

Original Research Article

Art and the Possibility of Breaking Away From Subjectivism in Heidegger's Perspective*

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Abstract

Problem statement: Like Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger considers the history of metaphysics to be the history of the development of nihilism. However, in Heidegger's view, the situation of modern man, what has made human beings homeless, unlike what Nietzsche said, is not a construction of an imaginary world which we have imagined to be real and valuable, and through which we have deemed our worldly life and natural needs worthless. Heidegger argues that true nihilism is where metaphysics, through its subjective approach, confuses the Being and the beings in the background of what comes into presence, that is, the remaining beings, and thus forgets even the question of Being. Heidegger, therefore, considers metaphysical subjectivism to be the main element in the nihilistic state of modern man. Accordingly, the present study examines the question of the possibility of breaking away from subjectivism as our philosophical necessity today.

Research objective: In addition to answering the question of what nihilism, metaphysics, and subjectivism are in Heidegger's thought, the present article seeks to provide a critical account of art as a means of breaking away from subjectivism.

Research method: As to the content and objectives of this research, the descriptive method has been used.

Conclusion: Based on Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's poem *Mnemosyne* in the essay *What Are Poets For?*, as well as his description of Paul Cézanne's work, it is argued that through allowing the presence of nothingness in the work of art, the artist not only prepares the scene for the occurrence of the truth of Being but also eliminates the dichotomy between Being and beings by informing us about the distinction and make it a mysterious unity, thus enabling us to break away from subjectivism.

Keywords: *Art, The possibility of breaking away, subjectivism, nihilism, Heidegger's thought.*

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Introduction

Heidegger believes that philosophy is the same as metaphysics, and the history of philosophy is the history of the development of subjectivism, which has led to a nihilistic state. He believes that at the end of philosophy, the modern human being, who no longer thinks or dwells in, nor builds, and is therefore homeless.

Heidegger tries to find a way out of this situation for modern man by bringing up the question of Being, which has been forgotten throughout the history of metaphysics. He points out that the question of Being as Being, which can be called Heidegger's main problem, is closely related to "metaphysics and history."

Heidegger believes that modern human being views everything from the perspective of metaphysical subjectivism. Therefore, human is reduced and turned into subject, truth into "subjectivity," thinking into "representational-calculative thinking," nature into a vast reservoir or source of energy for industry and technology, the work of art into the product of the artist's genius (in neo-Kantian view, for example), and the language into the means of communication of the subjects. Having forgotten the question of the meaning of Being, and not even aware of our inability to understand the term Being, we are perplexed on the planet. Modern man seems to be everywhere and nowhere. To get rid of this homelessness, Heidegger undertakes the "deconstruction" of the history of philosophy, which is the history of the development of metaphysical subjectivism.

Behind this deconstruction, he describes man, not as subject, but as existence or being-in-the-world. He describes the truth, not as subjectivity but as discovering, revealing, or *Aletheia*. Heidegger views thinking, not as representational-calculative thinking, but as spiritual thinking (or a kind of thinking that reflects on the meaning of what governs everything, and with its essential characteristic, which is nothing but "maintenance" and "protection", allows things to be revealed). He

believes nature to be the manifestation of Being as the ancient Greeks thought, not a fixed source of storage. Heidegger points out that the work of art is not a product of the artist's genius but the scene of the occurrence of the truth of Being. Finally, he calls language the house of existence.

Heidegger considers aesthetics to be another construct of metaphysical subjectivism. He speaks of the term aesthetics in the first volume of his four-volume book on Nietzsche. The term 'aesthetics' is formed in the same way as 'logic' and 'ethics'. The word *episteme*, or knowledge, must always complete these terms. As a result, he believes logic is the knowledge of thought or the knowledge of the forms of thought and its rules; morality is the knowledge of the inner state of man and the manner which determines the state of his behavior; and "aesthetics" thus expresses the knowledge of the sensory, emotional and sentimental behavior of the man and the knowledge of how those behaviors occur. In other words, it can be said that in Heidegger's view, aesthetics, as a science, observes and studies the states of our feelings when as evoked by a beautiful thing; the same can be said of logic when we confront reality, as what determines our thinking, or the science that guides our thinking.

As Heidegger sees aesthetics as a construct of metaphysical subjectivism, it is already clear that he is not optimistic about it. Therefore, he intends to go beyond aesthetics through overcoming metaphysics. He considers aesthetics to be the cause of the fall and death of great art.

The question before us now is this: If Heidegger assumes great art to be dead, are we involved in a contradiction when we discuss the feasibility of art as a way of breaking away from subjectivism? No! Heidegger is very much in agreement with the idea of the end of art in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel believes that at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Renaissance, art has lost its connection with religion, and therefore it is no longer the best way to express truth or the spirit as "self-determining reason." He believes that in

modern times, art has been replaced philosophy after religion in terms of being the manifestation of the soul. As a result, art has lost its essential role in modern times. Heidegger agrees with Hegel in the sense that art, in its greatest form, is a thing of the past, insofar as he himself declares the death of art, but he does not quite agree with the linear historical lineage of Hegel's thought, in the sense that he does not necessarily consider the night of the modern age to be eternal. In Heidegger's thought, it is Being that underlies history. He calls great poets the ones who understand the poetic experience of Being because they listen to the Logos. Heidegger believes that through such an experience, a world rooted in the history and culture of the Volk emerges in the context of language for the poet.

In Heidegger's thought, the poet in a destitute time prepares the scene for the possibility of the return of the gods by awakening the feelings of others. In the night of modern times, although the gods have left the world, the remnants of the sacred have remained among us since their presence, and it is the poet who finds it in the time of the absence of the gods, protects it with his words, and invites other mortals to experience the sacred (Heidegger, 2010, 190-191). This event is what this article seeks to explore as a possibility of breaking away from subjectivism.

Research background

Some research has been done on truth, art, language, and similar concepts in Heidegger's thought, but, to the authors' best knowledge, no research has been done in the form of a dissertation or academic article on the role of art as a possibility to break away from subjectivism in Heidegger's view.

Research method

In this research, through reviewing the essays of Martin Heidegger and the works of his commentators, on the one hand, and examining some works of art on the other, some data on Heidegger's thinking and art are collected using the library method. Then, by analyzing the data,

in the first step, some light is shed on the concepts of metaphysics and subjectivism in Heidegger's thought are shed light, and then art is examined as a possibility for breaking away from subjectivism.

Heidegger and the problem of subjectivism

It can be said that Heidegger's main motivation for criticizing metaphysics is to respond to the crisis of nihilism. This is the crisis Wilhelm Nietzsche had understood before him and heralded its coming.

Nietzsche considers the history of philosophy since Socrates forward to be the history of the development of nihilism. According to Nietzsche, through Plato's thought and the influence he received from Socrates, and later through the emergence of Christianity, which itself was formed under the influence of Plato, some entities have been established as values, have been devalued by themselves, because of their opposition to human nature. Thus, all the values through which we have tried to make the world valid for ourselves have proved ineffective and thus have created a situation in which the world has been deprived of value for us. From a psychological point of view, He believes that all these values are the result of certain perspectives of usefulness, but have been mistakenly projected into the essence of objects (Nietzsche, 2014, 30-33).

Heidegger believes that although Nietzsche rightly considered the history of metaphysics as the history of the development of nihilism and criticized metaphysics, not only did he formulate metaphysical ideas, but he failed to understand the foundation of nihilism. Heidegger points out that real nihilism is where man considers beings only as they are present, and with this approach to beings, the question of Being is denied and Being is understood as a kind of nothingness. Accordingly, Heidegger believes that true nihilism, which is the foundation of Nietzsche's nihilism, is the forgetfulness of the question of Being, which has its roots in more than 2500 years of metaphysical history. The point to be noted is that in Heidegger's thought, nothingness "exists" in a certain sense as it is inherently revealed;

Hence, he believes that the first and most effective step towards overcoming nihilism is to include nothingness in the question of Being (Heidegger, 2017, 307).

As has been said, to find a way to break away from nihilism, Heidegger seeks to raise the question of Being as Being, a question closely related to metaphysics and history.

The word 'metaphysics', although it seems a bit vague, is not a separate concept from our lives. We all sometimes have thought about concepts like death, life after death, God, and the like, issues not arising from dealing with minor issues, but rather the result of going beyond beings and minor matters and paying attention to life and existence as general.

Throughout the history of metaphysics, philosophers have sought to answer the question of what beings are. According to Heidegger, metaphysics always pretends to ask and answer the question of Being, but it has never answered the question of the truth of Being because it does not ask a question about it at all. Metaphysical thinking, when it deals with Being in its own way, always becomes a representation of beings as beings. Whenever metaphysics speaks of Being, it refers to beings as a whole. The language of metaphysics has always confused Being and beings. This confusion is not an error but an 'event' in thinking. Metaphysics, due to its way of thinking about beings, has unknowingly prevented man as a barrier and prevents man from establishing an authentic and original relationship with Being (Heidegger, 2013b, 140). For this reason, Heidegger tries to overcome this problem by redefining metaphysics to ask the question of Being; However, from a certain point on, he decides to go beyond metaphysics.

In Heidegger's thought, especially in later works, art is a field that invites man to think about Being; The subject of the present study seeks to examine art as a possibility for breaking away from subjectivism.

Subjectivism is a way of understanding the world

and its history can be traced back to the beginning of metaphysics. But it should be noted that subjectivism in Heidegger's sense, referred to as metaphysical subjectivism, is somewhat different from the conventional understanding of subjectivism. As of the conventional meaning of subjectivism, subject and object are opposed to each other in the process of cognition. What causes subjectivism to be called such is that in this approach, the propositions and judgments of cognition are left to the subject's mentality, and the basic characteristic of the object is assumed to be belonging to the subject's cognition. In his essay *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger points out: But when man becomes the first and only real subjectum, then man becomes that existent thing, in which all that exists is grounded in the character of its existence and its truth. Man becomes the center to which the existent as such is related (Heidegger, 1976, 349-350). In other words, the subject is thought to be the foundation of existence. From this perspective, it can be concluded that in the history of metaphysics, especially since the time of Descartes, it is the subject that has become the foundation of metaphysics. On this basis, in a general view, the whole history of philosophy can be called the history of the development of metaphysical subjectivism.

According to what has been said, understanding the man as subject, interpretation of the world as an object and also considering the subject-object relationship as the main human relationship with the world can be considered as the main features of subjectivism.

Art and the possibility of breaking away from subjectivism

As stated, the subjective approach used by metaphysics considers the truth and nature of man to be consciousness. Thus, throughout the history of metaphysics, philosophers have defined man with terms such as the talking

animal, cognitive agent, self-perception, and so on. These are accounts Heidegger does not sympathize with. By introducing the concept of Dasein, which is the experience of being as peculiar to human beings, he tries to devise a new plan to understand what human being is.

Heidegger's path of thinking can be divided into two periods based on the interpretations of his commentators: the first stage, lasted until the mid-1930s, in which Heidegger tried to bring classical metaphysics back on track and establish true metaphysics based on fundamental ontology; and the second stage in which Heidegger gradually becomes disillusioned with metaphysics and realizes that the path he has taken in *Being and Time* has not been very efficient either, because he did not have in mind the historical form of the occurrence of the truth of Being.

Heidegger's thought in the earlier works was influenced by and in response to the thought of philosophers, such as Descartes, Kant, and Husserl. In *Being and Time*, he suggests that the question of the meaning of Being is possible only for the being who has an understanding of Being. He calls this creature, which is actually how we exist, Dasein. Heidegger calls Dasein's intrinsic structure, existence, or being-in-the-world and believes that the world belongs to Dasein because Dasein is the way this being exists in the world. He says that human being is a being-toward-death; Hence anxiety and boredom are the basic characteristics of Dasein. It should be noted that in Heidegger's thought, Dasein has some potential abilities that are common to all human beings, even if the individual does not know them. He calls these shared abilities 'existential analytic'. According to what has been said, existentialist thought is the ontological structures of any Dasein.

In his earlier works, Heidegger deals with Dasein's phenomenology as a being with a temporal structure to understand and arrive at

Being, and in fact, tries to raise the question of Being in the horizon of time.

The later period of Heidegger's thought, which can be traced back to his confrontation with Nietzsche, is significantly influenced by the thought and poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin. This influence can be clearly seen in his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*. In later works, unlike earlier works in which Dasein discovers the truth of Being with its temporal structure and its being in the world, it is Being that appears in the context of history, is discovered and calls man to think and makes it possible for him to understand the world.

According to what has been said about the later Heidegger, the discussion is no longer about our history and historicity, but about the history of Being itself. It is during this period that Heidegger speaks about the relationship between truth and art and language. In his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger points out that the essence of art is 'setting-into-a-work of truth' and art is a special manifestation of the occurrence of the truth of Being (Heidegger, 2013a, 64). From Heidegger's point of view, thought and art, as interconnected ways with a common goal, lead to the presence of human beings in the world. As its essence is 'setting-into-a-work of truth', art places man in the realm of the openness of Being, just like the spiritual thought which enables us to admire the being of beings, which is manifested in the presence of the present.

Heidegger sees the experience of openness as a kind of knowing, not in the sense of knowing something and representing it- as it governs the history of metaphysical subjectivism- but in the sense that Dasein allows the emergence of the truth of being of beings with its free approach to things on the one hand, and the emergence and manifestation of the truth of being of beings leads to Dasein's freedom on the other. Heidegger considers the essence of truth to be

freedom and believes that these two aspects, namely the free play of Dasein's existence and the revelation of the truth of the being of beings occur at the same time.

Instead of art, as Heidegger suggests, philosophy, science, and technology have become realms for the revealing of truth in modern times. Every historical culture, including all pre-modern cultures, is a whole complex organ that forms the life-world in itself. This life-world is only available to those who belong to that life-world. Hence, we can no longer live in a world which open sup to us great works of art. In our time, works of art have been reduced to aesthetic objects and no longer count as the beginnings of a nation's historical presence.

Accordingly, as long as we interpret works of art with a subjective approach, art is a thing from the past in the sense that it is the scene of the occurrence of the truth of Being. But, as stated in the introduction, Heidegger does not agree with the linear approach to history, and although he considers human thought and action to depend on historical horizons and frameworks, he believes Dasein - or human's existence - to be the same as transcendence and points out that one can transcend historical, social and cultural boundaries. It is based on the ability of man to transcend and the synonymy of transcendence and Dasein that we modern humans, although deprived of a genuine relation to the being of things in works of art, can regard art as a possibility of breaking away from subjectivism.

Works of art can still remind us of memories of the memories of experiencing the truth of being. We, humans, have the ability to perceive the occurrence of the truth of Being in works of art in destitute times. This is the truth that becomes evident in the work of art. In his essay *What Are Poets For?* Heidegger mentions an unfinished Hölderlin's poem "Mnemosyne":

"The heavenly powers/ Cannot do all things. It is the mortals/ Who reach sooner into the abyss. So the turn is/ With these. Long is/ The time, but the true comes into/ Its own" (Heidegger, 2001, 90).

Heidegger believes that truth emerges in the composition as a revelation along with the concealment of what is: "Poetry, creative literature, is nothing but the elementary emergence into words, the becoming-uncovered of existence as being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1988, 171-172).

Poetry is a word that the poet has not yet mastered. In other words, in some moments of the composition process, the poem appears and places the poet in the realm of openness and revealing. From this point of view, Heidegger considers all forms of art to be poetry in their essence because they allow for the truth of what is to occur. As he explains in *The Origin of the Work of Art*: "What poetry, as illuminating projection, unfolds of unconcealedness and projects ahead into the design of the figure, is the Open which poetry lets happen, and indeed in such a way that only now, in the midst of beings, the Open brings beings to shine and ring out" (Heidegger, 2001, 70).

From what has been said, it can be concluded that in Heidegger's thought, being a poet is beyond the art of composing poetry. Poetry, as the "illuminating projection of truth," is, as has been said, the essence of all art forms. Of course, it should be noted that in his view, linguistic work, that is, poetry, has a special place because he believes that "language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance" (*ibid.*, 71).

On the relationship between poetry, thought, and truth, Heidegger says in a poem entitled "The Thinker as Poet": "Singing and thinking are the stems/ neighbor to poetry./ They grow out of Being and reach into/ its truth" (*ibid.*, 13). What poetry/ artwork does as the realm of the

opening and revealing of the truth of Being is not merely a representation of nature, but a thoughtful contemplation which leads to freedom from all limitations through allowing the presence of nothingness: "Poetry is the original admission of dwelling" (*ibid.*, 225). And the poet shows man the way to abide in his own nature, that is, returning home, adwelling which is nothing but an experience of breaking away from subjectivism.

Heidegger argues that the poet in destitute time "who founds the sacred" is a lyric poet as he is a follower of Dionysius, and his poetry is not concerned with nature instead of history. Through being open to Dionysius, the man becomes excited. With this in mind, it can be concluded that in Heidegger's thought, in destitute time, this experience of turmoil is calming angst or a sacred turmoil in the art that leads to the experience of the remnant of the sacred for us humans.

Influenced by Hölderlin's poems, Heidegger calls the play between earth, sky, divinities, and mortals the basis of the event of Being. The earth hides what the sky seeks to emerge. The earth pulls the sky towards itself to hide itself, and the universe tries to overcome the mystery of the earth. This conflict, which is always going on, shows the connection between the earth and the sky. On the other hand, we mortals who are aware of our own death, find our identity in the relationship we have with the divinities. Heidegger considers the divinities to be the sources of human inspiration. The struggle between earth and sky is similar to the struggle between everyday desire and Dasein's authentic desire for understanding its own existence. Heidegger believes that we have lost ourselves in our everyday lives with the subjective approach we use in life, so we have forgotten Being. He sees idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity as fundamental existentials for Dasein that reveal Dasein's daily existence.

Heidegger calls this state of "beinglost in everyday life" a fall. He believes Dasein's downfall in other beings and in the world that preoccupies him to be an escape. Heidegger sees angst as a situation through which Dasein is freed from the ontic understanding that is the product of subjectivism. In angst, we lose all beings and the world in an instant, and as a result, we feel suspended. Accordingly, what makes us enter into a state of angst is not a being in the world, but the being-in-the-world as such. In the wake of angst, Dasein seems to face losing oneself, because it no longer has anything to hide behind and make itself lost in it. In Heidegger's thought, Dasein is 'existence suspended in nothingness' and if Dasein had not been suspended before nothingness, he would never have been able to interact with other beings or with himself.

"Only on the ground of the original revelation of the nothing can human existence approach and penetrate beings. But since existence in its essence relates itself to beings — those which it is not and that which it is — it emerges as such existence in each case from the nothing already revealed" (Heidegger, 2013c, 6-7).

Therefore, angst means finding a fundamental state that acts against the flow of the fall and leads to Dasein's openness to the world and its existence and, consequently, to an understanding of its existence.

What should be noted is that angst and fear are the same but different at the same time. The difference is in their motivator: fear is always fear of some particular thing in the world. However, angst is anxious about being in the world as such. Angst is experienced in the face of something completely indefinite.

From what has been said, it can be concluded that angst, as a finding of a fundamental state, is an event that enables a break away from subjectivism, since it leads to Dasein's rise to nothingness. The experience of angst is an

event occurring in authentic encounters with works of art for human beings.

Heidegger's commentary on the works of the French painter Paul Cézanne can be seen as an example of the experience of this event. He believes Cézanne's method to be the same as his own method as a thinker. At the end of his visit to Cézanne's residence, Heidegger equated living there with living in a library full of philosophical books; He pointed out that he wished he had thought as Cézanne was painting. Heidegger composed the following poem, inspired by Cézanne's painting:

Cezanne

Das nachdenksam Gelassene, das inständig
Stille der Gestalt des alten Gärtners Vallier, der
Unscheinbares pflegte am chemin des Lauves.

Im Spätwerk des Malers ist die Zwiefalt von
Anwesendem und Anwesenheit einfältig
geworden 'realisiert' und verwunden zugleich,
verwandelt in eine geheimnisvolle Identität.

Zeigt sich hier ein Pfad, der ein
Zusammengedören des Dichtens und des
Denkens führt?

(The thoughtfully serene, the urgent stillness of
the form of the old gardener Vallier, who tends
the inconspicuous on the Chemin des Lauves.

In the late work of the painter the twofoldness
of what is present and of presence has become
one, 'realized' and overcome at the same time,
transformed into a mystery-filled identity.

Is a path revealed here, which leads to
a belonging-together of poetry and thought?)
(Young, 2001, 152).

As is clear from the poem, what has fascinated Heidegger in Cézanne's works, especially in his later works, is the fact that things emerge from hiddenness and their inclination towards hiddenness. It is as if objects rise from the heart of the earth and sink into nothingness again. For Heidegger, this event which also causes our angst always happens as an event, suddenly and without intermediaries, like a lightning.

In his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger describes examples of works of art. For example, he speaks of a Greek temple. He argues that the temple does not depict anything, but the building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico (Heidegger, 2001, 40-41).

Now, relying on the principle in Heidegger's thought that the work of art, by its own standing, opens up a world in the heart of nothingness, preserves it, and thus leads to Dasein's conscious uprising before nothingness, other works of art including music (which Heidegger himself did not deal with in detail) can be interpreted in various forms. Music, since it is nothing more than the revelation of harmonious melodies from the heart of silence, enables us to distinguish between Being and beings by allowing the presence of nothingness in the work of art-as in Paul Cézanne's paintings, Hölderlin's poems, and other poets of destitute time- and helps us break with subjectivism. In this regard, we can refer to the interpretation of the contemporary philosopher and critical theorist, Slavoj Žižek, of one of the musical works of the German composer and pianist Robert Schumann titled "Humoresque" (Humoreske). The word Humoresque literally refers to the German term Humoreske meaning humor, lust, sensuality, and imaginary composition. Humoresque in music refers to a piece for the piano that usually evokes excitement rather than humor. Schumann was the first composer to use the term for a musical work. In 1839, he composed a piece called Humoreske, Op.²⁰ in B-flat major. Humoreske is not a simple piano song. In this work of art, the vocal line gradually becomes silent and we only hear the piano sound that actually accompanies the silence. In the notes of this song, Schumann wrote 'inner voice' instead of a vocal line between two piano lines. In other

words, the vocal line exists only in the form of Augenmusik or Eye music, which means that the music, written in the form of notes, is only for the eyes. The interesting point is that the notes written for the right and left hands are not directly related to each other, so to understand the music, one has to reconstruct the third line or the song of silence. This is a melody line that is virtually available but is not structurally applicable. This third line has an impossible-real state, that is, it physically obliterates the two melodic lines we hear (Žižek, 2005). This is exactly what allows the presence of nothingness in the work of art. This is the event that makes us aware of the distinction between Being and beings, and turning this distinction into a mysterious unity, transforms us mortals and breaks us away from subjectivism, and prepares the world for the return of the divinities.

Conclusion

Heidegger believes that metaphysical subjectivism, remaining at the forefront of beings throughout the history of metaphysics, has ignored the distinction between Being and beings, that is, the distinction between “presence” and “what is present”. As a result of this incident, modern man is in a nihilistic state. Heidegger tries to revive this distinction by asking the question of Being. It should be noted, however, that Being, or what the ancient Greeks called Physis and we call presence, is not Being itself, but an event of rising from hiddenness.

From Heidegger’s point of view, if we choose to dwell next to works of art (instead of aesthetically examining them) and allow what is in the work of art to be revealed, we will be able to understand the event of approximation or emergence from hiddenness. Heidegger believes that works of art record and transmit this event and allow us to experience it and thereby

overcome our limitations in understanding the truth of beings.

In Heidegger’s thought, nothingness is nothing but the horizon of the being of beings. Through allowing the presence of nothingness in the work of art, the artist who follows Dionysius in destitute time, not only prepares the scene for the occurrence of the truth of Being but informs us about the distinction between Being and beings at the same time, and removes the duality and turns it into a mysterious unity. The experience of this event leads to Dasein’s conscious uprising before nothingness. As stated earlier, Heidegger believes that Dasein is existence suspended in nothingness. In the moment of experience of this event, man is present in the world not as a subject, but as Dasein, and consequently experiences the break with subjectivism.

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