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Establishing the Truth: Heidegger's Reflections on Gestalt

Vincent Blok

In 1936 Heidegger introduced a conception of gestalt into his own account of “The Origin of the Work of Art.” According to this account, the creation of a work of art concerns the bringing forth of gestalt. At first sight this seems strange because the concept of gestalt appears to be inherently metaphysical. Within the metaphysical tradition, the being of beings is found in a form, ἰδέα or gestalt of beings – the beingness of beings – whereas Heidegger’s question of being asks about being as such, about the truth of being. In other texts of the same period, for example in his *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, Heidegger explicitly rejects the concept of gestalt: “this thinking [about the truth of being, VB] should never seek refuge in a gestalt of a being.”<sup>1</sup> Why? Because gestalt is “only in a being.”<sup>2</sup> In Heidegger’s “being-historical thinking,” as developed in his *Contributions* and in *Mindfulness*, concepts like “gestalt” might prove helpful, but only when they are interpreted as signpost to being-historical thinking, rather than as a substitute.<sup>3</sup> What induced Heidegger to maintain a non-metaphysical conception of gestalt in his essay on the origin of art, and why did he later reject the entire concept? What led him to change his mind?

It is my hypothesis that the answers to these questions are to be sought in Heidegger’s confrontation with the thought of his contemporary Ernst Jünger (1895–1998). On the one hand, we know that Heidegger developed a strong critique of Jünger’s metaphysical conception of gestalt in the thirties. On the other hand, it seems likely that Heidegger developed his own non-metaphysical conception of gestalt in the course of this confrontation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*, GA 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989/1994), p. 422; *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 298 (modified). Quotations in the main text are in English. Further references and quotations in the notes refer to the German original.

<sup>2</sup> GA 65, p. 422; tr. p. 298.

<sup>3</sup> In this article, we shall not focus on Heidegger’s being-historical thinking and its connection with gestalt. For Heidegger’s being-historical thinking, see Parvis Emad, *On the Way to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007); Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis: Zu Heideggers “Beiträge zur Philosophie”* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 80–83.

In what follows, we shall first inquire into Heidegger's criticism of the concept of *gestalt*, which governs the metaphysical tradition (II) until the thinking of Ernst Jünger (III). We shall then test the plausibility of Heidegger's deconstructed conception from "The Origin of the Work of Art" (IV). In V, we close with a critical discussion of Heidegger in relation to his subsequent renunciation of *gestalt* in favour of the name, of language. However, in preparation for this discussion, we begin with a short exposition of Heidegger's understanding of the *ownmost* (*Wesen*) of truth as un-concealment, because his conception of *gestalt* grows out of his understanding of the *ownmost* of truth (I).

### I The Ownmost of Truth in "The Origin of the Work of Art"

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger breaks with the traditional aesthetic categories and develops his own view of the origin of art (for reasons of space, I omit any further elaboration of Heidegger's philosophy of art). Heidegger does speak about the creative character of art and of its beauty, but these characteristics receive a new meaning because of their orientation to the *ownmost* of truth. According to Heidegger, the creativeness of a work of art means that the truth is fixed (*festgestelltsein*) in the work's *gestalt*.<sup>5</sup> What is the origin of this *gestalt*, that Heidegger should think about it in close relation with the *ownmost* of truth? In order to understand this, we must begin by inquiring into Heidegger's conception of the *ownmost* of truth.

Heidegger derives his conception of the *ownmost* of truth from the Greek *ἀλήθεια*, which, taken literally, means the un-concealment of beings. Unconcealment is not only another word for the traditional definition of truth, the agreement (*adequatio*) of our knowledge with the facts. Our knowledge can only agree with the facts when they *show* themselves, when they stand unconcealed. "A statement is true by conforming to the unconcealed, i.e., to that which is true."<sup>6</sup> Heidegger wants to show us that the unconcealment of beings (truth) is a necessary condition for our knowledge of facts to be true (*adequatio*, correctness). The unconcealment of beings is, however, not the only condition presupposed. For our knowledge of facts presupposes no less the unconcealment of human being, of *us*: "Rather, the unconcealment of beings (being) moves our *ownmost* in such a way, that all our representing remains set into, and in accordance with, unconcealment."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the whole region in which my knowledge of facts can be true (*adequatio*, correctness) must be unconcealed, at least when these facts have to occur to me: "we

could never make the presupposition of there being something manifest to which we conform ourselves – if the unconcealment of beings had not already set us forth into that illuminated realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws."<sup>8</sup>

According to Heidegger, this "illuminated realm," in which human beings can encounter other beings, is itself *beyond* beings. "In the midst of beings as a whole an open place comes to presence."<sup>9</sup> He calls this open place a clearing (*Lichtung*): "Only this clearing grants us human beings access to those beings that we ourselves are not and admittance to the being that we ourselves are."<sup>10</sup>

This clearing is not however a fixed stage on which our knowledge is always in conformity with the beings we encounter. When Heidegger calls attention to the *ownmost* of truth as *ἀλήθεια*, he is primarily interested in the *alpha private* in the word *ἀλήθεια*, a *not* or a *un-* which takes place in the *ownmost* of truth: unconcealment. A *privatio* is not just a *negatio*, for instance the negation of concealment (*ἀλήθεια*). The *privatio* unconcealment indicates the *brokenness* of concealment and stays, as such, always related to this concealment. Therefore, Heidegger turns toward the concealment (*ἀλήθεια*) at the heart of unconcealment as the *ownmost* of truth: "The *ownmost* of truth, i.e., unconcealment, is ruled throughout by a denial. This denial is, however, neither a defect nor a fault – as if truth were a pure unconcealment that has rid itself of everything concealed. ... *Denial*, ... *belongs to the ownmost of truth as unconcealment*."<sup>11</sup>

How are we to understand this relation between concealment and unconcealment? It might seem that Heidegger, in "The Origin of the Work of Art," is asking us to attend to the fact that every light is surrounded by darkness, but that would be a superficial reading of his essay on the *ownmost* of art. According to Heidegger, our questioning is only *really* philosophical when this questioning *recoils back* from what is asked back upon itself.<sup>12</sup> We have an experience of this *Rückstoß* when we ask: Does Heidegger's questioning about the *ownmost* of truth as unconcealment 'unconceal' this concept itself? Our answer to this is unflinchingly negative. The *ownmost* of truth is most *concealed* in Greek philosophy: "for the hidden history of Greek philosophy consists from its beginning in this: that it does not measure up to the *ownmost* of truth that lit up in the word *ἀλήθεια*, and so, of necessity, has misdirected its knowing and saying about the *ownmost* of truth more and more into the discussion of the derivative *ownmost* of truth. In the thought of

<sup>8</sup> GA 5, p. 39; tr., p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> GA 5, pp. 39–40; tr., p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> GA 5, p. 40; tr., p. 30.

<sup>11</sup> GA 5, p. 41; tr., p. 31 (modified).

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953<sup>1998</sup>), p. 4. Because of this recoiling back (*Rückstoß*), our questioning becomes entangled in its object, and according to Heidegger, this is a sign that our questioning is *really* philosophical.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege*, GA 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), p. 51; "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> GA 5, p. 38; tr., p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> GA 5, p. 39; tr., p. 29 (modified).

the Greeks and all the more completely so in the *philosophy that followed*, the owmmost of truth as ἀλήθεια remained unthought" (my italics).<sup>13</sup> The owmmost of truth as unconcealment is concealed both for Greek existence and for the following tradition, and is therefore *concealed* from thinking as such.

Heidegger differentiates between two kinds of concealment of beings. The first kind is encountered when beings refuse themselves to us to the extent that all we can say of them is that they 'are.' In principle, this could be the kind of concealment pre-eminently at stake in discussions of the word ἀλήθεια. The owmmost of truth as unconcealment is not only refused to the Greeks, but to thinking at all. "No attempt to ground the owmmost of unconcealment in 'reason,' 'spirit,' 'thinking,' 'logos,' or in any kind of 'subjectivity,' can ever rescue the owmmost of unconcealment. In all such attempts, what is to be grounded — the owmmost of unconcealment itself — is not yet adequately sought out. . . . What is first required is an appreciation of the 'positive' in the 'privative' owmmost of ἀλήθεια."<sup>14</sup> We appreciate this positive in the privative when we see that the refusal of ἀλήθεια does not end in its disappearance; one can experience this refusal indirectly in the *alpha private* of the word ἀ-λήθεια. It is precisely this refusal, indicated by the word ἀλήθεια, which gives rise to Heidegger's experience of "the opposition which exists within the owmmost of truth between clearing and concealment."<sup>15</sup>

The second kind of concealment has the character of an obstructing (*Verstellen*); a thing can show itself as something else and can therefore deceive us in this way. Again, in principle, this could be the kind of concealment pre-eminently at stake in discussions of the word ἀλήθεια. The Greeks and the following tradition did not measure up to the owmmost of truth that comes to light in the word ἀλήθεια; rather they understood it as *adequatio*, as a property of facts or statements. Yet this is a *derivative* of the owmmost of truth and this *as* is actually an *as-if*: The correctness of facts or statements acts *as if* it is the owmmost of truth, but in this, the owmmost of truth *as* unconcealment is *concealed*.

According to Heidegger, we are never really certain as to which of the two kinds of concealment — refusal or obstructing — is at stake: "Concealment conceals and obstructs itself. This means: the open place in the midst of beings, the clearing, is never a fixed stage with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of beings enacts itself. Rather, the clearing happens only as this twofold concealment. The unconcealment of beings — this is never a state that is merely present but rather a happening."<sup>16</sup> Precisely because the clearing happens only as this twofold concealment we conclude, first of all, that there is not a plain *opposition* between conceal-

<sup>13</sup> GA 5, p. 37; tr., p. 28 (modified).

<sup>14</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit," *Wegmarken*, GA 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), p. 238.

<sup>15</sup> GA 5, p. 41-42; tr., p. 31 (modified).

<sup>16</sup> GA 5, p. 41; tr., pp. 30-31.

ment and clearing within the owmmost of truth, but concealment (Αίδησις) is the heart of unconcealment as the owmmost of truth.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, because of this *happening* of clearing *and* concealment, we conclude that ἀλήθεια is better understood by the participle *unconcealing-concealing*: the concealing of the owmmost of truth *as* unconcealment is the *origin* of the unconcealing of the derivative owmmost of truth *as* correctness. "Truth presences as itself only because the concealing denial, as refusal, is the continuing origin of all clearing but yet, as obstructing, metes out to all clearing the rigorous severity of error."<sup>18</sup> The owmmost of truth is unconcealing-concealing and, according to Heidegger, the touchstone for philosophical thinking about the owmmost of truth is the extent to which we can accept, and expose ourselves to this clearing of self-concealment.

## II. Truth and the Creation of Art (τέχνη): Metaphysical Gestalt I

What are the consequences of this conception of the owmmost of truth for Heidegger's conception of the origin of art and that gestalt which it creates? A work of art is, at first sight, a created being such as a painting or building. Yet, as we said above, truth is not a property of beings. In what way, then, does Heidegger take the owmmost of truth to be related to the creation of works of art?

The creation of a work of art may be understood as the bringing forth (*Hervorbringen*) of that work. Bringing forth, however, is not exclusive to art: the making of equipment is also a bringing forth and this explains why the Greeks use the same word, τέχνη, for handicraft and for art. Yet, according to Heidegger, this does not mean that we have to determine the nature of creation in terms of its craft aspect. Very early on, Heidegger saw that τέχνη means neither craft nor art for the Greeks, but rather designates a way of knowing the truth: "As knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, τέχνη is a bringing forth of beings in that it brings forth what is present, as such, *out of* concealment, specifically *into* the unconcealment of their appearance."<sup>19</sup> We pause for a moment to consult Plato's definition of this bringing forth (*Hervorbringen* - τέχνη) in his *Sophistes*, to better understand this relation between truth and creation (τέχνη) in Greek thought.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Sophistes*, Plato differentiates between two kinds of τέχνη — τέχνη ποιητική and τέχνη γνωστική. The ground for this distinction is found in two domains of beings, in each of which τέχνη is a way of knowing the truth. Τέχνη ποιητική

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denken," *Zur Sache des Denkens*, GA 14 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), p. 88.

<sup>18</sup> GA 5, pp. 41-42; tr., p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> GA 5, p. 47; tr., p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> We follow Heidegger's interpretation of the Sophistes in his lecture on this of 1924-25. See Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes*, GA 19 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), pp. 269-275.

concerns, for instance, the cultivation of arable land or the production of artefacts. The main characteristic of τέχνη ποιητική is that it brings forth into presence (unconcealment) what was not present (concealment) before.

In contrast to τέχνη ποιητική, τέχνη κτητική concerns beings which are present by nature or brought forth by τέχνη ποιητική. The main characteristic of τέχνη κτητική is the representation of the unconcealed being in λόγος (a judgment, for instance) or in πρᾶξις (hunting, for instance). What is present in τέχνη κτητική, is the *whariness*, (*essentia*) of a being, its form, εἶδος or gestalt (i. e., the beingness of beings).

Further, τέχνη ποιητική is guided by the representation of the form or gestalt. For example, in order to produce shoes, we have to know *what* a shoe is. Even so, τέχνη ποιητική is not primarily the production of shoes, but the representation of the *essence* of shoes (the form, εἶδος or gestalt of shoes) *in actual shoes*.

On the one hand, against this background, we can understand why Heidegger in "The Origin of the Work of Art" can say that the creation of a work of art is not primarily its physical production. "The artist is not a τεχνίτης because he is also a craftsman but rather because both the setting-forth [*Herstellen*] of works and the setting-forth of equipment happen in that bringing forth which allows beings, by assuming an appearance, to come forth into their presence."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, the Greek-metaphysical τέχνη showed us that the bringing forth of a gestalt concerns the representation of the εἶδος or gestalt, in which the beingness of beings is present. In representation, the owmmost of truth – the concealment at the heart of un-concealment, the happening of unconcealing-concealing – is exactly concealed: "Unconcealment is, for thought, what is most concealed in Greek existence. At the same time, however, it is that which, from early times, has determined the presence of everything present."<sup>22</sup>

This becomes clear when we look again at the *alpha privative* in the Greek name for truth: ἀ-λήθεια. The privative shows that φύσις – i. e., what emerges from itself and is subject to generation and corruption – has the tendency to conceal itself,<sup>23</sup> to resist the representation of τέχνη. Τέχνη is *against* φύσις and makes present the *whariness* or *essence* of beings (its εἶδος or gestalt), to prevent its regression to concealment. This *attack* of τέχνη on φύσις does not yet indicate the utilisation or extortion ('the total mobilisation' [vgl. III]) of nature in our time. The present form or gestalt is that by which each being is what it is and with a view to which separate beings can be brought forth or cultivated (τέχνη ποιητική), studied or hunted for (τέχνη κτητική). As a consequence, the owmmost of truth as ἀλήθεια remained unthought in the thought of the Greeks and all the more so in the tradition of philosophy that followed.

<sup>21</sup> GA 5, p. 47; tr., p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> GA 5, 38; tr., p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. "φύσις δὲ καὶ" Ἡρόδοτος κρύπτειν φύλας" (Heracitus, fragment 123).

When Heidegger states in "The Origin of the Work of Art" that the createdness of a work of art means that the truth is fixed (*festgestellt*) in the work's gestalt, we can already draw the negative conclusion that the bringing forth of this gestalt cannot be understood in the Greek-metaphysical sense of the word. Before turning to Heidegger's destructed conception of gestalt, we focus in the next section on Heidegger's critique of the metaphysical gestalt of Ernst Jünger.

### III. Heidegger's Critique of Jünger: Metaphysical Gestalt II

Ernst Jünger, who returned from the First World War as a hero and became famous due to his raw descriptions of the Great War in his novel, *Im Stahlgewitter*, wrote two essays which had a great influence on Heidegger: *Die totale Mobil-machung* from 1930 and *Der Arbeiter* from 1932. In *Taschen und Gedanken*, Heidegger remarks that Jünger had a persistent influence on him in the years 1933-34.<sup>24</sup> He remarks that because of his reading of Jünger, he already saw, very early, what was much later to be confirmed by the dreadful events of the Second World War: "The universal dominion of the will to power within planetary history."<sup>25</sup>

The fundamental experience of Jünger is that of nihilism, which he describes in terms of a *total mobilisation*. Man and things no longer derive their meaning from a fixed value or idea, but emerge as *potential energy*, which derives its value from the extent to which it is fruitful in different situations, the extent to which it is beneficial for life; a forest appears for instance as a potential producer of wood or as recreation after work. Amidst the total mobilisation, man and things emerge in terms of function, as *operative (Arbeiter)*.

Now Jünger supposes that this total mobilisation involves a *gestalt-switch*, a change in the way in which reality appears and man deals with it. He does not only see that the world is totally mobilised, but along with this he envisages the appearance of a new type of man – the type of the worker – who is at home in our totally mobilised world. This change in the appearance of the world together with the way people deal with it, leads Jünger to conceive of a new turn in 'being' – a gestalt of the worker – which is capable of "guaranteeing a new certainty and a new rank

<sup>24</sup> For this, see Vincent Blok, *Rondom de vloedlijn. Filosofie en kunst in het machinale tijdperk Een confrontatie tussen Heidegger en Jünger* (Soesterberg: Aspekt, 2005); Günther Figal, "Nochmals über die Linie," in: *Magie der Heierkeit. Ernst Jünger zum Hundertsten*, edited by Günther Figal, Heimo Schwilk (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995), pp. 25-40; Zimmermann, *op cit.* pp. 80-83; Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, "Topologie und Topographie des Nihilismus aus dem Gespräch zwischen Ernst Jünger und Martin Heidegger," *Heidegger Studies*, 24 (2008): 21-37.

<sup>25</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse eines Lebensweges*, GA 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), p. 375.

order of life.<sup>26</sup> Gestalt is said to be a summarising unity or measure, in which reality appears as ordered. In the case of Jünger's gestalt of the *worker*, this summarising unity must be found in *work*: that is, in the stamped face of reality as *work* and the human dealing with it, grasped in terms of the type of the *worker*. According to Jünger, within total mobilisation, gestalt can only be surmised. The objective of *Der Arbeiter* is the transition of human being to the type of the *worker*, which represents its gestalt.<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger draws two conclusions from Jünger's line of thought. First, Heidegger points to the Platonic-metaphysical character of Jünger's conception of gestalt. Platonism represents gestalt (εἶδος or form) within a transcendental-metaphysical world of 'being,' which is the measure for the orderly appearance of things on earth, the world of 'becoming.' Gestalt (being) is thus conceived as involving a turning away from our earthly existence.

The Platonic-metaphysical character of Jünger's gestalt consists in this: according to him there is no home base to be found in the world of becoming, which he calls the 'elementary.' To be at home in the world, we need a gestalt (being) to regulate the elementary (becoming). Such a gestalt is a "resting being" which is *unchangeable* and *everlasting*<sup>28</sup> and as such guarantees a new certainty and rank order of life. Moreover, Jünger understands this regulation of 'becoming' by gestalt (being) in accordance with the metaphysical tradition, that is, as a *design* for matter. From all this, Heidegger concludes: "once again Platonism, 'everlasting being.'<sup>29</sup>

Yet, at the same time, Heidegger says Jünger's gestalt is "modern-metaphysical."<sup>30</sup> To understand this we must consider the way that modernity is marked by the thought of René Descartes. Descartes sought indubitable and certain knowledge and he found the *fundamentum inconcussum* for this in the *ego cogito*. For

<sup>26</sup> Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter – Herrschaft und Gestalt*, Sämtliche Werke, Band 8 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> For this, see Vincent Blok, "Der ontologische Sinn der Gestalt. Zum Verständnis des Arbeiters," *Les Carnets*, Volume 10, 2005, pp. 173–192; Vincent Blok, "Die Bändigung des Elementaren. Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst in Ernst Jüngers »Der Arbeiter«,» *Existenta*, 18 (2008): 83–98.

<sup>28</sup> Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter*, op. cit., pp. 37–43.

<sup>29</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Zu Ernst Jünger*, GA 90 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), p. 81. Although Heidegger points to Jünger's Platonism, what is at stake here is the relation between Platonism and the reversal of Platonism. Out of this, he does not draw the conclusion that something else matters in Jünger as in Nietzsche or Plato, but only that Jünger thinks everything unclearly, mixes up and levels out everything (GA 90, p. 131). In fact, a *fusion* between Nietzscheanism and Platonism is happening in the work of Jünger, which cannot be elaborated in this article. For more on this, see Vincent Blok, "Die Faktizität der Natur. Der philosophische Sinn der Natur als Antwort auf den Nihilismus," *Jünger-Studien*, 2009 (forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> GA 90, pp. 94, 134, 167.

Descartes, human being is the subject which is the basis for certain knowledge. In light of this, Jünger's gestalt can be said to be modern in two ways. First, Jünger, like Descartes, seeks *certainty*, in that he seeks a unity which guarantees a new certainty and order of life. He finds this *fundamentum inconcussum* for certainty in a gestalt of the *worker*. Second, Jünger's gestalt can be seen to be *modern* in that, like Descartes, he ties this *subjectum* up with human being, with a gestalt of a *type* of people. For Jünger does not speak about a gestalt of *work* but of a gestalt of the *worker*. That Jünger's search for the subject is tied up with human being is, according to Heidegger, due to "modern metaphysics in the sense of the installation of human beings as *subjectum*."<sup>31</sup> According to Heidegger, Jünger's concept of gestalt is therefore *neuzeitlich-metaphysisch*.

#### IV. Heidegger's Destructed Concept of Gestalt in "The Origin of the Work of Art"

In his early and later writings on Jünger it becomes clear that Heidegger thinks of gestalt as closely connected with metaphysics. He even asserts that the fact that Jünger is thinking in terms of a gestalt at all is a sign of his entanglement in metaphysics.<sup>32</sup> What then inspired Heidegger to maintain a non-metaphysical concept of gestalt? Why did he not reject the concept of gestalt as an inherently metaphysical concept?

As we said in the introduction, it seems likely that Heidegger worked out his concept of gestalt precisely in the course of his confrontation with Jünger. Although Heidegger is very critical about Jünger's concept of gestalt, it seems also to have inspired him to develop his own destructed concept of gestalt. In an annotation on Jünger he remarks: "From where and how is gestalt as such, gestalt-like? The gestalt-like as essential swaying of *being* (but *this* is *not* the way Jünger thinks)."<sup>33</sup> What, then, is the status of Heidegger's own conception of gestalt? In this section, we distinguish Heidegger's non-metaphysical conception of gestalt from the metaphysical tradition in three different ways. In the following section, we bring this article to a close with a critical discussion of Heidegger's later rejection of gestalt in favor of language, in favour of naming.

The first characteristic of Heidegger's destructed concept of gestalt shows itself when we elaborate the relation between the *ownmost* of truth and beings. Heidegger says: "The openness of this open, i. e., truth, can only be what it is, namely *this*

<sup>31</sup> GA 90, pp. 132–133.

<sup>32</sup> "Am unterschiedensten zeigt sich Jüngers Verstrickung in das Metaphysische dadurch, dass er in »Gestalten« denkt. ... 1. Die Gestalt überhaupt und das recht verstandene εἶδος, das Aussehen, in dem das »Wesen« gestellt ist und steht, sich zeigt, nicht »Idee« als neuzeitliches *perceptum*! – ist metaphysisch! 2. Der Mensch als *die* Gestalt und das erst-Gestaltbare ist *neuzeitlich* metaphysisch" (GA 90, pp. 93–94).

<sup>33</sup> GA 90, p. 141.

open, when and as long as it establishes itself in its open. In this open, therefore, there must be a being in which the openness takes its stand and achieves constancy.<sup>34</sup> The truth is only what it is – namely this openness of unconcealing-concealing – when it establishes (*Eimichtung*) itself in a being. According to Heidegger, one of the essential ways in which truth establishes itself in beings is art, namely, the establishment of the truth in a work of art.<sup>35</sup> What is the nature of this establishment?

According to Heidegger, a work of art is indeed brought forth, but the product of this bringing forth is not a present form or gestalt of beings (vgl. II). The happening of unconcealing-concealing is here not *neutralized* in favour of the presence of a gestalt in a created being, but on the contrary, it is, exactly, *opened* in this being. “Truth establishes itself as strife in a being that is to be brought forth only in such a way that the strife opens up in this being the being itself, in other words, is brought into the rift-design.”<sup>36</sup> *Riß* comes from *Reißen*, which means to rift, to write, to sketch. The bringing forth of the rift does not cut out a form as *opposed* to the formless (unconcealment as *opposed* to concealment). The rift of which Heidegger speaks is indeed a *distinction*, but it carries the contestants into the source of their *unity*: The rift cuts the contestants from each other in such a way that they can show themselves *as* they are. “It brings the contest between measure and limit into a shared outline (*Umriss*),”<sup>37</sup> i.e., the outline of the ‘as’ or meaning of this being (unconcealment), which stays in touch with its surrounding and concealed horizon.

Thus far, this remains abstract. How are we to understand this establishment of the truth in a being, even leaving aside the question of whether this being is brought forth in an artistic or another way? Let us return to our example of the word *ἀλήθεια*, whose ownmost was concealed for the Greeks.<sup>38</sup> The word *ἀλήθεια* is an example of a being which is inscribed with an outline (*Umriss*), by a rift (*Riß*). In this case, the outline with which we are dealing is the actual meaning of truth *as adaequatio* (unconcealment), but this remains surrounded by its self-concealing horizon of meaning (*ἀλήθεια*), namely, the two kinds of concealment (refusal, obstruction) at the heart of unconcealment. In this way, *ἀλήθεια* is brought into *relief* as *adaequatio* in the rift-design.

According to Heidegger, this rift-design, as it is established in a being, is said to be *gestalt*. Such a gestalt is the crystallization point, in which the self-establishment of truth in a being and this being’s occupation of the open of truth meet each

other. Understood in this way, Heidegger’s gestalt has nothing to do with “giving form to an existence impacted by the threat of formlessness!”<sup>39</sup> As long as we think of gestalt in terms of form and formlessness, we will not recognise the fundamental and irremovable openness of truth. Heidegger’s conception of gestalt does not neutralize this openness in favour of the presence of the form, *εἶδος* or gestalt in the manner of the metaphysical tradition, rather the happening of clearing *and* concealment establishes itself exactly in gestalt. With this, we encounter our first difference between Heidegger’s deconstructed conception of gestalt and that of the metaphysical tradition.<sup>40</sup>

Our second such difference comes into view when we consider the following observation, made by Heidegger in the *Introduction to metaphysics* of 1935: “But from an *observer’s* point of view, what stands-there-in-itself becomes what puts itself forth, what offers itself in how it looks. The Greeks call the look of a thing its *εἶδος* or *ἰδέα*” (my italics).<sup>41</sup> What is at stake in this passage? When we start with ‘observation,’ a being is not taken strictly in terms of itself, but rather in the way it *shows* itself, its *εἶδος* or form. That, in the metaphysical tradition, the theme of philosophy should be understood in terms of *εἶδος*, *ἰδέα* or form is thus not something obvious, nor directly comprehensible. It is orientated to the present-at-hand being *opposite* to me, and derives from this a *point of view*, out of which the *εἶδος* or form becomes accessible.<sup>42</sup> When the being of beings is grasped as *ἰδέα* or *εἶδος*, then the being of this being is not understood out of itself, but out of the *Erfassungsart*, the way the Greeks have access to being. For the Greeks, pure seeing or *θεωρία* is the primary mode of access to being.<sup>43</sup> It is because the being of beings is accessed from a point of view *opposite* to the present-at-hand being and becomes accessible through pure seeing that it comes to be called *ἰδέα* or ‘form’.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Bernard Radloff, *Heidegger and the Question of National Socialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> The reproach of Lacoue-Labarthe, that the philosophical thinking of Heidegger in the thirties is still reigned by the *onto-tyology*, is thus incorrect. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 85. Nevertheless, Heidegger saw later on that he could not withdraw his concept of gestalt completely from the onto-tyology, insofar as every thinking of gestalt thinks being not only in relation with beings, but also *out* of beings (for this, see section V).

<sup>41</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik, op cit.*, p. 46; *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer 1993), p. 62.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit*, GA 21 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it is not true that the word ‘gestalt’ is convertible for the word ‘form’, as van Peperstraten suggests, because Heidegger tries to draw his conception of gestalt from the *Sache* itself. See Frans van Peperstraten, *Sublime Mimesis* (Budel: Damon, 2005), p. 143. Form is like *εἶδος* and *ἰδέα*, not a *sachhaltige* definition for the *Sache* which have

<sup>34</sup> GA 5, p. 48; tr., p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Such an establishment is not restricted to art; the act which founds a state or the questioning of thinkers can also be said to be the establishment of the truth in a being.

<sup>36</sup> GA 5, p. 51; tr., p. 38.

<sup>37</sup> GA 5, 51; tr., p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> We defer any discussion of whether a word is or is not to be understood as a being (for this, see section V).



Contrary to the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger tries to draw his way of speaking from the *Sache* of which he is speaking, and this is the meaning of the maxim of Phenomenology: *to the things themselves!* To what extent, then, can we say that Heidegger's understanding of gestalt is drawn from the *Sache* itself? Does the word gestalt itself give us, in other words, a single reason to bring it into connection with the strife or rift between clearing and concealment?

The word gestalt is originally the participle of *stellen*.<sup>45</sup> *Stellen* means *thesis*, i.e., the bringing forth of a being. The reason for using exactly this word — gestalt — lies in its character as a participle; what is brought forth in gestalt is not a present form, but the *happening* of unconcealing-concealing: "The 'happen' in the 'letting happen of truth' is the prevailing movement in clearing *and* concealment or, more precisely, in their union; in other words it is the movement of the clearing of self-concealment as such, from which, in turn, all self-illumination arises."<sup>46</sup> That gestalt is thus not 'everlasting being,' but is understood as a participle, i.e., as the *happening* of unconcealing-concealing, is the second of our three differences between Heidegger's conception of gestalt and the metaphysical tradition.

Now, one might object that Heidegger's destructed conception of gestalt cannot escape degenerating into a present form because he also feels it urgent to speak about the *establishment* (*Feststellung*) of truth in gestalt. Does not every *Feststellung* ultimately lead to a stable and present form, and thus also gestalt as conceived by Heidegger? It might seem so. However, this objection is anticipated and parried in the appendix to "The Origin of the Work of Art": "But if, in the context of the artwork-essay, we keep in mind the Greek sense of θέσις — to let lie forth in its radiance and presence — then the 'fixed' corresponding to 'fix in place' can never mean the stiff, motionless, and secure."<sup>47</sup> The establishment of truth in a gestalt exists in the outline of the *as* (or meaning) of a being, in order that it gives itself *as* itself free in the unconcealed, fulfils itself and begins to *be* in the proper sense of the word. Instead, "end" means completion in the sense of coming to fulfillment (*Vollendung*). Limit and end are that whereby beings first begin to *be*. This is the key to understanding the highest term that Aristotle used for being: ἐντελέχεια, something's holding-(or maintaining) — itself-in-its-completion-(or limit) ... Whatever places itself into and thereby enacts its limit, and thus stands, has gestalt, μορφή. The ownmost of gestalt, as understood by the Greeks, comes from the emergent placing-itself-forth-into-the-limit."<sup>48</sup>

to be defined. As we will see, Heidegger advances his concept of gestalt in connection with *Vollendung* and *Umriss*.

<sup>45</sup> Therefore, Heidegger says that gestalt has to be thought of out of "Ge-stell", although this word cannot primarily be thought of as the basic concept of the modern technical era.

<sup>46</sup> GA 5, p. 71–72; tr., p. 54.

<sup>47</sup> GA 5, p. 71; tr., p. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, p. 46; tr., p. 63 (modified).

Yet, if we accept Heidegger's argument as to why his gestalt does not degenerate into a present form, a further fundamental question arises: Can we still speak of a *destruction* of the concept of gestalt, when Heidegger here seems to *endorse* it as he refers to the Greek ἐντελέχεια and μορφή? Does he not just take over the Greek concepts without destructing them? It might appear so, but consider the following passage: "Where beings are apprehended as beings, and distinguished from other beings, *in view of their outer appearance*, the demarcation and arrangement of beings in terms of outer and inner limits enters on the scene. But what limits is form, what is limited is matter" (my italics).<sup>49</sup> It is only when we understand the outline of a gestalt from out of the *Erfassungswart*, that we understand it as limiting form. Further, it is only when we understand this outlining and establishing as representation, that the limiting form is then understood as the representation of the gestalt (presentness) of a being. But Heidegger's destruction of gestalt is first and foremost the destruction of the sense of being as presentness in view of the truth of being — unconcealing-concealing — and therefore, the 'fixation' of truth in gestalt never runs counter to its happening-character. Heidegger finds only a *trace* of his destructed conception of gestalt in the Greek μορφή as fulfillment and limit: *Sich-in-die-Grenze-her-stellen*.

The term ἐντελέχεια is an example of such a gestalt, and one which we already reviewed a couple of times. ἐντελέχεια is an example of a being which is inscribed with an outline (*Umriss*) or *Riß*, namely, the outline of the actual meaning of truth as *adaequatio*, which stays surrounded by its concealed horizon of meaning. This outline of the meaning of truth is not a question of semantics, but rather regards the *horizon of our vision*. The outline of truth as *adaequatio* or correctness articulates the way beings appear to us and the way human being deals with them; our world appears as fitting (*rectus*) or uncanny (*sinister*), about which we can utter *correct* or *incorrect* statements.

Here we see that the established gestalt of truth *as* correctness does not outline a being but the *whole* of beings in which I am included. With this, we encounter the third and final of our three differences between Heidegger's destructed conception of gestalt and the metaphysical tradition.

As we have seen, the metaphysical gestalt (εἶδος, form) is accessible only when we take up a point of view or standpoint opposite to the present-at-hand being. With the adoption of this point of view, the metaphysical gestalt becomes primarily gestalt of beings and our pure seeing of this gestalt is *external* to it. Heidegger sees, by contrast, that the established gestalt of truth *as* correctness not only outlines the way the whole of beings appear to us, but, together with this, the way human being deals with them. This means that we are not after all *external* to this gestalt, because it concerns the relation *between* being and thinking, in which I

<sup>49</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Der Wille zur Macht als Kunst*, GA 43 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), p. 94.

know myself *included*. This inclusion of thinking in Heidegger's concept of gestalt is the third characteristic difference at work in his destructed conception of gestalt.

The first consequence of our inclusion is that the bringing forth of gestalt concerns that which is our *own* (i.e., our own being), thus gestalt is related to our *ownness*. What is, in this sense, *our own*? That the ownmost of truth as unconcealment is *concealed* from thought as such! This means, first of all, that not only Jünger and the metaphysical tradition, but *all of us* are ruled by the desire for presence, that *none of us* is capable of accepting and exposing himself to the clearing of self-concealment. But it is precisely this experience of inaccessibility, which is indicated by the word *ἀνάρησις*, that gives rise to our indirect experience of the ownmost of truth as unconcealing-concealing (cf. I).

Secondly, our inclusion in the bringing forth of gestalt means that our experience of gestalt requires that we drop our everyday way of life, including our metaphysically drawn understanding of the relation between being and thinking, and that we dwell by the happening of clearing and concealment.<sup>50</sup> "For a work only actually is as a work when we transport ourselves out of the habitual and into what is opened up by the work so as to bring our ownmost itself to take a stand within the truth of beings."<sup>51</sup> But this "transportation" is not primarily *our* achievement: gestalt, as the self-establishment of truth, has the power to throw our metaphysical way of thinking off its balance and to invite us to be mindful of the ownmost of truth. This is, for Heidegger, the real achievement of gestalt: "Preservation of the work does not individualize human beings down to their experiences but rather, brings them into a belonging to the truth that happens in the work. By so doing it founds their being-with-one-another (*Miteinandersein*) as the historical standing out of human existence (Da-sein) from out of the relation to unconcealment."<sup>52</sup>

Through this analysis of 'The Origin of the Work of Art' we have seen three characteristics of Heidegger's destructed conception of gestalt: its openness, its happening character and its inclusiveness. *In the bringing forth of Heidegger's gestalt an unconcealing-concealing of being in which I am included, is happening.*

#### V. Gestalt and Name

The question remains: why did Heidegger change his mind and resolutely reject the concept of gestalt – not only the metaphysical conception of gestalt but also his

<sup>50</sup> "In short, the unconcealing of beings is a matter of going under, enownment and allotment, and those who unconceal beings are those who go under, are enowned by being, and who are allotted to being" (Emad, *op cit*, p. 50).

<sup>51</sup> GA 5, p. 62; tr., p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> GA 5, p. 55; tr., p. 41. The further analysis of this *Bewahren* and the question how we have to distinguish this *Bewahren* of the truth from an *adaequatio* between being and thinking, must be left aside in this article.

own destructed conception – in other texts from the same period? As a way into this question, we focus once more on the nature of the creation of gestalt.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger quotes a known utterance of Albrecht Dürer: "For in truth, art is found in nature; whoever can wrest it from her has it."<sup>53</sup> In the previous section, we learned how we have to understand this wrestling, namely, as the bringing forth of the unconcealing-concealing in gestalt. But the bringing forth of gestalt is not a simple reproduction of the rift-design of nature, it is not a *mimesis* in the classical sense of the word. By way of contrast, Heidegger raises the question: "how can the rift be wrested forth except as the rift, and that means if it has not first been brought into the open, through the creative sketch, as the strife between measure and unmeasure?"<sup>54</sup> In this creative wrestling there lies a productive moment, according to Heidegger. On the one hand, the rift-design of gestalt belongs to nature, but on the other hand, this rift is only brought forth by the productive projection. "Truth will never be gathered from what is present and ordinary. The disclosure of the open and the clearing of beings happen, rather, only insofar as the approaching openness is projected within throwness."<sup>55</sup> The truth of gestalt is only in its bringing forth, in its projection (*Entwurf*) of *die in der Geworfenheit ankommende Offenheit*.

Heidegger also calls this projection of the truth in gestalt 'poetry'. We can understand this when we recall the Greek origin of the word: "poetry is the 'bringing forth' of something in its presence, in the unconcealed."<sup>56</sup> That Heidegger specifically calls his concept of gestalt poetical should not be taken to mean that he excludes the visual arts from such bringing forth. However, although Heidegger does think that visual arts and architecture belong also to poetry, in a wider sense, he also accords poetry in the narrower sense, namely, the *linguistic* work of art, a privileged position in relation to the other arts.

Language, according to Heidegger, is not an expression of what needs to be communicated or a vehicle for the transfer of information, but concerns the way in which beings appear to us: "Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. This naming nominates beings to their being and *from out of* that being. Such saying is a projection of the clearing in which announcement is made as to what beings will come into the open."<sup>57</sup> An example of such naming is 'correctness,' in light of which our world appears as fitting (*rechts*) or uncanny (*sinister*), about which we can utter correct or incorrect statements.

<sup>53</sup> GA 5, p. 58; tr., p. 43.

<sup>54</sup> GA 5, p. 58; tr., p. 43.

<sup>55</sup> GA 5, p. 59; tr., p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Heidegger, *I. Nietzsches Metaphysik 2. Einleitung in die Philosophie. Denken und Dichten*, GA 50 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990), p. 112.

<sup>57</sup> GA 5, p. 61; tr., p. 46.



On this view, language *itself* is poetry, because language *names* a pregnant meaning of the word (unconcealment) which is surrounded by its concealed horizon of meaning; this clearing of self-concealment is shown through the name ἀλήθεια in previous sections.

The particular position of linguistic poetry lies therein, that it is best able to preserve the primordial poetry of language itself. Other modes of poetry, such as visual arts and architecture, only occur within the clearing of beings, which is opened by language. "Building and plastic creation, on the other hand, happen, always and only, in the open of saying and naming. It is this open which permeates and guides them. For this reason, they remain their own particular ways and manners in which truth orders itself into the work. They are an always unique poeticizing within the clearing of beings which has already happened, unnoticed, in the language."<sup>58</sup> Although the poetry of gestalt and the poetry of the name seem to be convertible at first sight,<sup>59</sup> a hierarchical difference occurs here between the poetry of language, poetical *naming* and the poetics of gestalt. Heidegger sees that the poetry of gestalt is originally marked by the poetry of naming and ultimately by the poetry of language.

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," this hierarchical difference is determined *positively*, for although the poetical naming preserves the owmmost of language best, Heidegger does not reject the poetical bringing forth of gestalt here as inessential. He only speaks about a relation of primordality, because the creation of gestalt is *secondary* and originally guided by the poetical saying and naming, in which the openness of unconcealing-concealing is happening.

In other texts of the same period however, this hierarchical difference is quite *negatively* determined. In his *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, written around 1936–38 but posthumously published, Heidegger says explicitly: "This thinking (of being [Seyn], VB) should never seek refuge in a gestalt of a being and in that gestalt experience all the light of what is simple out of the gathered richness of its enjoined darkness. This thinking can also never follow the dissolution into what is without gestalt [Gestaltlose]. In the abgrund of the gestaltgrund [Gestaltgrundes] – this side of gestalt and gestalt-less [Gestaltlosen] (which is, of course, only in a being) – this thinking must seize the resonating throw of its throwiness

<sup>58</sup> GA 5, p. 62; tr., pp. 46–47.

<sup>59</sup> About the poetry of gestalt, Heidegger says: "Was die Dichtung als lichter Entwurf an Unverbohrtheit auseinanderfaltet und in den Riß der Gestalt vorauswirft, ist das Offene, das sie geschehen läßt und zwar dergestalt, dass jetzt das Offene erst inmitten des Seienden dieses zum Leuchten und Klingen bringt" (GA 5, p. 60). The poetry projects a gestalt in which the openness (truth) can show itself (vgl. GA 5, p. 63). About poetry as naming, Heidegger says: "Das entwerfende Sagen ist Dichtung." This Sagen "ist ein Entwerfen des Lichtes, darin angesagt wird, als was das Seiende ins Offene kommt." Poetry projects the name in which the openness (truth) can show itself (GA 5, p. 61).

and carry it into the open of the projecting-opening."<sup>60</sup> Here it becomes clear that Heidegger is not solely criticizing the metaphysical concept of gestalt because it is understood as present εἶδος, ἰδέα or form of a being or as idea of the subject (gestalt of a people). In the *Contributions*, Heidegger states that *every* concept of gestalt is metaphysical, because it starts with beings and therefore only thinks gestalt in relation to these beings. Heidegger here realizes that gestalt is always gestalt of a being and that this relation cannot be destructed. Therefore, gestalt is no longer secondary but in-essential; in gestalt, unbeknown to itself, the unconcealing-concealing of being has fallen into oblivion, is closed of and concealed.<sup>61</sup>

So, whereas Heidegger in "The Origin of the Work of Art" seems to introduce only a hierarchical difference between the poetical bringing forth of gestalt and the poetic naming, later on he rejects the concept of gestalt explicitly in favour of the name. Language is not a being according to Heidegger, but rather names the clearing of self-concealment, as is shown by the example of the 'name' ἀλήθεια. Only language is "the original resonance of the truth of a world."<sup>62</sup>

Why did Heidegger change his mind? What convinced him that the concept of gestalt cannot after all be destructed and so must be rejected? My hypothesis is that this is the consequence of his later critique of his own thinking in "The Origin of the Work of Art." I will finish this article with an elaboration of this hypothesis.

As we have seen in section 4, Heidegger says in "The Origin of the Work of Art" that truth has to establish itself as unconcealing-concealing in a being, and that this establishment of truth in a being is said to be gestalt. When Heidegger in his *Contributions* remarks that gestalt is inherently related to beings, he has been seduced by exactly this concept of gestalt into the idea that truth has to establish itself in beings. What is the problem of *establishment*? In his essay on art, Heidegger says that with the concept of self-establishment of truth, we step into the domain of the question-worthiness (*Fragewürdigkeit*) of the ontological difference. The problem for Heidegger is this: in the metaphysical tradition, being is under-

<sup>60</sup> GA 65, p. 422; tr., p. 298 (modified).

<sup>61</sup> Therefore, I do not agree with Radloff's "fundamental claim [...] that being 'takes gestalt' in beings, and in the comportment of Da-sein, and that this event overcomes the separation of being and beings to found the historicity of Da-sein and the being of entities" (Radloff, *op cit*, p. 317). Radloff suggests that Heidegger in the *Beiträge* still thinks that the truth "takes gestalt in beings" (Radloff, *op cit*, p. 327) and he refers to GA 65, p. 389. Here, Heidegger says indeed that truth needs "diese Bergung des Offeneren" in a being, but he explicitly is not talking about gestalt in a positive way anymore. On the contrary, he says on the next page: "Denn Bergung der Wahrheit im Seienden, ermetet das nicht allzu deutlich an die *Eingestaltung* der 'Idee' des εἶδους in die ὕλη? ... Wahrheit west nur und immer schon als Da-sein und somit als Bestreitung des Streites" (GA 65, p. 390).

<sup>62</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsches metaphysische Grundstellung im abendländischen Denken*, GA 44 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986), p. 110. In this article, we cannot elaborate Heidegger's understanding of the owmmost of language any further, and restrict ourselves to the given indications in the artwork essay.

stood out of beings (beings as such), whereas Heidegger tries to think *being as such*. When Heidegger, at the same time, states that being has to establish itself in a being, then the question arises as to how this established being is differentiated from the metaphysically understood *beingness* of beings (i. e., ontological indifference).

Our discussion of Heidegger's deconstructed conception of *gestalt* in the previous section made clear that it cannot be understood as the beingness of beings. And yet, later Heidegger came to see that he could not withdraw his conception of *gestalt* completely from this tradition, because it is inherently related to beings and thinks being out of beings. For instance, when Heidegger in his *Rectoral address* is talking about the task (*Aufgabe*) before the Germans of finding their ownmost and when this ownmost can be found in a *gestalt* of the German people, then it is not clear how this *gestalt* is differentiated from an onto-typology, or from the beingness (*gestalt*) of beings (Germans).<sup>63</sup> As long as the truth of being has to establish itself in a *gestalt*, being as such is not only thought of in relation with beings, but also *out of* beings, and we are then incapable of differentiating it from the beingness of beings.<sup>64</sup> That is why Heidegger, in his *Contributions*, finally rejects the establishment of the truth in a *gestalt* and attempts (*Versuchen*) to think the truth of being *without* beings: "Mindfulness transports the man of the future into that "in-between" in which he belongs to being and yet, amidst beings, remains a stranger."<sup>65</sup>\*

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Lacoue-Labarthe, *op cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>64</sup> Although Heidegger in "The Age of the World Picture" from 1938 still speaks about *establishment*, he no longer uses this word on his own account. In this essay, establishment concerns the way subject and object are built into each other. "Im planetarischen Imperialismus des technisch organisierten Menschen erreicht der Subjektivismus des Menschen seine höchste Spitze, von der er sich in die Ebene der organisierten Gleichförmigkeit niederlassen und dort sich einrichten wird. Diese Gleichförmigkeit wird das sicherste Instrument der vollständigen, nämlich technischen Herrschaft über die Erde. Die neuzeitliche Freiheit der Subjektivität geht vollständig in der ihr gemäßen Objektivität auf" (Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," *Holzwege*, GA 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), p. 111; "The Age of the World Picture," in *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 84. This establishment bears witness of the presence of subject and object for each other, and is therefore unsuitable to think the truth of being.

<sup>65</sup> GA 5, p. 96; tr., p. 72 (modified). In the *Beiträge*, Heidegger still speaks about the "Bergung der Wahrheit des Seyns im Seienden" (GA 65, p. 27), but here, he no longer thinks *Bergung* in connection with *Einrichtung* and *Gestalt*. As long as we think *Bergung* as *Self-establishing* in a *gestalt*, we understand being not only in relation with beings, but also *out of* beings: "Da-sein steht anfänglich in der Gründung des Ereignisses, erfundet die Wahrheit des Seyns und geht nicht vom Seienden zu dessen Sein über. Vielmehr geschieht die Begründung des Ereignisses als Bergung der Wahrheit im Seienden und als Seiendes und so ist, wenn überhaupt noch ein Vergleich möglich wäre, was nicht zutrifft, das Verhältnis ein umgekehrtes" (GA 65, p. 322).

\* I would like to thank Frans van Peperstraten and the reviewers of *Heidegger Studies* for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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