

The Oblivion of Beings. The Process of Immunization in Martin Heidegger's Philosophy

El olvido del ente.
El proceso de inmunización en la filosofía de Martin Heidegger

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Abstract: What I intend to demonstrate in this paper is that Heidegger pretends to immunize his philosophy from any possibility of refutation. The thesis that I argue is that precisely because the ontological cannot be corroborated by the empirical realm and, on the other hand, does not provide a foundation for what he considers the *a priori*, the German thinker shields his philosophy from any kind of reply: the ontological cannot be corroborated by beings and, at the same time, it can only be reached by a “leap” (*Sprung*). The question is: on what is the *a priori* founded? how to establish the validity or legitimacy of a horizon? There seems to be no answer.

Key-words: Being, beings, immunization, Heidegger

Resumen: Lo que intento demostrar en este artículo es que Heidegger pretende inmunizar su filosofía de toda posibilidad de refutación. La tesis que sostengo es que precisamente porque lo ontológico no puede ser corroborado por lo empírico y, por otro lado, no provee una fundación para lo que considera lo *a priori*, el pensador alemán blindo su filosofía de cualquier tipo de réplica: lo ontológico no puede ser corroborado por el ente y, al mismo tiempo, este solamente puede alcanzarse por un “salto” (*Sprung*). La pregunta es: ¿sobre qué se fundamenta el *a priori*? ¿cómo determinar la validez o legitimidad de un horizonte? No parece haber respuesta.

Palabras clave: entes, ser, Heidegger, inmunización

1. Introduction

The transitional thinkers must ultimately know what all insistence upon understandability especially fails to realize, that no thinking of being, no philosophy, could ever be verified by “facts,” i.e., by beings. To make itself understandable is suicide for philosophy. The idolizers of “facts” never realize that their idols shine only in a borrowed light. They are indeed not supposed to realize that for it would immediately make them perplexed and, accordingly, useless. But idolizers and idols are used only when the gods are absconding and so are announcing *their* nearness. (GA 65, p. 435 / 344)

What does Heidegger mean here? Is it that philosophy has nothing to do with facts? By what are the statements of philosophy legitimized? Philosophy for Heidegger deals with being, which is that which makes possible the experience of entities. *Sein* is

meaning (*Sinn*)¹. The ontological, the relative to being, is never corroborated by facts since the former is the condition of possibility of the latter. The facts, the empirical level, have no relevance in philosophical argumentation. «If, scorning empiricism, you opt out of the exact sciences, then the human sciences, then traditional philosophy, then the sciences of language, and you hunker down in your forest then you will indeed feel a tragic loss» (Latour, 1993, p. 66), the loss of rational grounding. Heidegger takes refuge in the impenetrable forest of being, immunizing his thought from any possibility of reply. In his argumentation something analogous happens to the problematic justification of the *a priori* in Immanuel Kant, as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel points out². Kant postulates certain categories that function as pure concepts of objects. These categories cannot have an empirical origin because they would not be pure concepts, nor were they taken randomly, like Aristotle. The categories are determined «by means of a few principles of the understanding» (Kant, 1970, p. 132) to ensure that those chosen are the correct ones and that none are missing. The categories are derived from the logical form of the judgments. For example, from the hypothetical judgments (if p then q) the category of the cause relation and the effect are derived. The categories are founded on the logical judgments, but what is the origin of the judgments? As Hegel points out, here lies a major problem in Kantian argumentation. The Königsberg philosopher does not provide any *a priori* foundation that legitimizes the table of judgments. He simply points out that the categories could be easily reached thanks to the «work of the logicians» (Kant, 2004, p. 75). Thus, Hegel concludes that if «thinking is to be capable of proving anything, if logic must demand that *proofs* be given, and if it wants to teach how to give proofs, then it should be capable above all of proving the content most proper to it and seeing its necessity» (Hegel, 2015, p. 86)³. In the same way there seems to be no clear justification when Heidegger speaks of technology, art or language as those instances that open up a world or a horizon of meaning. Heidegger, on the other hand, considered that the idealists, who were united by the rejection of Kant, never got beyond him because the position of the Königsberg philosopher was never really disputed, rather abandoned. «Kant's work remained like an unconquered fortress [*eine uneroberte Festung*]» (GA 41, p. 58 / 59)⁴.

What I intend to demonstrate in this paper is that Heidegger also pretends to build an unbeatable fortress. The thesis that I argue is that precisely because, like pure concepts, the ontological cannot be corroborated by the empirical realm but, on the other hand, there is no possibility of proving the *a priori* by other means, the German philosopher shields his philosophy from any kind of reply: the ontological cannot be corroborated by beings and, at the same time, it can only be reached by a “leap” (*Sprung*). The question is: on what is the *a priori* founded⁵? how to establish the validity or legitimacy of

¹ I have worked on this in Belgrano (2020a). See also Sheehan (2015) and Bertorello (2008).

² I am grateful to Dr. Fernando Moledo for bringing this comparison to my attention.

³ On the limits of the Kantian critique and Hegel's questioning see Moledo (2018) and Longuenesse (2006).

⁴ However, Heidegger, similarly to Hegel, claims that «as a result of unveiling the subjectivity of the subject, Kant falls back from the ground which he himself had laid» (GA 3, p. 214 / 150). This is none other than the transcendental imagination, which Kant acknowledges to be an obscure domain of human nature and which we are unlikely ever to uncover. Now, Heidegger understands this obscurity, this retreat, not as something negative or reprehensible, but as the possibility for philosophy to glimpse «the breaking-open of the foundation and thus makes manifest the abyss of metaphysics» (GA 3, p. 215 / 151).

⁵ Here *a priori* is not to be understood as a transcendental horizon in the Kantian way, but as a space of meaning that is always historical and finite. *A priori* as that which precedes the experience of entities.

a horizon? There seems to be no answer. Heidegger thus immunizes his entire philosophy from any kind of objection⁶. In order to achieve what I propose, I will first introduce a fundamental distinction: the ontic dimension and the ontological dimension. Then, in a second moment, I will go into this “oblivion of beings”, concentrating on a specific issue: the work of art. Thirdly, I will show in what sense the ontological lacks foundation and its consequences.

Behind this discussion is the question of the task of philosophy. If we consider that philosophy has only a performative value, insofar as it seeks to make its interlocutors think and generate questions, then discussing the demonstrative character or methodological procedure of such a philosophy seems irrelevant. Nothing is to be proved here. Heidegger often seems to have this conception of philosophy⁷. As the German thinker said, his writings are “paths and not works”, forest paths (*Holzwege*), which go deep into the vegetation and get lost among the trees, some lead to large clearings, others end suddenly in the darkness of the bush. Rather than closed, finished theoretical systems, they are invitations to reflect on the paths of thought. But, at the same time, his philosophy seems to have a cognitive function, seems to be able to “return to things themselves” (*Rückgang zu den Sachen selbst*). Despite Heidegger’s relativistic airs, insofar as our access to being is always situated, the philosopher does not claim that phenomena remain inaccessible.⁸

It was an error of phenomenology to believe that phenomena could be correctly seen merely through unprejudiced looking. But it is just as great an error to believe that, since perspectives are always necessary, the phenomena themselves can *never* be seen, and that everything amounts to contingent, subjective, anthropological standpoints. From these two impossibilities we obtain the necessary insight that our central task and methodological problem is to arrive at the *right* perspective. We need to take a precursory view of the phenomenon, but precisely for this reason it is of decisive importance whether the guiding perspective is adequate to the phenomenon, i.e. whether it is derived from its substantial content or not (or only construed). It is not because we must view it from some perspective or other that the phenomenon gets blocked off from us, but because the perspective adopted most often does not have a genuine origin in the phenomenon itself. (GA 34, p. 286 / 203-204)

The central methodological task of phenomenology is to adjust the perspective in order to reach the “right” approach to the phenomenon. Something similar is stated in *Being and Time*: «What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way» (GA 2, p. 202 / 194-195). A first step is to identify the interpretative frameworks that hide this access to the phenomenon from us (*das Man* or technology, for example). But how do we ensure that we reach before the thing itself? How we determine how “close” we are? Although, as we shall see, Heidegger in various contexts maintains that the search for a criterion is misguided, insofar as each criterion presupposes a way of interpreting being, in the fragments quoted we see that there are certain perspectives that are more correct than others –and therefore a certain criterion of

⁶ One of the first to identify this way of proceeding was Karl Löwith (1953), particularly in *Being and Time*. According to him, anyone who questions what is said in the analytic of *Dasein* and interprets it as an arbitrary projection by the author will be told that she thinks this way because she proceeds from the inauthentic state of the “They”. “The existential-ontological interpretation is always right, for the opposition to it only shows that it arises from a ‘deficient mode’ of what is to be proved” (p. 92). In the same line of reasoning see Hartmann (1974).

⁷ I have tried to show how Heidegger intends to do this in his conferences in Belgrano (2021a).

⁸ For a discussion of Heidegger’s relativistic interpretations see Golob (2019).

truth is presupposed—, insofar as they come closer or not to the phenomenon itself. But what is the appropriate method for determining which perspective is right and which is wrong? It is not clear how we determine this. We will see that neither empirical knowledge of entities can help us, nor rational argumentation. One of the main thesis of this paper is that this criterion is not explicit and, therefore, the statements of his philosophy seem to be immune to any criticism.

2. The Ontic and the Ontological Dimension

In the history of philosophy the statement has traditionally been understood as the place where truth is given. The essence of truth consists in the adequacy of the intellect with the object, which is expressed in the proposition. In other words, something is true when what I say or think agrees with reality. But how is this concordance justified? For Heidegger the place of truth can never be originally the concordance between subject and object, because for the statement of something to be possible, the entity must first be discovered. And for something to be discovered it must manifest itself in a space of meaning. To take an example from Heidegger: when I say “chalk”, an eraser, a classroom and a blackboard are implied. It assumes, in turn, a classroom that is in the building of the University and this in the city of Freiburg. In other words, the chalk is shown to me as such in a certain meaningful context. «This whole context, this complete context, is immediately present to us in its un-hidden state when we say that this chalk is here on the lectern» (GA 27, pp. 81-82). If I write on a piece of paper “here is the chalk” and put it next to the object in question, the statement is true. But if by a draft the paper flies into the hallway and a passing student picks it up and reads it, the statement is no longer true. «Through the draft the truth has become an untruth. Strange that a truth should depend on a gust of wind» (GA 41, p. 28 / 29). In fact, what Heidegger wants to show here is that adequacy or conformity is always contextual, always presupposes a realm of disclosure. In the lessons of the winter semester 1925-1926 Heidegger proposes another example: a person walks through the forest and on the horizon, among the trees, she perceives a movement. At first, she thinks it is a deer. But as she gets closer, she realizes that it was actually a branch moved by the wind. Here we see that this false statement, “this is a deer”, depends on a previous space of meaning, a previous opening. That is to say, the person finds herself in a certain meaningful context, a German forest, in which it is plausible to interpret what she sees as a deer. She would never have presupposed that the one who moves is the shah of Persia, although that is possible, nor would she assume that it is the cube root of 69, which would be impossible (GA 21, pp. 187-188 / 158-159)

In short, to understand truth as concordance or adequacy is to understand it from a derivative form. It is not that this conception is false, but that it is not sufficiently original. That is why for Heidegger the notion of *adequatio* is the starting point to reach the ontological dimension of truth. The entity, when it reveals itself to us, is already situated in an interpretative or meaningful context. The proposition, then, does not have an original relation with the entity, it must first have been discovered. The statement is not only not the place of truth, but it is founded on the prior uncovering of the entity. The original truth is the condition of possibility that the statements can be true or false. And the proposition is derived insofar as it is only possible if a sphere is already open within which the entity can be shown before *Dasein*, in the same way that I can only see something if there is light. The Greeks used the word *ἀλήθεια* to speak of truth, a

term that Heidegger takes up and associates with the idea of being uncovered from the entity or its unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*). This way of understanding truth does not intend to set aside or eliminate what tradition teaches, truth as concordance, but to show that the sense that the history of philosophy has attributed to this concept is not original but derived.

In *Introduction to Philosophy* and in the conference “On the Essence of Ground” Heidegger distinguishes between an ontic truth or truth of beings and an ontological truth or truth of being. The ontic truth (*ontische Wahrheit*) refers to the uncovering of the being that he had already characterized in *Being and Time*: within it we can find truth in the primary sense, the opening of *Dasein* (*Erschlossenheit*), and truth in the secondary sense, the discovery of the being (*Entdecktheit*). Ontological truth (*ontologische Wahrheit*) is the antecedent understanding of being and the condition of possibility of the uncovering beings, the background from which true and false statements are possible. What is ontologically true is what makes intelligibility or meaning (*Sinn*) of an entity possible. Therefore, if the uncovering of the entity is only possible by a form of understanding of being, then ontic truth is founded on ontological truth. Ontological truth refers to the unveiling of being, to the horizon of meaning (GA 45, p. 137 / 119). Heidegger recognizes, then, three levels of truth⁹. I summarize it schematically:

1. In the first place, truth is given in the adequacy between the subject and the reality expressed in a statement.
2. The second level would be ontic truth. This alludes both to the discovery of the being (*Entdecktheit*) and to the open character of existence (*Erschlossenheit*). That is to say, an entity is true when it manifests itself and appears before a *Dasein*.
3. The third moment would be ontological truth or, as it begins to be characterized since *Contributions to Philosophy*, “the truth of being”. The entity can only be uncovered thanks to a prior understanding of being that shapes the possibilities of manifestation.

Each level functions as the foundation of the other, that is to say, truth as adequacy (level 1) is only possible if an entity manifests itself (level 2), which only happens thanks to a previous sphere of intelligibility (level 3). This structure is maintained throughout Martin Heidegger’s intellectual itinerary. What is here called level 3 is founded, at distinct moments, by different instances. I will concentrate particularly on what is called the second Heidegger, where this role is carried out, at certain points, by the work of art, language, technology and *Ereignis*. This means that art, technology and language configure a space or horizon of meaning that allows entities to manifest themselves. The space of meaning that inaugurates the *Ereignis*, the work of art, technology or language is the historical *a priori* that makes it possible for things to acquire meaning. The question is, on what is this *a priori* founded?

3. The Oblivion of Beings

Let us take for example the case of the work of art. One could start from technology or language, but in order not to extend too much, I will concentrate on one case.

⁹ See Sheehan (2015, p. 75)

In “The Origin of the Work of Art” Heidegger understands that the work of art is the “setting-itself-to-work of the truth” (*das Sich-ins-Werk-Setzen der Wahrheit*), that is to say, the work inaugurates a field of manifestation, a space of meaning, which functions as a condition of possibility for the appearance of entities. The work opens a horizon that functions as an *a priori* of understanding. The German philosopher gives different examples: the temple of Paestum, van Gogh’s boots, Meyer’s poem about the Roman fountain. Now, concretely, which world does van Gogh’s painting or Meyer’s fountain open up? the world of the peasant woman or the Roman world? the world of each artist? The same we can ask of the temple of Paestum, what space of meaning does it specifically inaugurate? the world of the Greek mythological gods or does it articulate a horizon of meaning today? how precisely does the appearance of the surrounding nature change in this case? «Truth happens in van Gogh’s painting. That does not mean that something present is correctly portrayed; it means, rather, that in the manifestation of the equipmental being of the shoe-equipment, that which is as a whole [...] achieves unconcealment» (GA 5, p. 43 / 32). How is the whole entity unhidden in van Gogh’s painting? How does truth work concretely in the examples provided by Heidegger? There does not seem to be a clear explanation¹⁰.

These questions can hardly be answered from what is said in “The Origin of the Work of Art”. Nikola Mirković (2020) argues that Heideggerian philosophy of art is a works-oriented theory, firstly, because what is specific to art is its character as a work, which is evident in the writing, secondly, because in “The Origin of the Work of Art” many allusions are made to individual works at key argumentative moments. Mirković concludes that «the orientation towards individual works testifies to the importance of experience for philosophical conceptualization» (p. 9. My translation). Not only do I totally disagree, but I would rather assert the opposite. It is true that the German philosopher mentions some works, although not so many (the temple, van Gogh’s painting, Meyer’s poetry), but at no point does he specify how the world that the work opens up is concretely given, what the new horizon that the mentioned artistic pieces open up consists of. There is no explicit explanation of how this experience with art takes place, nor is there a detailed and rigorous historical-critical analysis of the works he uses. As Dolf Sternberger (1987) states in his chronicle of the conferences, «nothing is avoided so much as a tangible result [*handfeste Resultat*]» (p. 189. My translation). There is an oblivion of beings. Heidegger denounced throughout his intellectual career the “oblivion of being,” that is, the identification of being and entity, understanding being as mere presence and “forgetting” that the former is the condition of possibility of the latter. But Heidegger, on the other hand, accentuating the difference between being and entity, concentrates only on the first and forgets the second. But this oblivion is not an accident or an argumentative flaw but is deliberate. Heidegger considers that his philosophy in general, and this reflection on art, are an ontological-transcendental meditation and, therefore, he is not interested in the ontic-empirical aspects of the phenomena, in this case, of the work of art. His philosophy does not deal with facts, but with their conditions of possibility. As we saw in the fragment quoted in the introduction, «that no thinking of being, no philosophy, could ever be verified by “facts,” » (GA 65, p. 435 / 344)¹¹. The clearing (*Lichtung*) can never be refuted by facts since it is the clear itself

¹⁰ I have worked on the ontological dimension of the work of art in Heidegger in Belgrano (2015) and Belgrano (2020b).

¹¹ In the same line of reasoning: “Hence it follows that an essential determination cannot be proved by facts (in our case by factually performed correct assertions)-in the first place because these facts cannot at all be surveyed and exhibited. And even if this futility were successful, the essential determination

that dictates the conditions of their manifestation. In this sense, «philosophical statements cannot be proved» (GA 36-37, p. 178 / 138). But then, how can we determine if Heidegger's proposal is adequate to approach the phenomenon of the work of art? on what is all his reflection legitimized? how can we be sure if the proposed framework for interpreting the work is correct, functional or valid?

The methodological solution proposed by Heidegger, which he exposes at the beginning of "The Origin of the Work of Art", is the hermeneutic circle. The thesis is the following: any understanding of any phenomenon presupposes a previous understanding of it. A work of art, for example, manifests itself as such thanks to a prior conception of what art is, which is constituted from the contemplations of other works in the past. Let us think, for example, of Marcel Duchamp's fountain. Only based on a certain pre-understanding of what we should understand by art, can we interpret the work as a piece of contemporary art. Without this pre-understanding, I would not be able to see the urinal as a piece of art. There is no aesthetic experience, like any experience in general, that is not mediated by certain preconceptions. There is a circle: my interpretation and contact with the work is mediated by my previous experience with other works, but at the same time the encounter with the new work feeds back into my preconception of what art is. How then do we determine what art is? Not from an arbitrarily determined concept of what art is, nor from what the artist says art is, but from the experience we have of the work. In this experience the circle is assumed, the contact with works always assumes a prior understanding of art. In other words, the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* feedback on each other. It is a matter of going around the circle. «But if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just 'sense' it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up. [...] What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way» (GA 2, p. 202 / 194-195). It is a matter of entering the circle to show the assumed preunderstanding behind our experience with the phenomenon, to highlight the meaning behind our experience with them. This is «the feast of thought» (GA 5, p. 3 / 2). Heidegger does not propose to describe the abstract and ideal essence of art, as if it were something ahistorical to discover, «is not intent on an eternally valid determination of the essence of the work of art» (GA 65, p. 503 / 396), but to make explicit the presupposed meaning in our dealings with works of art¹².

But how do we know that we are getting into it in "the right way"? On what is Heidegger based to maintain that his pre-understanding of art is shared by all? And furthermore, does Heidegger go through the whole circle that he proposes? In his essay there is no historical-empirical analysis of the examples provided, nor are there any references to studies by art historians¹³, hence his controversy with Meyer Schapiro¹⁴. Not only is

would still not be grounded. For the essence applies not only to all actual assertions, but likewise and a fortiori to all possible assertions, ones which might never be performed. But how could anyone demonstrate the appropriateness [*Angemessenheit*] of the definition of the essence of truth to possible cases of correct assertions?" (GA 45, p. 78 / 70).

¹² Jeff Malpas discusses the methodological solution of circularity in *Being and Time*. See Malpas (1997).

¹³ However, we know that he had very close ties with art historians such as Werner Körte, Theodor Hetzer, Hans Jantzen and Kurt Bauch. Moreover, Heidegger dedicates volume 9 of the Gesamtausgabe to the latter: "Our fruitful friendship, based in our mutual participation in lectures and seminars on art history and philosophy, stood the test of time. The encouragement received from our close companionship of thoughtful inquiry moves me to dedicate this collection of texts - a series of stops under way in the single question of being - to my deceased friend" (GA 9, V). On Heidegger's relationship with art historians see Gethmann-Siefert (1988) and Gnehm (2017).

¹⁴ In 1968, the American art historian published "The Still Life as a Personal Object – A Note on

there no study of the chosen examples, but there is also no detailed development of how the works of art open or opened a world, how they found or founded an era¹⁵. Heidegger does not seem to pay much attention to the empirical effects that the works he chooses as examples may or may not provoke within a sociocultural environment and jumps directly and quickly to the ontological question. Mirjam Schaub gives a detailed analysis of the use of examples in “The Origin of the Work of Art” and describes the Heideggerian *modus operandi* as a twofold movement: a control of the presentation of the example (*Vorstellungskontrolle*) and a “letting the example do” (*laissez-faire*). The idea is the following: Heidegger only presents a concrete case under absolutely controlled conditions, when possible refutations have been ruled out as absurd or innocent, and introduces his example in the context of the position he intends to defend. *Laissez-faire* consists in transforming a controllable, comprehensible, and therefore criticizable example into an uncontrollable paradigm, and therefore immune to any criticism (Schaub, 2010, p. 277). Schaub calls this process “essentialization”: the work, for example, van Gogh’s boots, loses all its empirical, contrastable, singular characters to become a universal essence, the “setting-itself-to-work of the truth”, incontrovertible. For these same reasons Michael Kelly (2003) accuses Heidegger of being an iconoclast, in the sense that the German philosopher is not interested in works of art *per se*, but in the problem of truth. He sees this disinterest clearly in the controversy with Schapiro over van Gogh’s painting: that the question about the owner of the boots is irrelevant speaks of Heidegger’s disinterest in the work (Kelly, 2003, p. 21). The philosopher is not interested in an empirical study of the work, but what is revealed in the painting, in this case, the essence of the equipment. The problem is: how does the van Gogh painting “speak” and reveal the essence of the

Heidegger and van Gogh”, a paper that was one of the first to question the German philosopher’s interpretation of the famous artist’s painting and attempted to demonstrate that the boots did not belong to a peasant woman, as Heidegger claims, but rather to the Dutch painter himself. For Schapiro (1994) in no way can it be claimed that the painting “expresses the being or essence of the peasant woman’s shoes and her relation to nature and work” (p. 137). Heidegger misses the essential, ignores the personal value of the shoes for the artist, ignores the presence of the van Gogh in his work. Schapiro understands the boots as an allusion to a personal object of the artist that had a deep meaning for him. This interpretation is supported by a passage from Paul Gauguin’s memoirs: “In the studio was a pair of big hob-nailed shoes, all worn and spotted with mud; he made of it a remarkable still life painting. I do not know why I sensed that there was a story behind this old relic” (quoted in Schapiro, 1994, p. 140). For Schapiro they are definitely the artist’s shoes. The boots are a self-portrait of van Gogh himself, they are a symbol of himself. Hence the title of his essay, “still life as a personal object”. “For an artist to isolate his worn shoes as the subject of a picture is for him to convey a concern with the fatalities of his social being. Not only the shoes as an instrument of use, [...] but the shoes as ‘a portion of the self’ (Schapiro, 1994, p. 140). There is nothing in the painting that points to or refers to a peasant woman. I have worked on this discussion in Belgrano (2017).

¹⁵ Something similar seems to occur in “The Question Concerning Technology” (1953), as Don Ihde (2010) rightly points out. The American philosopher finds in the Heideggerian philosophy of technology certain romantic biases that make him differentiate between “good technologies”, such as art, and “bad technologies”, such as modern technology. But these characterizations do not always coincide with reality. For example, for Heidegger, the hydroelectric dam represents a way of understanding the entity proper to modernity; it interprets things as an ever-available resource and object of exploitation. The dam intervenes in the course of the river to put its power at the service of human beings. The old wooden bridge, on the other hand, respects the course of the river. Ihde, from different historical research, shows that the way of understanding nature as a source of resources and that available for exploitation is not an exclusive perspective of modernity, but is present in a large part of the civilizations of Antiquity. The same is true of the temple of Paestum. According to Heidegger the temple lets the nature be around it, but, as Donald Hughes shows, the construction of temples in the Greek world meant the desolation of the environment in which they are located, the destruction of the natural habitat in which they were erected (Ihde, 2010, pp. 74-85). See also Mascaro (2020).

equipment if the interpretation of it appears to be totally arbitrary? Is Heidegger's whole analysis based on his own projection onto the work?

In my opinion, in "The Origin of the Work of Art" occurs something analogous to what Paul Ricoeur sees in *Being and Time*. In "Existence and Hermeneutics," a text published in 1969 in *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, the French philosopher distinguishes two ways of doing hermeneutic phenomenology: what he calls a short route and what he calls a long route. The example of the short route is the analytic of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. There Heidegger briefly develops the methodological question and already from the beginning approaches his ontology of existence without any dialogue with the human sciences. «One does not enter this ontology of understanding little by little; one does not reach it by degrees, deepening the methodological requirements of exegesis, history, or psychoanalysis: one is transported there by a sudden reversal of the question» (Ricoeur, 1974, p. 6). Here Ricoeur refers to the inversion that Heidegger produces within hermeneutics: it is no longer a question of how we interpret a text, but of the very structure of understanding. *Dasein* is thrown into a meaningful context from which it becomes comprehensible itself and what surrounds it. But Heidegger does not stop to analyze in what the different significant contexts in which existence is found consist, which would be an ontic analysis, but concentrates on the ontological investigation. The short route consists of jumping directly to the ontological question, without mediating with the contributions of the ontic sciences and extracting the object of investigation from the context in which it appears. Does not something analogous happen in "The Origin of the Work of Art"? Does not Heidegger quickly enter the ontological question without mediating with the artistic disciplines and without making a minimum historical investigation of the works? In the essay on art, in my opinion, we find a clear example of what Ricoeur calls a "short route". Heidegger proposes to go through the whole circle that makes up the aesthetic experience, but he is not «in contact with methodologies as they are actually practiced» (Ricoeur 1974, 15) and «sets up directly by a sudden reversal» the ontology of the work of art (Ricoeur 1974, 19). Ricoeur, in contrast, will propose "the long route", an indirect path, but with the same goal, an ontological inquiry of the entity capable of comprehension in dialogue with the human sciences¹⁶.

Only in *Schillers Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* does Heidegger provide a more detailed example of how the work of art founds an epoch, the case of Albrecht Dürer's hare. The analysis of Heidegger's example is preceded by a presentation by the art historian Werner Körte (1905-1945), who was already familiar with the German philosopher's interpretation of Dürer's work from his seminar on the *Critique of Judgment* (Heidegger, 2005, p. 174). The latter points out, after describing how the work arose historically, that Dürer's watercolor presents a great novelty for the time. It was not until the 15th century that the animal began to be considered as an object worthy of representation. Since the 12th century the animal appeared exclusively as a reproduction in the "bestiaries" that sought to interpret them allegorically according to ancient fables and according to the Christian doctrine of salvation. There the animal appeared as an abstract sketch that served to identify the species. In Villard de Honnecourt's sampler, for example, an attempt is made to emphasize the characteristic features of each animal, leaving aside the specific details of an individual animal figure. Dürer, on the other hand, does not represent an abstract hare, it is not a representation that denotes certain general qualities of a species, as in the bestiaries, but draws the hare

¹⁶ I have developed a more detailed analysis on the "long way" in Belgrano (2022).

in its singularity. The master seeks to understand the sensible–material in the manifestation of this animal with a loving passion for observation in the singular» (Heidegger 2005, 158. My translation). Thanks to the drawing of every detail, to the careful depiction of the fur, of every hair, to the subtle tracing of the animal’s muscles, Dürer, without having to open its body, like the anatomists and physiologists of his time, captures, says Körte, «the truth of the hare» (p. 162). But Dürer’s watercolor does not capture the truth of the hare because of the precision of the portrait, because of the brilliantly achieved naturalism. After the exposition of Körte Heidegger makes a detailed analysis of how Dürer’s drawing “sets the truth to work”. The German philosopher takes up the problem of bestiaries: in the Middle Ages, the hare could never have been portrayed in this way, in its singularity and uniqueness, but rather the universal, the *genus*, the general of the animal was sought to be represented. The figure of the bestiary tries to give a general, indeterminate outline that allows us to recognize the animal. In this epoch the real was considered as the universal, the sensible form of the singular supposes a «fall of the real» (Heidegger, 2005, p. 95). In contrast, Dürer’s hare presents the singular. Nominalism will be the one to question the medieval paradigm: the universal is no longer the real, but the entity is properly the individual, the singular is the only reality. This change is clearly seen in the passage from the bestiaries to Dürer’s hare. The hare ceases to be a mere instance of a *genus*, as a medievalist would interpret it, but rather the real is this singular and unique hare. Here there is a transformation of the understanding of being according to which the entity is not the universal but the singular. In Dürer’s work, a new understanding of being is set to work, he brings «the *being* of things, the *being* of beings» (p. 113) to light, but «*being* does not really allow itself to be painted, it is not (reproduced) but produced [*erstellt*] (not represented [*dargestellt*]). Production [*Erstellung*] of being» (p. 115. My translation)¹⁷. Dürer does not copy or reproduce an understanding of being prior to the work, but rather the work produces, sets in motion, a new field of manifestation: the singularity of the real.

Dürer’s hare initiates modernity: the turn of nominalism founds history, inaugurates an epoch, the era of modern times. Thanks to this transformation of the understanding of being can appear, according to Heidegger, the figure of Descartes, according to whom the singular self is the true entity, the philosophy of Leibniz, who maintains that the *singularitas* is the true *forma substantialis*, and even the Reformation, according to whom faith no longer consists in believing in universal truths, but is the confidence of the individual in the experience of grace. What Heidegger does not make very clear is how Dürer’s work, which sets this new nominalist understanding of being to work, is linked to the antecedents of nominalism

¹⁷ That Dürer sets in motion a new transformation of being is later confirmed in *Nietzsche I: The Will to Power as Art*: «A statement by Erasmus which has been handed down to us is supposed to characterize the art of the painter Albrecht Dürer. The statement expresses a thought that obviously grew out of a personal conversation which that learned man had with the artist. The statement runs: *ex situ rei unius, non unam speciem sese oculis offerentem exprimit*: by showing a particular thing from any given angle, he, Dürer the painter, brings to the fore not only one single isolated view which offers itself to the eye. Rather –we may complete the thought in the following way– by showing any given individual thing as this particular thing, in its singularity, he makes Being itself visible: in a particular hare, the Being of the hare; in a particular animal, the animality. It is clear that Erasmus here is speaking against Plato. We may presume that the humanist Erasmus knew the dialogue we have been discussing and its passages on art. That Erasmus and Dürer could speak in such a fashion presupposes that a transformation of the understanding of Being was taking place» (GA 6.1, pp. 189-190 / 186-187). And in *Zu eigenen Veröffentlichungen*: «Abrupt transformation [*Umschlag*] - Art as conquest [*Eroberung*] and discovery [*Entdeckung*] of being itself - Dürer and modernity» (GA 82, p. 499).

(Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, for example). He only states: «the change from the universal to the singular is clarified in the presentation [*Darstellung*] of art» (Heidegger, 2005, p. 99. My translation).

4. A Matter of Faith

Regardless of this last example, Heidegger does not consider it necessary for “facts” to corroborate the *a priori*¹⁸. But then, on what is the *a priori*, truth as unconcealment, founded? What is Heidegger based on to argue that some works of art can set the truth to work or that technology or language are instances that unconceal being? If truth in the original sense is identified with a realm of intelligibility or space of meaning, which makes truth possible in its first sense (as adequacy), then the space of meaning is always constitutive and it cannot be judged in terms of true or false, that is, in the first sense of truth. Something analogous happens here to the thesis of the incommensurability of paradigms in Thomas Kuhn. For the American philosopher and physicist, the truth or falsity of a statement depends on the paradigm within which a given scientific community moves. A paradigm is the set of fundamental theoretical assumptions, shared beliefs and values accepted by all members of a scientific community. Facts are not neutral but are interpreted on the basis of the paradigm. For example, in 1572 a new star appeared which meant, for the Copernicans, the refutation of the immutability of the stars supported by the Ptolemaic paradigm. The followers of the ancient astronomer, however, argued that because the moon was closer to the earth, this effect occurred. The same phenomenon, two different interpretations: on the one hand, as a new celestial object, on the other, as an atmospheric effect¹⁹. Our perceptions of phenomena are always determined by the paradigm and are therefore never neutral. Truth is always relative to the paradigm, since the facts with which science works are based on the paradigm and, if the paradigm changes, the facts will also change. There are no paradigms that are truer than others, because that would suppose that there is a criterion of truth that encompasses both and would function as a metaparadigm. The same happens in Heidegger, there is no horizon of meaning truer than another, because that would be to continue thinking the truth from correction²⁰. Let's see what Heidegger points out in *Contributions*:

¹⁸ On the Nietzschean doctrine of eternal return he states: «The evidentiary procedure for the doctrine of return is therefore in no case subject to the jurisdiction of natural science, even if the “facts” of natural science should run counter to the outcome of that procedure. What are the “facts” of natural science and of all science, if not particular appearances interpreted according to explicit, tacit, or utterly unknown metaphysical principles, principles that reflect a doctrine concerning beings as a whole?» (GA 6.1, 335 / 114).

¹⁹ On this historical discussion see Lattis (1994, 145-60).

²⁰ See the following passage, with clear Kuhnian resonances: «For the early Greeks the Sun was Helios, the god who in his chariot of fire travels through the sky and plunges into the ocean. Later this interpretation loses its force, and the Sun becomes a disk that travels along its trajectory. Then this disk becomes a sphere of fire, a kind of ball of fire, which moves around the Sun, which now becomes the center. And, finally, this solar system becomes one system among many others. And our sun becomes an object of investigation through the solar spectrum. Where is the truth then? Can physics and astronomy today claim to have discovered the cosmos as the cosmos is? Where lies the criterion that the present conception of solar systems is the only true one and that, therefore, it is truer than the previous one and, of course, far superior to the mythical one?» (GA 27, p. 165). I have further discussed the similarities and differences between Heidegger's philosophy and Kuhn's in Belgrano (2021b).

If truth here means the *clearing* [*Lichtung*] of being [*Seyn*] as openness of the “amidst” of beings, then it is not at all possible to ask about the truth of this truth unless truth is taken in the sense of the *correctness* of the projection [*Richtigkeit des Entwurfs*] –but that would in many respects miss what is essential. For, on the one hand, it is altogether impossible to ask about the “correctness” of a projection, and that applies afortiori to the correctness of that projection whereby the clearing as such is grounded in general. On the other hand, “correctness” is a “species” of truth which *falls short* of the originary essence, since it is a consequence of that essence and therefore already is not enough for grasping the original truth. (GA 65, p. 327 / 259)

If truth is identified with the space of meaning or, following the analogy, with a paradigm (which I obviously understand here in a broader way than an exclusively scientific paradigm), then it is not possible to ask about “the truth of this truth”, that is, it is not possible to ask about the validity or legitimacy of the clearing, since that would presuppose a previous criterion of truth that would be functioning as a clearing or paradigm²¹. This is what Oliver Marchart (2008) understands as post-foundationalism: there is no ultimate, immutable and immovable foundation and therefore multiple contingent and possible foundations coexist. «The impossibility of such a ground is the necessary condition of possibility for grounds in the plural» (Marchart, 2008, p. 44). This is what reappears in “On the Essence of Ground” as the abysmal character (of abyss, in German *Ab-grund*) of the ground (*Grund*). Therefore, whether the work of art is that which inaugurates the *a priori* of our understanding or whether it is the horizon of technology, is undemonstrable. On the one hand, the empirical cannot refute this ontological dimension. On the other hand, there is no method or procedure that would allow us to corroborate the assertions of the Freiburg professor. Heidegger’s philosophy seems impenetrable, an unconquerable fortress, precisely because, if we follow the German philosopher, there is no possibility of refutation. «It is because a philosophy can never be refuted! Why not? Because it contains nothing refutable; for, what in it is actually philosophy is the opening up of being—world-projection; such can never be

²¹ In Tugendhat’s words: «If every true statement about intramundane entities is relative to the historical horizon of our understanding, then the whole problem of truth is concentrated on these horizons, and the decisive question should now be: in what way can one ask about the truth of these horizons or can such a question about truth no longer be applied to the horizons themselves? For Heidegger this question is superfluous insofar as he calls the corresponding understanding as opening a truth in itself and for itself. In this way it is achieved that on the one hand we can still speak of truth with respect to the understanding and its horizons, and, on the other hand, that it is not necessary for us to ask about the truth of this horizon, since that would mean asking about the truth of a truth» (Tugendhat, 1969, p. 295). Tugendhat’s (2011) thesis is that «Heidegger’s equalization of “truth” and “openness” (unconcealment) is not sustainable and even leads to the concealment of the problem of truth» (p. 260). The central point is that Heidegger misses the distinction between being given in general and the self-giving of the thing (self-giving in person). If unconcealment has the sense only of letting the being manifest itself, be it in an apparent way, be it a “true showing itself”, then there is no criterion for determining the truth or non-truth of that manifestation. That is, it is not possible to identify whether the thing is actually giving itself. In other words, truth in Heidegger, in its original sense, loses all normative character and refers to the realm of intelligibility that makes possible all manifestation in general, that allows the entity to acquire meaning (and in turn makes possible both true and false statements, as seen in the example of the forest in which it is stated “that is a deer”). Thus, it is not that Tugendhat rejects or criticizes the phenomenon of unconcealment as such, but rather that he argues that it is incompatible with the concept of truth. In 1964, already towards the end of his philosophical production, Heidegger seems to agree with Tugendhat’s diagnosis and no longer identifies the ἀλήθεια in the original sense with the term truth (*Wahrheit*) since it «was inadequate and misleading» (GA 14, p. 86 / 70). On Tugendhat’s critique see Dahlstrom (2009, pp. 394-414), Lafont (1997, pp. 146-56) and Wrathall (2011, pp. 34-39). Many interpreters were highly critical of Tugendhat’s analysis, on which I cannot elaborate here: Gethmann (1989), Pöggeler (1989), Richter (1989).

refuted» (GA 94, pp. 238-239 / 175)²². Therefore, true philosophy seems to be, then, immune to any attack. In *Being and Truth* (WS 1933/34) he states:

The issue is whether the understanding of *Being* is transforming itself from the ground up. It will be a transformation that will first of all provide the *framework* for the spiritual history of our people. This cannot be proved, but it is a *faith* [*Glaube*] that must be borne out by history. (GA 36-37, p. 255 / 195)

But then, is it a question of faith? on what is all his reflection legitimized? Heidegger does not make explicit what he understands here by faith. In the 1936/37 seminar he states: «In both regards, philosophical statements cannot be proved. But this is *no flaw*, for what is *essential* in all things in general is *unprovable*, and the advantage is precisely that every access to philosophy entails a fundamental disposition and a fundamental decision [*Grundhaltung und Grundentscheidung*] on the part of human beings» (GA 36-37, pp. 178-179 / 138).²³ Philosophy, for Heidegger, does not suppose, then, a rational discussion (and therefore becomes, as undemonstrable, indisputable), but of disposing oneself and deciding to listen to the call of being. Those privileged ones, the thinkers and poets, capable of listening to the call, will have to point out to the rest, to the people, the way of being. Or in other words, being, as the condition of possibility of being, is given. The entity can only “be” thanks to this donation of meaning, what Heidegger calls a “gift” (*Gabe*) (GA 4, p. 10 / 6). But this gift is an impersonal instance of the production of meaning that does not depend on *Dasein*, that is, it does not depend on its arbitrariness, we do not know its logic or its reasons and, therefore, it is impossible to predict its arrival. Heidegger says: «Nor is there, as Hegel thought, only a systematics that can fashion the law of its thinking into the law of history and simultaneously subsume history into the system» (GA 9, p. 335 / 255). There is no rational law immanent to history that man can discover. Being sends its gift without a why. The revelation of being is not given on *Dasein's* own initiative, although existence must be prepared for its arrival. In *Contributions to Philosophy* he argues that, faced with this situation, it is necessary a leap that «jettisons and leaves behind everything conventional. The leap expects nothing immediate from beings» (GA 65, p. 227 / 179). A leap from the rational, from propositional logic and metaphysical thought, to being²⁴. True thinking is not expressed in statements,

²² In the same line of reasoning: «to what extent refutation impossible in genuine philosophy; impossible, because not attaining the realm of truth belonging to philosophy at all, which always decides the *truth of being*» (GA 69, p. 13 / 13).

²³ Heidegger sees this also, for example, in the Nietzschean doctrine of the eternal return. «Is the principle of eternal return disclosed by way of a deduction from prior propositions asserted of the nature of the world? Or does not the very essence of the world first become palpable *as* an eternal chaos of necessity by means of the determination of the world totality as one that recurs in the same? If that is how matters stand, then the ostensible proof is not at all a proof that could have its force in the cogency and conclusiveness of its deductive steps. What proffered itself as a proof in our own presentation is nothing more than the revelation of positings that are co-positd –indeed necessarily co-positd– in the projection of being as a whole onto Being as eternally recurrent in the same. But then this proof is simply an articulation of the cohesion of the projection itself and what it immediately co-positd. In short, what we have here is the unfolding of a projection, by no means its computation and its grounding» (GA 6.1, p. 337 / 116)

²⁴ Even an abandonment of philosophy, as he went so far as to say in “Overcoming Metaphysics”: «But with the end of philosophy, thinking is not also at its end, but in transition to another beginning» (GA 7, p. 81 / 96). Or in “A Letter on Humanism”: «The thinking that is to come is no longer philosophy, because it thinks more originally than metaphysics - a name identical to philosophy» (GA 9, 364 / 276).

subject to be true or false, nor are they governed by the principle of sufficient reason²⁵. This brings it closer, as John Caputo points out, to a mysticism, understood as «a non-discursive, directly intuitive experience of a “truth” which neither common sense nor rational argumentation can attain» (Caputo, 1974, p. 78)²⁶.

Conclusion

We are standing at the methodological cross-road which will decide on the very life or death of philosophy. We stand at an abyss: either into nothingness, that is, absolute reification, pure thingness, or we somehow leap into *another world*, more precisely, we manage for the first time to make the leap [*Sprung*] into the world as such. (GA 56-57, p. 63 / 51)

In short, either we remain on the level of beings, of the positive sciences, or we are able to make the leap to the realm of being. Heidegger, on the other hand, invites us to question his thought.²⁷ But, on the basis of which criterion? a rational one? an empirical one? If access to being can only be reached by a leap, do not his statements become unquestionable? This is precisely what he answers to Rudolf Carnap's criticism: the latter moves on a different plane from Heidegger and, therefore, his questioning is futile.²⁸ Thus Heidegger completes, knowingly or unknowingly, the process of immunization: neither his sayings can be contrasted with facts, with the empirical reality of beings, nor can they be accessed with reason, they require a leap. But, unfortunately, «only a few who arrive at the leap, and they do so on different paths. By creating and sacrificing, they always are the ones who belong to the grounding of Da-sein in the time-space of which beings as beings are preserved and thereby the truth of being is sheltered» (GA 65, p. 236 / 186). To attain being becomes a privilege.

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²⁵ As he develops in *The Principle of Reason*, the principle of sufficient reason, according to which nothing is without foundation or cause, expresses the essence of the metaphysics on which modern science and technology are built, and therefore «the demand to render reasons threatens everything of humans' being-at-home and robs them of the roots of their subsistence» (GA 10, p. 60 / 30).

²⁶ But Caputo makes it clear that we can only understand Heidegger as a mystic in this broad sense. Strictly speaking he is not a mystic because: his philosophy is a secular thought that seeks not God, but to understand the history of the West. His question is always the question of being and not the search for the union of the soul with God (pp. 78-80). See also Caputo (1990).

²⁷ «QUESTION : Do you think a proposition you utter is right or true? HEIDEGGER : I would say it is questionable.» (GA 15, 436)

²⁸ On this discussion see my article Belgrano (2021a).

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