thematized' (or 'non-thematizable' – that is, the earth). In the work of art the earth is still a setting forth (*hergestellt*) as such, and this alone definitively distinguishes the work of art from the thing-instrument of everyday life. The obvious temptation – to which Heidegger's followers have certainly yielded – is that of understanding this as the distinction between an explicit meaning of the work (the world that it opens up and ex-poses) and a group of meanings which are always still in reserve (the earth). This may be legitimate to the degree that the earth is still wholly conceived of in terms of the dimension of temporality: if we think in purely temporal terms, the earth's keeping itself in reserve can only appear as the possibility of future worlds and further historical/*geschichtlich* openings, that is, as an always available reserve of

further ex-positions. It should be said that Heidegger never explicitly formulates his theory along these lines, probably because of a rightful unwillingness to reduce the earth to a not-yet-present (but still capable of being present) 'world'. The decisive step, though, is taken when Heidegger turns to the plastic arts, as he does in his 1969 text. Nor is this the only place where he does so; already in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* poetic dwelling is understood as an 'Einräumen', as a making of space in the sense that is developed by Gadamer in the passages from *Truth and Method* mentioned above. In 'Art and Space', this *Einräumen* is visible in its two fundamental dimensions: it is both an 'arranging' of localities and a positioning of these places in relation to the 'free vastness of the region [*Gegend*]'.⁸ In Gadamer's text, which serves as a sort of 'commentary' to Heidegger, the essence of the decorative and secondary arts is found in the fact that they operate in a double sense:

the nature of decoration consists in performing that two-sided mediation; namely to draw the attention of the viewer to itself, to satisfy his taste, and then to redirect it away from itself to the greater whole of the context of life which it accompanies.⁹

May we legitimately consider this interplay between locality (*Ortschaft*) and region (*Gegend*) as a specification of the conflict between world and earth that is examined in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'? The answer is yes, if we keep in mind that Heidegger discovers this relation between *Ortschaft* and *Gegend* precisely at the point where, in 'Art and Space', he tries to explain how the 'setting-into-work of truth', which is the essence of art, could occur in sculpture. Sculpture is the 'setting-into-work of truth' insofar as it is the occurrence of authentic space (that is, in that which is proper to the latter); and this occurrence is precisely the interplay between locality and region in which the thing-work is foregrounded both as the agent of a (new) spatial ordering, and as a point of escape toward the free vastness of the region. The 'open' and the 'opening' (*das Offene, die Offenheit*) are the terms with which Heidegger – beginning in particular with his lecture on 'The Essence of Truth' (1930) – designates the truth in its originary meaning, that is, the one which also makes possible every occurrence of the 'true' as the conformity of the proposition to the thing. Perhaps, though, it never appears elsewhere so clearly as in this text on art and space that these terms do not only designate opening as an inaugurating and a founding, but also – and in an equally essential way – designate the act of opening as a dilation and a leaving free: it is, as it were, at once an ungrounding and a backgrounding, for what is placed in the background is also shown to possess a clearly limited and definite figure. In the play of *Ortschaft* and *Gegend* this double meaning of the opening as background is brought into focus for us. Heidegger's text on art and space thus leads us to see something that in his 1936 essay is left implicit or even not thought out: the definition of the work of art as the 'setting-into-work of truth' does not just concern the work of art, but also and above all the notion of truth. The truth that can occur and that can be 'set-into-work' is not simply the truth of metaphysics (as evidence and objective stability) with the additional characteristic of 'eventuality' rather than structure; that truth which occurs, in an event which for Heidegger is identified, almost without leaving any residue at all,¹⁰ with art, is not the evidence of the *obiectum* giving itself to the *subiectum* but rather the

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Vattimo play of appropriation and expropriation which elsewhere he calls the *Ereignis*.¹¹ If we look at sculpture and the other plastic arts in general, the play of transappropriation of the *Ereignis* – which is also that of the conflict between world and earth – arises as the interplay between the locality and the free vastness of the region.

It is here that significant indications for thinking about the notion of ornament may be found. In a long article on Gombrich's *The Sense of Order*,¹² Yves Michaud observes that Gombrich's interpretation of the urgency of the problem of ornament in art at the turn of the century, while it supplies crucial concepts for formulating the problem itself, does not place in question the distinction between 'an art that attracts attention to itself, on the one hand, and another art (that is, decorative art), which is supposedly the object of a strictly lateral interest, on the other'.¹³ Michaud instead suggests that we radicalize Gombrich's argument, and puts forward the hypothesis that 'a large number of the most influential manifestations of contemporary art may consist precisely in the fact of shifting toward the centre and placing at the focal point of perception that which usually remains at its margins'.¹⁴ This is not the place to enter into a broader and more direct discussion of Gombrich's work, in which other reasons for reflecting on the implications of Heidegger's theory in regard to a 'decorative' notion of art (in music, for instance) could easily be found; it may nonetheless be noted that, particularly from the point of view of 'Art and Space', the relation between centre and periphery does not have either the meaning of founding a typology alone (the distinction between an art that points openly and self-reflexively to itself and one which is the object of a strictly lateral interest on the part of the spectator), nor that of supplying an interpretive key to the development of contemporary art in relation to the art of the past. For Heidegger, it would appear, it is not merely a question of defining decorative art as a specific type of art, nor of determining the particular traits of contemporary art; rather, he seeks to acknowledge the decorative nature of all art. If we keep in mind Heidegger's insistence on the verbal sense of the term *Wesen*, or 'to essentialize', then it is possible to see that this question is connected to the reversal of centre and periphery that appears to characterize contemporary art in Michaud's eyes; for we accede to the essence of art in a situation in which it arises as an *event*, with precisely those same traits defined by Michaud; and this has to do with the essence of art in general, for it is the way in which art makes itself an essence in our own epoch of Being.

The occurrence of truth in art is a problem upon which Heidegger never ceases to reflect right up to his last works. In the light of 'Art and Space', his argument in the last analysis means that: (a) the truth which may occur does not possess the nature of truth as thematic evidence, but rather that of the 'opening' of the world, which signifies at the same time a thematization and a positioning of the work on the background, or an 'ungrounding'; and (b) if truth is understood in these terms, then art, as its setting-into-work, is definable in far less grandiose or emphatic terms than those which are customarily taken to belong to Heidegger's aesthetic thought. Gadamer, who is certainly well-informed about Heidegger's work, in *Truth and Method* assigns to architecture a more or less dominant and founding position among the arts. This gesture can legitimately be taken to imply that art in general has for Heidegger,

art arises as
an event.

precisely inasmuch as it is the 'setting-into-work of truth', a decorative and 'marginal' essence. Vattimo

The full implications of this cannot be understood unless placed within a more general interpretation of Heideggerian ontology as 'weak ontology'. The result of rethinking the meaning of Being is in fact, for Heidegger, the taking leave of metaphysical Being and its strong traits, on the basis of which the devaluation of the ornamental aspects of the work of art has always definitively been legitimated, even if through more extensive chains of mediating concepts. That which truly is (the *ontos on*) is not the centre which is opposed to the periphery, nor is it the essence which is opposed to appearance, nor is it what endures as opposed to the accidental and the mutable, nor is it the certainty of the *obiectum* given to the subject as opposed to the vagueness and imprecision of the horizon of the world. The occurrence of Being is rather, in Heideggerian weak ontology, an unnoticed and marginal background event.

If we follow the archaeological work and continual remediation that Heidegger dedicates to the poets, it is possible to see that this nevertheless does not mean that we are confronted by the inapparent nature of the peripheral occurrence of the beautiful, in a purely mystical sort of contemplation. Heideggerian aesthetics does not induce interest in the small vibrations at the edges of experience, but rather – and in spite of everything – maintains a monumental vision of the work of art. Even if the occurrence of truth in the work happens in the form of marginality and decoration, it is still true that for it 'that which remains is established by the poets'.¹⁵ What 'remains', though, has the nature of a residue rather than an *aere perennius*. The monument is made to endure, but not as the full presence of the one whose memory it bears; this, on the contrary, remains only as a memory (and the truth of Being itself, moreover, can for Heidegger only arise in the form of a recollection). The techniques of art, for example, and perhaps above all else poetic versification, can be seen as stratagems – which themselves are, not coincidentally, minutely institutionalized and monumentalized – that transform the work of art into a residue and into a monument capable of enduring because from the outset it is produced in the form of that which is dead. It is capable of enduring not because of its force, in other words, but because of its weakness.

From a Heideggerian point of view, the work of art as the occurrence of a 'weak' truth is understandable, in so many senses, as a monument. It may even be thought of in the sense of an architectural monument that contributes to form the background of our experience, but in itself generally remains the object of a distracted perception. This is not the still grandiose metaphysical sense that can be found in Ernst Bloch's concept of ornament in *The Spirit of Utopia*;¹⁶ for Bloch, ornament takes the form of a monument which is a revelation of our truest nature, and this monumentality is still deeply classical and Hegelian, even if Bloch tries to free it from these ties by displacing the 'perfect correspondence between inside and outside' to a future which is always yet to come. In the monument that is art as the occurrence of truth in the conflict between world and earth, there is no emergence and recognition of a deep and essential truth. In this sense as well, essence is *Wesen* in its verbal aspect; it is an occurrence in a form which neither reveals nor conceals a kernel of truth, but in superimposing itself onto other ornaments constitutes the ontological thickness of the truth-event.

Vattimo We could uncover other meanings of Heideggerian weak ontology concerning an 'ornamental' and monumental notion of the work of art. In passing it could be pointed out, for instance, that Mikel Dufrenne,¹⁷ starting from phenomenological premises, elaborates a notion of the 'poetic' which shares much of the same sense of *background* which can be found in Heidegger's work. What needs to be stressed is that ornamental art, both as a backdrop to which no attention is paid and as a surplus which has no possible legitimation in an authentic foundation (that is, in what is 'proper' to it), finds in Heideggerian ontology rather more than a marginal self-justification, for it becomes the central element of aesthetics and, in the last analysis, of ontological meditation itself – as the entire text of 'Art and Space' essentially shows. What is lost in the foundation and ungrounding which is ornament is the heuristic and critical function of the distinction between decoration as surplus and what is 'proper' to the thing and to the work. The critical validity of this distinction today appears completely exhausted, in particular at the level of the discourse of the arts and of militant criticism. Philosophy, in returning – although not exclusively – to the results of Heideggerian hermeneutic ontology, simply acknowledges the fact of this exhaustion, and tries to radicalize it with the aim of constructing different critical models.

NOTES

- 1 Martin Heidegger, 'Art and Space', pp. 120–3.
- 2 The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Albert Hofstadter (trans), New York: Harper & Row, 1971; repr. 1975, pp. 163–86.
- 3 For an extremely careful and rich analysis and discussion of this, see E. Mazzarella, *Tecnica e metafisica. Saggio su Heidegger*, Naples: Guida, 1981, pt 1, ch. 3.
- 4 The most useful and complete of all the basic works on Heidegger's language, besides H. Feick's *Index zu Heideggers 'Sein und Zeit'*, 2nd edn (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1968), is still E. Schofer's *Die Sprache Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1962).
- 5 Here, as well as later on, I refer to the terminology and arguments provided by Heidegger in his essay on 'The Origin of the Work of Art', though I try not to bog down my discussion with notes for each term or concept that I consider. For a more detailed analysis of this essay, see my *Essere, storia e linguaggio in Heidegger* (Turin: Ed. di 'Filosofia', 1963), chapter 3.
- 6 Cf. H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Garrett Barden and John Cummings (trans.), 2nd edn, New York: Crossroads, 1975; repr. 1984, p. 139.
- 7 Here I refer the reader to the final chapters of my *Le aventure della differenza* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981).
- 8 Martin Heidegger, *Die Kunst und der Raum*; in *Gasamtausgabe*, vol. XIII, p. 207.
- 9 Cf. Gadamer, op. cit., p. 140. Repr. here, p. 134.
- 10 The essay on 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Hofstadter), pp. 54–6, at one point discusses the different modes of occurrence of truth. None of these modes, though, not even that of philosophical thought, is taken up by Heidegger and developed in his subsequent works: the occurrence of truth remains tied to the 'setting-into-work of truth' that occurs in the work of art.
- 11 See especially the various texts published in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954; repr. 1978).
- 12 E.H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979; Yves Michaud's article, 'L'Art auquel on ne fait pas attention', is found in *Critique*, 416, Jan. 1982, pp. 22–41.
- 13 Michaud, op. cit., p. 36.
- 14 Ibid., pp. 36–7.
- 15 For example, see Heidegger's lecture on 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry' (1936) in *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 3rd edn (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1963).
- 16 Cf. Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie* (1923), 2nd rev. edn, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977, p. 20 ff.
- 17 Cf. M. Dufrenne, *Le poétique*, Paris: PUF, 1963.

PART III

STRUCTURALISM