

Autochthony and Rootlessness: towards a Hegelian reappropriation of Heidegger's philosophy

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Abstract: In this paper I offer a critical reading of some aspects of Heidegger's late philosophy and evaluate how these relate to his nationalist claim that we need to stay rooted in the soil of our homeland. In response to this claim, Žižek suggests that being-rootless is the primordial state of being-human and that what we represent as our roots are secondary attempts to obfuscate this dimension. First, I will present Heidegger's philosophy of technology to elucidate his thesis that the essence of modern technology (Gestell) determinates the way we come to experience the totality of beings in our times as "standing reserve". In the second section, I expound his aesthetics where art is seen as a mode of approaching entities that follows a different logic to that of the Gestell. However, this analysis of Heidegger's philosophy of art will reveal a political dimension to the concept of earth which I take to be a reactionary attempt to neutralize the eventual dimension of the Gestell. In the third section, I offer a critical re-interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy following Žižek's clue. I argue that modern art is characterized by its self-reflexive character which can be deemed transcendental once we accept the ontological dimension of art following Heidegger. These works offer a rooting in our own rootless condition analogous to the grounding in the Abgrund of Hegel's absolute knowledge. Finally, I offer an analysis of Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* from the perspective of the conceptual framework developed in the previous pages.

Keywords: Philosophy; Hegel; Heidegger; Art; Žižek

Introduction:

The purpose of this work is to offer a critical reading of some aspects of Heidegger's late philosophy and evaluate how these relate to his nationalist claim that we need to stay rooted in the soil of our homeland (Heidegger 1969: 47). In response to this claim, Žižek suggests:

“What if, at the most radical level, we are all Jews? What if being-rootless is the primordial state of being-human, and our roots are a secondary phenomenon, an attempt to obfuscate our constitutive rootlessness?” (Žižek 2019: unpaginated)

First, I will present Heidegger's philosophy of technology to elucidate his thesis that the essence of modern technology (Gestell) determinates the way we come to experience the totality of beings in our times as “standing reserve” (Bestand) (Heidegger 2013: 20). In the second section, I expound his aesthetics where art is seen as a mode of approaching entities that follows a different logic to that of the Gestell. However, this analysis of Heidegger's philosophy of art will reveal a political dimension to the concept of earth which I take to be a reactionary attempt to neutralize the eventual dimension of the Gestell. In the third section, I offer a critical re-interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy following Žižek's clue. I argue that modern art is characterized by its self-reflexive character which can be deemed transcendental in the Kantian sense once we accept the ontological dimension of art following Heidegger. The success of Heidegger's phenomenology of art in *The Origin of the Work of Art* in part depends on his implicit recognition of the transcendental character of certain works which come to make explicit their own conditions of possibility. In the famous *Spiegel* interview, Heidegger claims that we need to find a sublation (Aufhebung) of the Gestell in an explicit reference to Hegel but laments the fact that modern art is not up to the task. I propose that the introduction of this Hegelian concept implies a major departure from Heidegger's previous philosophical understanding of history. Whereas Heidegger used to appeal to a reactionary notion of autochthony, he now exhorts us to find a different alternative. I

suggest that the rooting that modern works of art provide points beyond both the Gestell and Heidegger's reactionary politics: they provide a transcendental rooting analogous to the grounding in the Abgrund of Hegel's absolute knowledge. Finally, I offer an analysis of Quentin Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* from the perspective of the conceptual framework developed in the previous pages.

The universal: Technology

Heidegger believes that each epoch in human history poses specific challenges to us and that what characterizes the human being is that we must always learn how to dwell on the Earth again (Heidegger 2013: 159). Our age is specially challenging because of the hegemony of what he calls the Gestell. The Gestell or "enframing" is the essence of modern technology, which determinates the way humans understand the totality of beings today. According to Heidegger, in our times everything appears to us as inherently meaningless reservoirs of resources that only become significative to us in so far as they be can measured by science and optimized by technology in the quest for maximum profit. What is so problematic and unique about the Gestell is that humanity comes to be seen as one entity more, undistinguishable in value or dignity to inanimate objects.

The Gestell is also one of the chapters in Heidegger's depiction of the history of western thought as ontotheology. One of the decisive transformations that Hegel brought about (and which has become a fundamental methodological stance that sets continental philosophy apart from the analytical tradition) is the idea that philosophy cannot be divorced from the history of philosophy, this discipline being a philosophical task itself. However, far from viewing the history of philosophy as a dialectical process in which each epoch discovers the partial character of the truth held by the previous configuration, Heidegger deems the history of metaphysics "the forgetting of Being" (Heidegger 2000: 70). In this reading, metaphysics is defined as a mistake arising from a primordial confusion. Being, that which all beings have in common and which makes any given understanding of beings possible (the ontological question),

was taken to be an entity (the *ens realissimum*, the theological question). Thus metaphysics has an ontotheological structure that was first acknowledged by Aristotle when he defined the discipline as the science concerning the first and the most general of all entities.

Heidegger's take on the history of metaphysics aims to emphasize a certain paradox. The idea is that those systems of modern philosophy where everything was understood in reference to the subject are the very roots of our present hegemonic understanding of Being where the figure of the subject comes to disintegrate itself in the blind pursue of maximum profit that we, departing from Heidegger's politics and terminology, may deem capital¹. This objectification of the subject is epitomized in the concept of human resources. People are seen as resources to be measured by means of percentiles, iq tests and so on in order to be exploited in the most efficient ways (Heidegger 2000: 18). While modern philosophers such as Descartes reduced nature to a mere object to be dissected by reason and exploited for human interest, our times lead to a paradoxical situation where human beings are no longer the ones who benefit from this exploitation. Instead, capital comes to occupy this central position in relation to which all entities, including the human being, acquire meaning in so far as they can be optimized to render the maximum desired output.

The threat that modern technology poses is twofold. On the one hand, we have the concrete threat of the end of life on earth as a consequence of either an atomic war or an ecological catastrophe. On the other hand, we have the ontological threat to humanity's essence which is what specially concerns Heidegger. Humanity's essence is unconcealment (*ἀληθεύειν*): which simply means our ability to take things as something. The emphasis lies in the as of the phrasal verb taking as (Wheeler 2020: unpaginated). Heidegger's thesis is that every way of approaching entities carries with it an implicit ontology that predeterminates our interpretation of their nature. Metaphysical ontotheologies secure themselves by reducing that which makes other ontologies possible (Being) to an entity. The Gestell further threatens to make this elision permanent by actively dismissing ontological questions in favor of an instrumentalist conception of scientific knowledge which in turn is taken to be the only form of legitimate knowledge possible. In this scenario, the knowing

subject, the only entity capable of posing the question of Being, is reduced to an entity more in the mechanism of nature. The ontologically privileged status of humans is thus denied. If instrumental science were to become the only mode of unconcealment at our disposal, humans would be reduced permanently to Bestand as the Gestell's ontology would reach a point of absolute hegemony.²

Heidegger's point is not that we need to reject science but that if human nature is left to be explained in purely scientific terms, something very important will be lost: the possibility of approaching entities as something more than blind mechanisms that seek only to maximize and optimize themselves in a meaningless struggle for self-preservation. Žižek seems to share this fear when he laments how even sex is understood in these mechanical terms when orgasms are praised for their health benefits in popular magazines. Our godless times are not those of a hedonist celebration of humanity since pleasure is strictly controlled and accepted only in so far as it optimizes the functions of the human mechanism. In the same vein, Žižek also points out how the devaluation of the humanities in favor of more practical fields of knowledge is a dangerous subordination of what Kant called the public use of reason to its private one (Žižek 2011: 412) For both Heidegger and Žižek, what is at stake is the ontological openness to a different future enabled by critical (transcendental) thought, which will be permanently lost if the only kind of knowledge we foster is oriented to instrumentalist goals.

The particular: Art

Heidegger seems to deposit his hopes in art, somewhat enigmatically suggesting that art and poetry will rescue us from this grim future. In order to understand Heidegger's philosophy of art we must first elucidate his concept of earth. This concept is systematically polysemic, in a way that challenges the assumption, specially championed by the analytical tradition, that we must define our concepts precisely and avoid conceptual conflation at all costs.

The first sense of the concept of earth is a purely "materialist" one (what Heidegger would call ontic as opposed to ontological). It refers to the material that the artist manipulates in the process of his or her work. For example, the

piece of marble for the sculptor, sound for the musician or language for the poet. This material offers a concrete resistance to the hand of the artist. It is not inherently meaningless since the artist must assume a certain attitude of respect towards it. On the other hand, the earth is also that dimension of intelligibility that resists interpretation. In the *Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger offers a phenomenology of one of Van Gogh's paintings titled *A Pair of Shoes*. In experiencing this work, Heidegger arrives at his Heraclitean concept of strife as art's essence. This strife takes place between what is unconcealed and what conceals itself in the painting (Heidegger 1989: 12). According to Heidegger, the pair of shoes unconceals the world of a country woman since their mere presence puts in front us the whole chain of significant relationships that exist between the farmer and her surroundings: through the mere image of the shoes we come to think of her waking up daily in the early morning to work with the soil and so on. Here, Heidegger is hinting towards the notion of world that was developed in *Being and Time*. There, the universe of meaning that constitutes the world of *Dasein* was seen as the chain of references that each piece of equipment establishes with the next and which ultimately refers back to *Dasein* as the unifying pole where all the referential chains converge. This pseudo-idealism is abandoned here: the world that is disclosed by the painting has as its counterpoint the material excess of the earth. The world-disclosing shoes are surrounded by an inchoate background that lends itself to various gestaltic configurations which escape our grasp as soon as we try to retain them (Thomson 2019: unpaginated). This amounts to the semiotic sense of the concept of earth as that dimension of meaning that remains open to dynamic interpretations, never allowing itself to be abstracted in precise conceptual bounds. By unconcealing the world by means of art, we then have at our disposal a mode of approaching entities different from that of the *Gestell*. That is, art doesn't demand from *Being* to completely reduce itself to a set of mathematical formulas or concepts but rather accepts its inherently dynamic and inexhaustible character. Just as no conceptual interpretation of a work of art can ever fully do justice to it, Heidegger understands that our relationship with the earth (*Being*) is likewise provisional: no metaphysical system (including science's approach to nature) can ever claim to have arrived at a definitive account of reality.

Heidegger's intentional conflation of the ontic and the ontological aspects of the concept of earth aims to show the essential connection between these two. It is the concrete earth that remains in the work what makes it fundamentally opaque and resist our attempts at reducing it with concepts. However, there seems to be yet another dimension to the concept of earth which makes itself especially evident in his public speech known as Memorial Address (Gelassenheit). There, it is claimed that our capacity to make great works of art depends on us being rooted firmly in the soil of our homeland. Heidegger refers to this rooting as Autochthony (Bodenständigkeit) (Heidegger 1959: 17).³

To what extent Heidegger's nationalism is constitutive of his philosophy or whether it is something that can be extirpated from his thought is a thorny question. What is clear, however, is that Heidegger's appeal to nationalism is a reaction to the Gestell. Aside from the characteristics that we have already mentioned, our age also carries with it the shortening of all distances in space and time (Heidegger 2000: 179). Globalization is a direct consequence of modern technology. Local traditions are lost to be replaced by a normalized global culture. As such, the thesis that we need to remain rooted in a homeland is a reactionary attempt to hold back from the Gestell. Heidegger's romanticization of the German country woman in the Origin of the Work of Art could be accepted at first as an innocent example of someone whose relationship with the earth retains a way of unconcealing entities different to that of the Gestell. However, in light of this nationalist claim that we need to be rooted in our homeland, the example comes to be grimly reminiscent of the Nazi motto Blood and Soil.

Of course, this is unacceptable, and it is very doubtful that nationalism is the answer to save humanity's essence. However, Heidegger seems to acknowledge that his notion of autochthony does not offer a promising alternative to what he understood as the Gestell's threats. In such texts as the Spiegel interview and in Gelassenheit itself, Heidegger exhorts us to think a new way to dwell and inhabit the earth in the times of the Gestell (Heidegger 1959: 23). What we need to find is a new sense of autochthony that does not imply a reactionary appeal to nationalism.

The Individual: Absolute Knowledge

What Heidegger fears is that the objectification of the subject propelled by the Gestell would signify a true end of history. By permanently dismissing the ontological question in favor of an instrumentalist science that claims to be the only form of knowledge possible, the Gestell threatens to impose itself forever. In Hegelian terms, the understanding threatens to halt for once and for all the infinite movement of Reason's concept. Heidegger's romanticism, his insistence on roots and his pseudo-polytheistic celebration of nature as seen in such texts as "Warum bleiben Wir in der Provinz?", should be read as an attempt to neutralize the eventual dimension of the Gestell by opposing globalization with the seemingly innocent idea that an embodied contact with nature allows us to depart from the technological understanding of beings. Žižek provocatively claims that here Heidegger is at his worst. Of course, the force of Žižek's claim is based on its obvious hyperbole: if this is Heidegger at his worst, then it must be somehow worse than what is contained in the Black Notebooks. Žižek's aim is to suggest that this romantic attempt to neutralize the Gestell is the philosophical (and given it's supposed ontological purity, the more disturbing) counterpart to Heidegger's politics. His seemingly innocent celebration of the countryside is the point where Heidegger's supposedly pure ontological philosophy reveals its grim political kernel.

However, Heidegger was forced to admit that this reactionary nationalism was not a philosophically sound answer to the Gestell's threats and in the Spiegel Interview he surprisingly claims that we need an *Aufhebung* of the Gestell in the Hegelian sense. What does an *Aufhebung* of the Gestell mean? How does this fit in the context of Heidegger's philosophy of history?

A striking difference between Heidegger's philosophy of history in comparison to Hegel's, is the pessimism of the former. Hegel opened the radical possibility of viewing past philosophical systems as something more than mistakes. Recall how Kant viewed past philosophers as dogmatic metaphysicians who didn't know the proper limits of Reason. If there were some truth in their writings, they could only have arrived at it by chance since they lacked the guiding principle for a truly systematic thought. That is, they failed to ground their ontologies on the transcendental subject (the famous example given by Kant is Aristotle's

table of categories which, unlike Kant's definitive version, was conceived of as revisable).

The transformation propelled by Hegel lies in his understanding of the history of philosophy as a progressive deployment of truth, where each configuration of rationality is seen as superior to the previous one in so far as it dissolves its inherent contradictions and false dilemmas. This leaves us with a fundamentally positive understanding of the past: each of Reason's failures is justified as a necessary mediation towards the truth of the Hegelian system. Heidegger inverts this relationship between philosophy and its past by postulating a point outside of its history in relation to which we can negatively assess the development of western thought. The pre-socratic experience of Being is what philosophy needs to recover via a deconstruction (Destruktion) of the history of metaphysics. However, I believe that the Hegelian concept of sublation cannot be imported into this negative assessment of the history of philosophy without effecting a radical transformation. An *Aufhebung* of the *Gestell*, which is the culmination of western forgetfulness, is opposed to its mere negation. From this perspective, future philosophy then cannot simply hope to return to a pre-metaphysical understanding of Being. ⁴

The history of philosophy is essentially bounded to the philosophy of history and it is in the latter where the political dimensions of Hegel's and Heidegger's systems enter into the picture. The constitutive optimism of Hegel's philosophy results in a sort of complacency. The cunning of reason (even if we reject its vulgar interpretations) allows us to justify and even celebrate all of the dire events of history as necessary steps towards the freedom achieved in our present. On the other hand, Heidegger's history of philosophy had as its natural political counterpart the project of a radical upheaval of the humanist legacy of the enlightenment. However, the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung*, if applied to the political domain, precludes in advance the tribalistic aspects of Heidegger's reactionary politics. Even if it was not clear to Heidegger himself, an *Aufhebung* of the *Gestell* must embrace rather than reject the legacy of the enlightenment both in the political and philosophical domains.

In Žižek's terminology, a sublation of the *Gestell* amounts to a recognition of its eventual dimension. Facing a truth-event, one that challenges our whole

conception of the world, we have two different courses of action at our disposal. We can either negate the event in what would amount to a reactionary conservatism or embrace the event and dare to transform ourselves in the process. Clinging to a primitive idea of an essential connection between our native soil and us would amount to a negation of the event of the Gestell. That is, a reactionary attempt to neutralize the irreversible changes that modernity brought about in the domains of thought and politics. On the other hand, a sublation of the Gestell requires a deeper assessment of the changes produced by this radical upheaval.

Žižek offers us a possible avenue to think a universalist concept of autochthony for the globalized world. In response to Heidegger's stance that we need to be rooted in a homeland (and the Nazi undertones of this claim), Žižek provocatively suggests that we are all Jews in the sense that we are fundamentally rootless and that our roots are epiphenomenal attempts to obfuscate our primordial rootless condition.⁵ This is of course a Hegelian stance. In the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel presented us a history of the various ways in which western thought has attempted to find grounds for itself. Absolute knowledge is the last phase in this history. Here, human consciousness comes to realize that this reason giving process is doomed to fail and that the only ground available to consciousness is its own ground giving activity itself: that is, consciousness comes to ground itself in an Abgrund (Pinkard 1994: 269). Following Hegel, the question is: can we find our lost roots in our own rootless condition?⁶

I argue that this self-reflexive movement that allows us to stay rooted in our own rootless condition characterizes modern art which becomes explicitly self-referential. The defining trait of modern philosophy was the reflexive turn that made gnosiology, the question concerning the subject, take precedent over the question concerning being (metaphysics). Hegel's introduction to the modern period in his lectures on the history of philosophy is illuminating:

We come now for the first time to what is properly the philosophy of the modern world, and we begin with Descartes. Here, we may say, we are at home and, like the sailor after a long-voyage, we can at last shout "Land

ho." Descartes made a fresh start in every respect. The thinking or philosophizing, the thought and the formation of reason in modern times, begins with him. The principle in this new era is thinking, the thinking that proceeds from itself. (Hegel 2009: 131)

However, this self-reflexive turn occurred first in the domain of fiction. Don Quixote was published in 1605, 32 years before Descartes's Discourse on the Method. Perhaps, The history of modern rationality could be said to begin with the Spanish Renaissance since the spirit of the age, as Hegel understands it, is clearly prominent in the work of Cervantes. The literary critic and bible translator Robert Alter argues that the novel as a genre is characteristically self-conscious and he takes the Quixote to be the archetypical work which first put forth the self-reflexive tropes that later novelists would repeat and develop .

This self-conscious character should not be understood as a superficial and cynic game that novelist plays with himself. Alter emphasizes the ontological significance of these works in a way that is highly reminiscent of Hegel:

"The intuition of life that, beginning with Cervantes, crystallized in the novel is profoundly paradoxical: the novelist lucidly recognizes the ways man may be painfully frustrated and victimized in a world with no fixed values or ideals, without even a secure sense of what is real and what is not, yet through the exercise of an autonomous art the writer boldly asserts the freedom of consciousness itself. The imagination, then, is alternately, or even simultaneously, the supreme instrument of human realization and the eternal snare of delusion of a creature doomed to futility" (Alter 1978: 18)

Note how this passage evokes the tragic character of Hegel's Phenomenology in which each successive configuration of consciousness painfully realizes that it must abandon what it held to be its truth. Cervantes' paradoxical "intuition of life" can be equated to Hegel's absolute knowledge, which is nothing but the

recognition of the tragic character of consciousness once it brings to self-conscious view the very futility of its nature. Jela Krečič's formulation of this concept is from this perspective very precise:

“...absolute knowing is the point at which consciousness reflexively assumes the fact that the share of illusion or fantasy is constitutive of the progress of truth. The truth is not located outside fantasy, since fantasy is the key element of its deployment.” (Žižek 2015, 186)

The fact that this absolute self-reflection also takes place in the artistic domain is crucial since one of the most striking contributions of Heidegger to philosophy is the idea that humans come to understand the world primarily through an involved manipulation of it (as opposed to an abstract contemplation) that creates something new out of the raw material offered by the earth. It is at this point that a reappropriation of Heidegger's philosophy becomes possible if we reject Hegel's famous thesis that art is something of the past.

In this vein, it is worth noting that the art historian Meyer Schapiro found out that the shoes that Van Gogh painted were not those of a German country woman as Heidegger hoped but his own shoes. Schapiro thought that this proved how arbitrary Heidegger's description was and then it is common for Heideggerians to give little importance to this fact. However, I believe that the fact that Van Gogh painted his own shoes is crucial. Heidegger could arrive at the essence of art via the phenomenological description of a single work only because Van Gogh's painting is a reflection on the essence of art. Contrary to hyperrealist paintings which have become increasingly popular on the internet and whose aim is to conceal the fact that they are man-made artifices, Van Gogh's broad brushstrokes embrace the art-character of art. By doing away with the precise and defined lines of realism, the painting comes to exhibit the earth in its essence. The world that the painting unconceals is then not that of a country woman but that of an artist. The earth that surrounds the shoes then should not be understood in terms of the national soil of Germany but rather as that dimension of Being which resists totalitarian closure.⁷ As we saw earlier, this excess is given sensual expression in the receding images that the background evokes. This type art is not only self-reflexive but transcendental in the Kantian

sense: by choosing art itself as its subject matter, modern art comes to exhibit its own conditions of possibility.

Art has played a crucial role when it came to creating the fictions of national identities. This phenomenon can be traced to the founding myths and epics of ancient cultures where the notion of a shared identity and common belonging to a nation was consolidated. However, *The Quixote* is the first work where the fictional character of art is embraced and reflected upon. Cervantes' novel is the first autonomous work of art that rids itself of the political function of rooting a people's identity in order to reflect on the delusions of a man that feels lost in a disintegrating world of values. Don Quixote is then simultaneously an artist and a knight as he creates in the course of his novel the world where he fights. Instead of situating his protagonist in the enchanted world of the books that took Don Quixote's reason away, Cervantes chose the empty disenchanting emptiness of La Mancha where the world-disclosing effect of art (represented by Quixote's delusions) can be made explicit. In Žižek's terms, we can say that what Cervantes discovered is the modern subject: the empty x that can abstract itself from all its particular determinations, distance itself from his own historical background, in order to create something genuinely new.

Case study: Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* as Transcendental Art

Jorge Luis Borges claimed that the four devices of fantastic literature are the double, the contamination of reality by dream, the work inside the work and the voyage in time (Borges 2000: 18). The first three are developed by Alter as constitutive of the novel as a self-conscious genre. The fourth may seem an outlier from this list but self-conscious fictions open the radical possibility of imagining different pasts since history is itself a form of narrative. The revolutionary character of the "what if?" approach to history has been pointed out by Žižek.⁸ Tarantino's alternate history similarly aims to redeem cinema and exorcise the ghosts of its past.

All of Tarantino's films are a celebration of the medium of cinema and *Inglorious Basterds* is no exception. All of the characters revolve around the medium in one way or another. Shoshana is a theater owner, her boyfriend is a

projectionist, Zoller is a nazi soldier who is given the opportunity to play himself in one of Goebbels' propaganda films, the British Spy in charge of Operation Kino is a film scholar, etc.

The work inside the work is in this case “A Nation’s Pride”, a piece of propaganda. Propaganda is a perfect example of reactionary art. That is, a totalitarian work that attempts to preserve the primitive function of art of giving roots to a people at all costs. In the midst of the Gestell, this implies a degradation of art’s own essence since, in order to achieve this, art must be subordinated to politics. Transcendental art is the opposite: in these works all that matters is art itself.

Tarantino’s film comes to take revenge against the insult to the medium of cinema that was Goebbels' propaganda. The climax of the film takes place in Shoshana’s theater. Hitler and all his closest men come to watch the premiere of Goebbels' film. However, in *Inglorious Basterds*, cinema is the very substance of reality and, as such, its omnipotence does not allow the heresy of reducing the medium to propaganda. Hitler’s visit to the theater, his intrusion into these holy lands, awakens the wrath of Tarantino’s god: cinema itself. The very materiality of the medium allow cinema to rebel itself against its improper usage. The nitrate film, the enclosed space of the theater, the sound of shots that mirror and hide the actual bullets that are fired behind the film projector are what brings the nazi down in this alternate history.

Inglorious Basterds has been deemed a jewish revenge film. If Žižek is right that we are all jewish the sense that being rootless is essential to our nature, I think this is a perfect description of Tarantino’s film. Propaganda is precisely that secondary phenomenon that attempts to obfuscate our rootless nature with artificial roots. Our weapon against it is a free form of art which, as Hegel saw, is one of the fundamental ways that we humans have to reflect on our essence.

Conclusion:

In the previous pages I attempted a Hegelian reading of Heidegger’s philosophy with the hopes that this will enable us not only to reappropriate the legacy of his thought but also think beyond its limitations. These limitations, which are fundamentally bounded to the political dimension of his philosophy, were

recognized by Heidegger himself and it is very noteworthy how he appealed to Hegelian terminology and an emphasis on the subject's self-conscious character when he exhorts us to think beyond them. My concepts of transcendental art and the post-heideggerian reinterpretation of absolute knowledge as a rooting in our rootless condition may serve as possible avenues to think with Heidegger but also beyond him, appropriating the legacy of his thought while actively rejecting its regressive politics.

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Notes:

¹ I believe that importing the concept of capital into the framework of Heidegger's philosophy is illuminating. If there's an unstoppable force that systematically transforms the way humans understand and approach nature, it's capitalism. As Žižek points out, capitalism is not inherently married to the liberal democratic values that seemed to go hand in hand with it in the past. No nation can avoid being integrated in the global market but this does not imply the undermining of traditional (what Žižek would deem "organic") hierarchical forms of social organization and domination. From this perspective, it's not the liberties of the western world which propagate themselves in a necessary manner but only capitalism, understood as a technocratic mode of production guided by the imperative to optimize everything and produce maximum profit, even if its methods are ultimately harmful for humans in many ways.

² Whenever Heidegger is talking about the ontological framework that characterizes our times, he is careful to employ a peculiar set of words. Thus, the semantic field of the Gestell includes such etymologically related words such as Bestand, bestellen (to make an order), vorstellen (to represent), Stellen (framing), etc. There seems to be an intentional pun in the fact that the passage from the modern metaphysical worldview to the Gestell could be neatly expressed as the passage from Verstand (understanding) to Bestand (stock).

³ The basic idea, emphasized in texts such as "Warum Bleiben Wir in der Provinz", is that an embodied contact with the soil allows us to retain a more original mode of experiencing entities. A central aspect of this "authentic" relation to the earth is its temporal dimension. A primitive agricultural life forces people to live at the pace of

nature's day/night cycle and the seasons. From Heidegger's perspective, this temporal experience is systematically corrupted by the Gestell via artificial lighting, transnational economic transaction in real time such as in the stockmarket, etc.

⁴ From a Hegelian perspective there is simply nothing to return to, since the "presocratic" understanding of Being is a fictional and retrospective projection of Heidegger onto the past. As Žižek claims in *The Fragile Absolute*, all these references to "authentic" pasts are to be rejected. Just as there is no Marx that we can access by bypassing Lenin (or a true message of Christ outside of Saint Paul), there is no pre-metaphysical understanding of Being that we can access by bypassing metaphysics.

⁵ Žižek's terminology is intentionally polemical. If rootlessness is Jewish, then zionism is not Jewish. It is worth noting how Martin Buber's philosophy closely resembles Heidegger's when it comes to the concept of earth. Whereas Heidegger thinks that an embodied contact with the soil is essential to achieve a non-metaphysical relationship to entities, Buber understands that a closer relationship with the soil leads to a heightened spirituality. This philosophy is closely related with the concept of the Israelite kibbutz.

⁶ This "rooting" could be equated to what Iain Thomson calls "ontological education" in his book *Heidegger on Ontotheology*. I take this ontological education, which Heidegger thought could be provided by a bucolic contact with the soil, to be the second period's counterpart to what Heidegger deemed the authentic mode of existence in *Being and Time*. Authentic existence was achieved when the subject (Dasein) recognized his own finitude. This was made possible when he stopped eliding death as constitutive of his own essence. Instead of losing himself in the anonymity of "das Man", which allowed the subject to fool himself into believing that he had infinite possibilities at his disposal, the recognition of death's negativity allowed him to see that each decision determinates his existence in one direction by simultaneously negating an infinite set of non-actualized possibilities. In the second period after the *Kehre*, this negativity acquires another modulation. What Heidegger now calls "nothingness" is the excess that remains, given Being's inexhaustible character, whenever entities are unconcealed in a certain manner. Metaphysics is precisely an elision of this nothing and thus an "inauthentic" approach to entities. By taking Being to be an entity, this negativity is neutralized. A "rooting" or an ontological education aims to achieve an authentic existence in this second (post-idealist) sense, by allowing us to recognize the excess that remains inaccessible to the human subject. Somewhat paradoxically, I understand that in the framework of Heidegger's philosophy this is achieved through a revaloration of the knowing subject's unique status as capable of posing the question concerning Being, in opposition to the elision of this privileged status in the Gestell's post-humanist configuration of rationality.

⁷ Žižek has similar views on modern art. For him what characterizes modern art is its ontological openness. From this perspective, the first modernist painting would be *Death of Marat*. While this is a realist painting as Žižek notes, the background is composed of a black void that, just as the background of Van Gogh's painting, precludes totalitarian closure.

⁸ “...Benjamin’s notion of revolution as redemption-through-repetition of the past: apropos the French Revolution, the task of a genuine Marxist historiography is not to describe the events the way they really were (and to explain how these events generated the ideological illusions that accompanied them); the task is rather to unearth the hidden potentiality (the utopian emancipatory potential) which was betrayed in the actuality of revolution and in its final outcome (the rise of utilitarian market capitalism). Marx’s point is not primarily to make fun of the Jacobins’ revolutionary enthusiasm, to show how their high-flown emancipatory rhetoric was just a means used by the historical “cunning of reason” to establish the vulgar reality of commercial capitalism; it is, rather, to explain how these radical-emancipatory potentials continue to “insist” as types of historical specters which haunt the revolutionary memory, demanding their enactment, such that the later proletarian revolution should also redeem (or put to rest) these ghosts of the past. These alternate versions of the past persisting in a spectral form constitute the ontological “openness” of the historical process...” (Žižek 2011: 84)