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The Work of Art – The Philosophical Word

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The Work of Art is a Subtle Sign of Otherness- The work of art as a transfer of truth about human existence can be treated as a sign-word of an invisible sphere of reality. In this situation it becomes a revelation of nature, which enjoys concealing things before the human being. Let us notice what the Wise Man from Ephesus (among others B 123) says that about this invisibility and truthfulness.

If we admit that the work of art is a kind of sign of the transfer of a divine truth, which has been revealed to the artist, then an interesting aphorism (B 93) is the one which reads: "The Lord, whose oracle is in Delphi, neither says nor conceals, only gives signs"¹. Let us emphasise, after Kazimierz Mrówka, that a sign does not destroy the otherness of nature but "reveals it, brings it out from otherness and brings it near to the human being."² Let us try to interpret here the work of art as a subtle sign of this otherness, a sign concealing the truthful essence of nature – which likes to conceal before the human being...

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The Work of Art – The Philosophical Word

Dr. hab. Aleksandra Pawliszyn

I. THE WORK OF ART IS A SUBTLE SIGN OF OTHERNESS

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II. THE SIGN VIBRATING THROUGH OTHERNESS

The almost magician-like atmosphere of Martin Heidegger's *Beiträge* can serve as a special kind of assent to experience the beginning of some other world, according to the sign mentioned in this way. For, on the one hand, the truth concealed (transferred somehow by the sign) can be interpreted as a refusal to reveal, while, on the other hand, this refusal has to grasp, after Heidegger, the assent "to belong to the peculiarity of another beginning"³, as can arise with the work of art in the horizontal order of things.

We remember that Heidegger tries to investigate the "fundamental history of Being", however

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¹ Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by K. Mrówka, *Heraklit. Fragmenty: nowy przekład i komentarz*, Warszawa 2004, p. 263.

² *Ibid.*, p.265.

³ M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1989. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by B. Baran, idem, *Przyczyńki do filozofii (Z wydarzeń)*, Kraków 1996, p.226.]

his attempts to describe Being in experience (which is still not present), as "a vibration of acting divinity"⁴, seems to emanate a particular atmosphere of contact between essentially different worlds.

According to Heideggerian suggestions about the experience of Being in terms of vibrations, one can say that the work of art is a sign of truth, which does not destroy but evokes otherness, leading it into a state of vibration. Let us try to look closer at this state, after the author of *Beiträge*: "This vibration (of the acting Being as divinity – AP) spreads out a time-space type of game, where, as refusal, it comes into Openness". It seems, that dimensions, non-reducible to each other: revealed existence (visible) and concealed (invisible), can both vibrate and create this "time-space type of game", which proceeds between the refusal of coming – and coming – into "Openness". So that the work of art is now a sign of refusal to become the owner of otherness, and now, a sign of sovereign otherness, which does not violate this sovereignty.

III. TENDERLY THE GAME WITH OTHERNESS

Therefore, the vibration of metaphysical environments non-reducible to each other can generate a game marking off the space of a non-brutal sign, which tenderly, as to Levinas, strives for the truth of the untouchable dimension. Let us call to view the author of *Le temps et l'autre* on caresses: "It (the caress – AP) is like a game with something slipping away, and a game without any project or plan, not a game with something that can become ours, or us, but with something other, always other, always inaccessible, always only imminent."⁵ One can say that in a vibrating atmosphere the space of a game is created between the sign and something always other; an otherness the sign does not violate, but only tenderly "touches".

Therefore – authentic contact between different worlds could be a kind of meeting in the dimension of vibration (of not possessing each other), so, it is a vibrating contact of worlds slipping away, tempted by their impossibility to absorb, their recoil from conquest, control, possession... As leaves trembling in the wind, leaves that have never experienced the wind – trembling

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ E. Levinas, *Le temps et l'autre*, PUF, 1998. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by J. Migasiński, idem, *Czas i to, co inne*, Warszawa 1999, p. 102.]

that bears the undulation of the world, the undulation of living plants – which bear the music of life...

IV. THE VIBRATION OF BEING AND THE SPACE OF THE GAME

So, the game is revealed – played in an attempt by existence to gain access to groundless vibration – this is an unconstrained game, as if carrying over the nebula of different worlds – as those worlds cannot be mutually grasped. It seems to us, according to a suggestion by the author of *Beiträge*, vibration becomes a game when it comes into space. Now, vibration is an ontically earlier state than ground, it is, therefore, a groundless environment on which the space of the game is implanted.

In this game vibration becomes refusal to master otherness – it can bring “a harmony of allocation”⁶ “evidence of a clearing” – truth, according to Heidegger. Therefore, appearance in the bright strip of existence – occurring by means of vibrations of light and darkness – is none other than a ceasing of the uncommon streams of existential brightness, appearing in harmonic allocation, and revealed by a refusal to master otherness (as a clearing of non-concealment, according to Heidegger).

V. THE WORK OF ART – AN ASSIGNATION OF THE SHAPE OF THE TRUTH

Let us recall that to fill an unconcealed truth, which, according to us sounds with strange streams of light means, for the author of *Der Ursprung*, “to pour truth into a shape”⁷. So, the game of the sign – the work of art – “pours” manifesting truth by means of the earth, into a defined shape. As Heidegger emphasises, “to make the work of art is not a manufacturing activity, but “use of the earth to assign truth a shape”⁸. So, it is a creative striving after a state of coagulation of the groundless trembling of unconcealment, the coagulation of the work of art. This state of coagulation is in an area which the author of *Beiträge* defines as spreading out of a “time-space type of game”. Then, the work of art as a sign is an assignation with truth, the shaping of a clearing into that which is connected with giving a material carrier to that truth (after P. Ricoeur).

To present in total the complexity of Heideggerian philosophical considerations needs individual study, here we would like to concentrate on Heidegger’s declaration referring to the space of the

game of the work of art. He tries to render interdependence between the essence of the entity of unconcealment and being. Heidegger notices that “if the essence of the entity of unconcealment belongs in some way to being itself (see *Being and Time*, § 44), then it allows, from its side, the occurrence of a space for a game of openness (a clearing of manifestation [Da]) and introduces itself as *that*, to every entity which rises in its way.”⁹ So, belonging in being, the essence of an entity in unconcealment can happen in spite of being. The consent of being to the experiencing of a space, where that which is unconcealed goes, occurs in a vibrating medium, establishing groundlessness, because it is still trembling – the “ground” of that which is open.

Therefore, let us repeat: establishing the shape of the truth as the “rising of an entity” (the sign) of a work “on its way”, acting on a “groundless ground” of vibrating existence, releases the space for a game of openness, where a magic world arises – in spite of creativity – into the crystal of the work of art.

VI. A SIGN OF INEXHAUSTIBLE EXISTENCE – THE WORK OF ART

From the point of view of hermeneutics, one can say that the work of art is the death of living changeability that it is, as it were, living on life; when the creator, burning in the fight for truth, is dying by the life of his works... The force of creativity seems like a divinity penetrating the human being, living by the pain and blood of the creator creating a new metaphysical dimension: the dimension of the sign of the work of art – announcing an absolute otherness, revelation in the truth of the clearing.

Let us emphasise here, that one must fight for the truth, and, that it is, after Heidegger, a primeval contention of concealment – as well as a clearing of unconcealment. Because of this primeval contention “contending, clearing and concealment, step aside”¹⁰. One can assume then, that this gap is “the most groundless crack, in which one can intuitively consider inexhaustible existence”¹¹. Brushing inexhaustible existence, which occurs during the act of creativity, induces us to recognize creativity as a divine feature of the human being. Let us notice creativity as being torn from the force of existence, initiating into mortal human life the germ of immortality – because of inexhaustible creativity.

Let us also stress, that the artist penetrating the creative core of existence is in a special state, defined by Heidegger as “intuitive consideration”. It seems then, that the artist “intuitively considers” the creative power of

⁶M. Heidegger, *Beiträge...*, *ibid.*, p.225.

⁷M. Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, in: *Holzwege*, Vittorio Klostermann GmbH Frankfurt am Main 1950. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by J. Mizera, *idem*, *Źródło dzieła sztuki*, in: *Drogi lasu*, Warszawa 1997, p. 44.

⁸*ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹*ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁰*ibidem*.

¹¹M. Heidegger, *Beiträge...*, *ibid.*, p. 229.

the river of existence, because he senses the possibility of experiencing the immortality of the great changeability of the universe by his own creative activity – the work of art as a sign – provoking thought about the inexhaustible creation of existence itself. The work of art is also an expression of apprehension, that the invisible, creative core of existence itself establishes every creative attempt of the human being.

VII. INVISIBLE AS “PURE TRANSCENDENCE WITHOUT AN ONTIC MASK”

Merleau-Ponty writes very suggestively about that which is invisible. He tries to give expression to the non-evident tangle of that which is visible with that which is invisible, recalling the notion of “reversibility”, which for the author of *Le Visible et l'Invisible*, “is the final truth”¹². However, for us, what is truly inspiring is one of the working notes of the French phenomenologist, from January of 1960, concerned with the problem of visibility and invisibility. First of all, Merleau-Ponty warns against treating the invisible “as another ‘possible’ visible”¹³, stressing in that way the otherness of the invisible, which is not able to be translated into expressions of light. The invisible is not a thing¹⁴, but accompanies all visible things as their “lining”¹⁵ – or their – “invisible core”¹⁶. For the French phenomenologist, the presence, the *here and now* of the invisible means that it is “a pure transcendence without an ontical mask”¹⁷.

One can admit that this pure transcendence occurs in the way of something groundless – without any ontical mask – as if vibrations made up the invisible density of the atmosphere of existence, charged by the potentiality of being whichever contour of a body they want.

VIII. THE LINING AND DEPTH OF ENTITY IS INVISIBLE

As to the visible and invisible, Merleau-Ponty recalls Proust’s view on musical entities. The author of *Le Visible et l'Invisible* grants recognition to the idea that it is not the opposite of the sensual entity, but the lining and depths of this entity¹⁸. The French phenomenologist adds that both art (literature, music) and science are the “exploration of the invisible”¹⁹, and that the “secret sable of milk, that Valéry talks about, is accessed only through its whiteness, as the idea of light, or the idea of

music as lining lights and sounds beneath, which are their second side or depths”²⁰.

Therefore, the work of art, in the above context, is the exploration of the invisible, influencing the human being’s learning endowment: sight, hearing, and also the activity of thinking – arranging a sensual architecture. “A corporeal tissue” of that which is invisible, which the French phenomenologist defines as “an absence of any corporeality”²¹. One can suppose that qualities generated in the human being, emanating invisibility through the work of art (the lining of the visible world) reveals in the learning area of the human being a furrow, “which in a magical way appears before our eyes, though there is nobody who can channel it”²², so they reveal a kind of absence (concavity, negativeness) – which can be recognized by a specific form of concealment e. g. between the signs of musical notation.

IX. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Ascertaining that the philosophical discourses of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are not comparable directly, let us notice that the intuiting of the meaning of categories we are interested in are the same. Namely, let us ask if the Heideggerian, “most groundless crack”, plays the same role in the description of interdependence between inexhaustible Being and coagulation into the work of art as unconcealment, as in Merleau-Ponty’s grasp of the relation between the visible and invisible – “a furrow, which in a magical way came into existence (...), although there is nobody who channels it”? If yes, then one can suppose further, that the coagulation of truth in the work of art – to give a material carrier of appearance in the clearing of unconcealment – can reveal an invisibility, concealed in a specific way behind it, e. g. note transcription, invisibility as the core of the universe, the exploding exuberant power of creativity...

Or, on the other hand, “a groundless crack”, and in another style, “a furrow”, where absence of the entity marks a specific concealment, grasped by the work of art in the unrepeatable annexation of the space of a game. Is this not an expression of fascination with the force of creativity revealed in the creation of another life? If yes, then touching the body of the artist with the corporeality of the world announces another existence; so it is a divine sign of the new existence released in the aura of vibrations.

X. THE MYSTERY OF INEXHAUSTIBLE EXISTENCES

So, perhaps, after Merleau-Ponty, one might say that we brush the invisible core not only when the

¹²M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'Invisible suivi de notes de travail*, Editions Gallimard, 1964. [Our translation is after the Polish issue translated by M. Kowalska, idem, *Widzialne i niewidzialne*, Warszawa 1996, p. 158.]

¹³Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁴Ibidem.

¹⁵Ibid., s. 137.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁷Ibidem.

¹⁸See ibid., p. 152.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 159.

²⁰Ibid., p. 154.

²¹Ibidem.

²²Ibidem.

body of the artist meets with the corporeality of the world, but also when that corporeality joins “with another body, adjusting [each to each other] with care in all of their dimensions; a strange statue being drawn untiringly by hands, which next gives back everything that it gets, lost to the world and its aims, absorbed in only one interest, the ecstasies of Entity with another life (...) And then (...) into patience, the calm work of desire starts a paradox of expression”²³? For, is not the creative expression of the human being an expression of the creative expression of existence? So, the work of art is a sign that indicates the mystery of inexhaustible existence.

XI. THE FASCINATING IMMORTALITY OF THE WORK OF ART

If we admit that the human being's calling is to participate in the miraculous mystery of life and death, then the work of art plays a cordial role, namely, inclining the human being to a meditative stop (drop everyday routine), in order to celebrate a miracle of transformation – the mystery of pre-divinity, bringing into mortal human life a flash of immortality. So, the work of art is, for us, a sign, creating a flash of immortality; that flash being the effect of the murderous struggle of the artist with life and death forces. It is a particularly interesting, uncommon, and strong fascination with immortality by the human-artist, because only in the mortal human being can that fascination be realized, generating a situation where he devotes his life to create works of art that grasp that flash... It seems as if the artist would like to realize a world where the sensitive heart, as sophisticated intellect, can harmonize in the patient satisfaction for a desire for life, that which is, however, lined by death...

Finally let us ask: how hard must one desire life, in order to die for it – creating works absorbing the human-artist's life – to celebrate in that way exactly that life? Therefore, is it not worth recognizing the work of art as the philosophical word about the transgression of the human being thrown into the forces of life and death, in order to conquer the fate of death?

²³Ibid., p. 148.