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Author: Marcus Steinweg

What is an art work?

I believe in the friendship between art and philosophy. What art and philosophy share is courage in the complete confrontation in the here-and-now to accelerate out of the texture of facts which is the universe of our shared evidence — our opinions, hopes, consistencies — to go through the experience of the inconsistency of this consistent universe that we call *reality*. In art and philosophy it is not a matter of basing oneself on hard facts; it is a matter of seeking out the inconsistency of these facts themselves in the experience of what I call *truth*, the truth of reality. There is a long history of the concept of truth in Western thinking — that is the history of philosophy. It is always the problem of locating the human subject in relation to truth which keeps philosophy alive and breathing. How does the subject conduct itself toward truth; what is the sense of this concept? The definition of truth I propose distinguishes itself from at least two powerful concepts of truth which here I can only briefly indicate: the Thomist and the Heideggerian concepts of truth. The Thomist formula that goes back to Aristotle is the following: *Veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei/truth is the correspondence between the thing and thinking*.<sup>1</sup> The locus of truth would be accordingly the philosophical sentence, or the sentence in general, the propositional sentence and ultimately the logic of propositions. In the proposition something resembling a determination of truth is supposed to take place. Later on, in *Being and Time* (especially in Section 44), Heidegger dislocates the locus of truth in relation to the category of the proposition or propositional logic and thus puts the primacy of propositional logic over philosophy into question. For Heidegger, the locus of truth is not the proposition, but rather, the proposition itself belongs to a space of truth, i.e. to that which he calls "openness". There must already be a "relationship to being", as Heidegger says, between the subject of the proposition and its objects, the objects of knowledge (according to epistemological theory). A relation of being, an "understanding of being on the part of human existence" must have already taken place before one can speak of this relation of knowledge and its connection in the proposition. In Heidegger there is a kind of deepening of traditional metaphysics of knowledge in the opening of the relation of knowledge to this ontological a priori of a relationship to being prior to it. What is persuasive in his analyses is this tearing of philosophy out of the primacy of the metaphysics of knowledge or epistemology. Heidegger's existential ontology is also the explicit attempt to oppose neo-Kantian thinking, contradicting the defusing of philosophy in its reduction to epistemology. One can think of the great tradition of German idealism, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel: a tradition in which the relationship between epistemology and general ontology is exemplified. It would be too little to simply ascribe this tradition to a philosophy of knowledge. The question concerning the limits of knowledge of the human subject is already a question concerning the subject's being as a *being* conscious of knowledge and a *being* conscious of self, a question which opens itself to the ontological tornness of the human subject as evoked already in the first sentence of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>2</sup> One of Heidegger's important achievements was not to accept the reduction of philosophy to epistemology in order to situate epistemology or to dislocate it into

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<sup>1</sup> "Veritas intellectus est adaequatio intellectus et rei, secundum quod intellectus dicit esse quod est, vel non esse quod non est" ((Contr. gent. I, 59. De verit. 1, 2). Or according to Durand von St. Pourçain "conformitas intellectus ad rem intellectam" (In I. sent. 1, 19, qu. 5). See: Rudolf Eisler *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* (1904).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. Steinweg *Subjektsingularitäten* Berlin 2004.

that which he, in turn, calls truth or openness or *alétheia*, as the space of disclosedness in which the relationship of being between human existence and that which *is*, beings, has already taken place. Obviously it is a matter of this 'already', of a kind of a priori, of a certain 'earlier' that proceeds the relationship of knowledge as its transcendental condition. As everybody knows, in philosophy *transcendental* means something like *enabling*. When Kant speaks of the transcendental subject, of the being of the human being as transcendental subjectivity, then transcendental means that structures can be found in the subjectivity of the subject that enable its relationship to its self and to the world. That is the sense of the word *transcendental* in Kantian terminology.

As opposed to the Thomist concept of truth that reduces truth to propositional logic, and as opposed to Heidegger's concept of truth that determines human existence as an existence understanding being, as being-in-the-world, I want to propose a third concept of truth. In his critical engagement with Descartes (who, in a classical, almost Platonic separation of the subject's body from its status as ego cogito, as thinking ego, proceeds from a dualistic metaphysics), Heidegger answered the Cartesian dilemma, "How do I get the cogito out into the world?" in the following way: "I do not have to get it out at all because it is already out there". The human cogito is original ecstasy, originary transcendence to the dimension of the world, as Heidegger calls it, the world or also the openness of being-in-the-world. The only point where I have trouble with Heidegger here is that the determination of human being as being-in-the-world implies a privileging of this relationship insofar as the human subject, human existence as being-in-the-world, is almost seamlessly embedded in its world. According to Heidegger, being-in-the-world is the *fundamental structure* of human existence. As originary being-in-the-world, human existence, or Dasein, is at home in the world, no matter how much Heidegger also speaks of *not being at home* and of *unhomeliness* (no matter how much he also concedes that being at home is derivative of being not at home<sup>3</sup>). Ultimately, the analysis of Dasein privileges the character of familiarity as opposed to the eery mode of unhomeliness in the world, since the world is Dasein's sphere of openness in which it moves as if in its element. Even though truth as disclosedness reaches back into hiddenness, even though being is thought as withdrawal, Heidegger insists on a vocabulary of *one's own* and of *one's own authenticity* that promises Dasein a kind of ontological home. Against this ontology of home, I want to define truth as the limit of the universe of facts, as the limit of that which Heidegger calls the *world*, the limit of this interconnection of usefulness in which Dasein articulates its self-evident relations to the world and to itself within the life-world. I call *truth* that which cannot be positivized any further, which does not allow any kind of positivity in the space of constituted realities, in the dimension of facts. One could also say, putting a point on it: *truth is that which does not exist*.

*What does it mean for philosophy to relate itself to truth?* For every philosopher it holds that he or she puts forth their own concept of philosophy, just as every artist provides their own concept of art. The artist provides his or her concept of art through his or her work which can include lectures and writings. The philosopher provides his or her concept of philosophy through the linguistic utterances which his or her lectures, books and other writings are. It is always a matter of not allowing oneself to be inscribed in an existing field, in an already existing concept of art and philosophy in order, in a critical engagement with the history of thinking, with the history of philosophy, to question this history so as to risk one's own

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Heidegger *Sein und Zeit* Tübingen 1986 (16th ed.), p. 189 (italics in the original): "Being not at home must be understood existential-ontologically as the more originary phenomenon."

concept of philosophy. It is obvious that philosophy is not philosophy *about*.<sup>4</sup> There is an irreconcilable difference between the work of the historian of philosophy (whose necessity is incontestable) and that of the philosopher. The philosopher's pretension consists in transcending, transgressing, surpassing the work on the history of philosophy, which makes up a part of his work, toward the wager of hazarding his own formulations, his own philosophical assertions. Philosophy as I understand it is not primarily an argumentative practice, an academic, theoretical, dialogical or historicizing procedure. It is never exhausted in commentary. It is never exhausted in transcribing the thinking of other thinkers. It is obvious that philosophy is something other than a critical engagement with the thinking of others, that the critical engagement with the positions of Western, and also non-Western traditions of thinking can only be a first step in philosophical work, and not the decisive step. The decisive step consists in articulating in this critical engagement one's own philosophical position, a position which is also a rupture, a cut, incision or a caesura because it enters into a necessarily polemical relationship to its history.

What is philosophy? *Philosophy is the courage not to evade the call of great concepts*: What is the human being? What is justice? What is truth? What is freedom? What is love? These, and other, oversized questions and concepts are the questions and concepts of philosophy. In philosophy it is always a matter of seeking out these hyperbolic categories. We know that philosophy of the twentieth century (which on the whole is critical of philosophy and metaphysics, metaphysics being another name for philosophy which has opened itself to the great concepts, starting with Nietzsche, from this *turntable* Nietzsche, as Habermas says<sup>5</sup>) articulates itself in a way critical of philosophy in the sense that it accuses philosophy of recurring to idealist entities with these oversized concepts whose sense and existence has to be doubted. The philosophy of the twentieth century established a kind of mistrustful thinking. What Wittgenstein, Heidegger, the Frankfurt School, structuralist and post-structuralist thinking share beyond their excessive difference is thus a hyperbolic mistrust of these hyperbolic concepts that begins to doubt the sense in addressing them. Against this universal mistrust I insist on reactivating these oversized concepts as appellative addresses of philosophical practice, to define philosophy as the reactivation of this relationship, of this opening toward these hyperbolic categories. My assertion is that the mode of being of these concepts which philosophy tries to touch is their specific non-existence. These concepts cannot be filled. Therefore, philosophy is humiliated by sound common sense because common sense always has right on its side, just as doxa always has right on its side as long as it accuses philosophy of dealing with non-existents, and therefore of being in the wrong. Thus, instead of resisting the accusation of factual illegitimacy, philosophy should affirm itself as an opening toward non-existence, for that is what makes it into such a breathless and necessarily blind practice: that it moves within the space of total illegitimacy.

The subject of philosophy shares with the subject of art the courage to accelerate itself toward these empty entities which mark nothing other than their non-existence within the universe of established realities. Here I see a connection between art and philosophy: art and philosophy share a not-being-in-agreement with reality as it exists as instituted reality, as a complex, self-contradictory system. Despite this complexity and heterodoxy it makes sense to unify this concept of reality, even though it remains a

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<sup>4</sup> Just as philosophy is not philosophy *about*, it is not philosophy *against*. In philosophy it is always a matter of transcending the *about* and the *against* toward a *for*. It is always a matter of thinking for something, that is, for the indeterminacy of that which does not (yet) exist. Cf. Gilles Deleuze *Woran erkennt man den Strukturalismus? (How Do We Recognize Structuralism)* Berlin 1992, p. 60: "No book against something, no matter what it is, is ever significant: only those books 'for' something new count, and those that know how to produce it."

<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Habermas *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* Frankfurt/M. 1998 (6th ed.), pp. 104ff.

strategic unification. The concept of reality I propose (completely in the sense of that which is usually called *reality*, insofar as this homogenization is tenable) marks this consistent universe of shared familiarities, this zone of evidence in which communication is possible, in which we make ourselves understood without having to constantly additionally clarify the concepts we use, and which as this realm of familiarities is the space of functioning. We could not live at all if we had to constantly put into question the consistency and reliability of the concepts of which we make use in this zone. The philosophical subject, philosophical practice as this breathless self-acceleration, includes this massive resistance against the universe of consistencies or realities. This is where I see the friendship between art and philosophy: in the shared refusal to allow oneself to be neutralized in the space of facts of shared evidence by articulating an almost blind resistance.

Art and philosophy are forms of self-acceleration that accelerate out of the universe of facts toward the great concepts, toward the inconsistency which these concepts mark within the web of facts. For these concepts are holes in the sphere of facts; they do not belong to the space of facts, at least not without resistance. I think that one thing is absolutely clear when it is a matter of defining a work of art: *an art work is not a fact among facts*. That is the thesis which I want to link with a further thesis: *that it makes sense in art as in philosophy to fight for the impossible and to relate this struggle to the non-existent*. Of course I do not have any evidence in my hands. It is not a matter of proving something in philosophy, but rather it is a matter of hazarding an assertion which, as unprovable, fights for its own clarity or evidence. Without doubt, in the struggle for the impossible it is not a matter of relating oneself to a second, dreamy reality. We have got used to denouncing philosophy as this movement of flight into a second world. In this denunciation all political Utopias are implied, and that to a certain degree also rightly. That is the notion that philosophy, instead of confronting, in the here-and-now of established realities, the harshness of these realities, relates itself to something beyond these realities. It is important to understand that this beyond of realities does not exist, and therefore I do not propose any Utopian model. *What I call truth is the factual non-existence of a second world*. There is only one world. This one, politically and culturally and economically over-codified world, this world overdetermined by the history of ideas, this zone of reality on whose immanent or implicit limitation philosophy unceasingly insists, is the lasting challenge for any thinking — a challenge which demands of philosophy that it emancipate itself from the heritage of an orthodox Platonism.

Plato marks the beginning of a thinking that institutionalizes and systematizes itself. With Plato, philosophy within the Western history of thinking gives itself for the first time a certain systematic consistency. As we know, Plato spoke of a heaven of ideas. Everyone knows the analogy of the cave. In Plato there is something resembling a two-world theory, people say. I think that this is not correct, that it is limited way of reading Plato, that with Plato there is already an instance, which he calls the *idea tou agathou/the idea of the good*, which marks this non-existence. The construction of the pyramid of ideas enables the deceptive phenomena to be distinguished from the general ideas, the universals of these phenomena. There is something in Platonic thinking that allows us, despite our differentiatedness and specificity, to nevertheless be addressed in common as human beings. That is what Plato calls the *idea* of the human being. At the same time in this pyramidal ontology of ideas there is an extreme vanishing point which is all too frequently forgotten when we make Plato responsible for this dualist ontology. That is the *idea tou agathou/idea of the good* of which he says in the *Politeia* that it is *epekeina tês ousias*: beyond

being.<sup>6</sup> *Beyond being* I would translate as beyond the universe of facts. The zone of facts constitutes itself not in marking itself off from the ideas, since the ideas are long since implied in our understanding of the world and ourselves. They work for the constitution of this universe of consistency which I call the space of facts. The implicit limits of the architecture of ideas thus does not run so much between the ideas and appearances. Rather, ideas and appearances share the work of constructing this one world by opening toward this black sun of which Plato says that it does not have any phenomenal representation within the spectrum of visibility whose illuminating source it is. It is the illuminating source which itself cannot appear within this spectrum, which by definition is excluded from the sphere of the light of facts.

The art work includes an opening toward this dark sun. There is no art work that can be assimilated completely into the zone of factual realities. Rather, art and philosophy share an opening toward the inconsistency of the evidence of facts. To give an example: every one of us has gone through the experience of being confronted at an exhibition or an art fair with the work of an artist which he or she does not understand. My thesis is that we never understand art, without it being said that there were nothing to understand. There is a whole lot to be understood, but one has to know that knowing is not everything. I think that with this philosophy begins, with the knowledge of the factual limitedness of knowing: *oido ouk eidos/I know that I know nothing*, said Socrates. Philosophy is never concerned with denying knowledge, with fleeing into an obscurantism of not-knowing. *Philosophy is a well-aimed anti-obscurantist practice*. But this means that, in resisting the idealist illusion, it pits itself also against all forms of the obscurantism of facts. There is something like an obscurantism of evidence or knowledge whose function consists in masking the instability of so-called facts. Art and philosophy share this double strategy of, on the one hand, withdrawing from the supposed evidence, the comprehensibility of hard facts in order, on the other hand, to resist the temptation of fleeing into idealistic or Utopian fantasies. Philosophy is a figure of resistance insofar as it builds up an *affirmative resistance* to these two sides.

There is this dictum from Nietzsche which everyone understands: "One is still stuck in that which one opposes". Everyone knows that it is not sufficient to be against something in order to articulate a philosophical or artistic assertion, but that what constitutes a philosophical or artistic assertion is resistance against the illusion of a simple transcending of recognized realities. This affirmative resistance makes of art something other than a simple practice of knowledge. If you are familiar with the art of the 1990s, then you know that, after the 1980s, after a phase which itself was a reaction to concept art and minimal art, the wild painting of the 1980s, there has been a tendency within art which has tried to reduce art to a questioning of art. What is the art work in this new sequence coming from the 1990s? It becomes an arena for questioning or reflecting upon its own conditions. It assimilates itself to journalism, to commentary, to design. It stages itself as critique and mistrust, as negativity turned against itself. I insist — against this conception which defuses the art work as a negative document of itself, reducing it to its status as document — on the art work being more than a reflection on its own conditions. The art work includes also (and therefore I have spoken also of a blind practice) a transcending, surpassing and transgressing of this model of reflection, a certain conflict or opposition against its own conditions. The art work is not a fact among facts because it articulates the transcending and transgressing of its historical, political, institutional, art-historical and aesthetic conditions.

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<sup>6</sup> Plato *Politeia* 509b.

I think that this transgressing makes of the art work something essentially different from a document of its times. In the sense of this otherness and transcending transgression it is necessarily untimely.<sup>7</sup> It is untimely because it assimilates itself neither to the *Zeitgeist*, nor to any sort of history along with its critical, and often pseudo-critical self-reflection. An art work cannot be reduced to its times. It cannot be reduced to its *Zeitgeist*. There is no (good) art that is simply an illustration of its times. The same holds for philosophy. In this shared irreducibility I see their alliance: the friendship between art and philosophy.

The art work's evidence consists in transcending its own status as document, transcending its own conditions in order to open this split or rift or gulf in relation to its times, to this universe of facts to which it never completely corresponds. Therefore, in art it is not primarily, not at first, and especially not exclusively, a matter of comprehensibility. I believe that this is not a philosophical experience, but an experience with which everyone is familiar: that we see the work of an artist whom we do not know and know (knowing, of course, is a provisional concept because it is an experience that transcends knowing) that this work *hangs together*. I would call this the evidence of the art work: this hanging-together which hands the subject of this experience over to a certain uneasiness because, when it starts to explain why it hangs together, it cannot find the right words. This holds also for the work of an artist whom we know very well, that there remains something which eludes and withdraws from understanding. This withdrawal, this remaining resistance is part of the art work. It can light up in its evidence without explaining itself, without being at all comprehensible. It can assert itself as absolute clarity without our being able to understand it. *In art as in philosophy it is not a matter of comprehensibility, but of clarity.* Clarity is a concept which I would connote with the concept of truth. *The experience of a truth is the experience of a clarity, and there is no clarity which is not disturbing.* The experience of a clarity is the experience of the inconsistency of my habitual realities and practices, my previous opinions and conceptions, including those about art and philosophy.

When I read the *Critique of Pure Reason* for the first time, the reading caused me a lot of trouble. Much I did not understand (and in a certain way that is still the case). But nevertheless, over time, I have understood more and more; I have learnt to read. I have learnt, what now seems evident to me, that there are no unreadable texts, neither in literature nor in philosophy. Someone or other — I believe it is once again sound common sense — tries to convince you that the writings of philosophers are hermetic, incomprehensible and unnecessarily complicated. I do not know a single such text. The same holds for literature. Authors such as Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* — such writings which are an imposition on what? Perhaps not on understanding, but on understanding as it has understood itself up to now. The experience of a clarity is such an experience which forces me to understand my understanding, to go beyond my self-understanding to date. Ultimately it is a matter of gathering a certain persistence and endurance, a certain courage to enter this flying-blind which is a necessary part of reading. I have never read a book in such a way that I have only read page 5 after I have already understood the first four pages. If I would read in such a way I would never get beyond page 1. One has to have the courage not to understand, to grasp that blindness is a part of understanding. I understand because I do not understand. Or: it is to be understood because ultimately I do not understand as a whole and cannot grasp, cannot comprehend the totality of a matter. The totality is that which always eludes me. That is not exclusively an experience of

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<sup>7</sup> As we know, Gilles Deleuze has reactivated this Nietzschean category of the untimely in marking it off from the category of the historical.

art and philosophy; it is already the experience of life which each of us lives in its factual unliveability, in its infinite complexity.

What does it mean for the subject to live in the space of this intransparency which its life is? It means to live nevertheless, to make decisions nevertheless, to act nevertheless. Herein lies the sense of a further philosophical category: the *decision*. A decision is not the same thing as a choice. A choice would be tea or coffee. A choice remains completely within that which I call the reality spectrum, the optional texture that is this space of liveability, this zone of familiarity called the space of facts. When we are invited somewhere then there is this option: tea or coffee. That is not a decision. That is a choice, and as a guest one should perhaps try not to be too complicated and to choose from among these options. But there are critical situations, situations in life that demand a decision. *Krisis* is the Greek word for such a situation; *krisis* means also 'decision'; *krineo*: 'I differentiate'. The Latin concept for decision is *decisio* which can be rendered as 'cut', 'incision'. The decision is a cut or also a tear. In the experience of the decision it is a matter of allowing this band of familiarity of this universe of familiarity which is my world to tear, to go through the experience of this tear in which the subject's lack of orientation becomes total. I think that every decision, to be a decision, must go through the darkroom of such an experience. If I completely controlled the situation in which I made a decision, this decision would be superfluous. Only because I do not understand, because I decide in intransparency or, following Derrida, only because I ultimately decide nevertheless in *undecidability* does something resembling a decision take place.

It is obvious that art and philosophy exist only as a surpassing, a transcending of the narcissistic disposition. What is the subject of narcissism? The subject of narcissism is the subject that does not have the courage to decide because it knows or intuits very well that a decision is not secure. There is no valid securing of a decision. There is no one who can take on the decision for me. The experience of decision is the experience of the ontological non-plausibility or the ontological inconsistency of reality. Suddenly I can no longer choose an alternative that goes back to a preceding decision of another; suddenly I find myself in what could be called the *desert of freedom* in going through the experience of a freedom which is the experience of a lack of valid orientation. At the same time, this freedom and desert is the space in which decision, in which a certain autonomy of the human subject become possible. Art and philosophy are a transcending and surpassing of the subject's narcissistic self-bracketing with its constituted reality.

In the art of the 1990s there is this kind of art in search of a self, terrible esotericism concerned with stabilizing one's own identity through grappling with what one calls one's own past, searching for one's self, where? In the odours of childhood, in one's grandparents porcelain, etc. It is obvious that that is nothing other than an obscurantism of identity which has nothing to do with any sort of persuasive art. By contrast, I define the art work as the arena of the subject's self-corruption with regard to its objective components, with regard to its having-become, with regard to its history, with regard to its esoteric identity, in short, as the transcending of the narcissistic arrangement. In this arrangement, the subject reduces itself to its status as object. I call object-status everything which makes of the subject an object of others' decisions, object of this anonymous texture that structuralism has laid bare which is the space of intransparency, of reality or of blind laws which have decided about me before I can decide. In order to avoid the idealist temptation, it is indispensable to understand that the subject also has these uncontrollable objective components and that there is such a thing as having-become, a product-status of human subjectivity which can never be quite controlled. That has seduced philosophy into discarding

autonomy as an idealist illusion, as the cardinal fantasy, in particular, of philosophy in the modern age. I think, to stop here with philosophy amounts to not having even begun to think. Of course it is important to confront this object-status, this status of having-become: to open myself, and not to close myself, to my objective being in this universe which I call the space of facts. This, too, requires courage. A second, intensified courage would consist in resisting the self-reduction to my own object-status which is always also my status as victim. "My father was an alcoholic, my mother is manic-depressive, therefore I am a bad artist." Of course that is hopeless! One must gather the courage to oppose self-victimization. Every subject has its history, is exposed to uncontrollable factors, contingencies and injustices which can tear it apart. Some are more privileged, some are less privileged in differing political and economic situations. I am not in favour of cynically passing over this, but I believe nevertheless in the necessity for art as this blind practice of self-elevation as which I try to define it, *to affirm oneself as the subject*, to articulate oneself in the confrontation with factual realities as a subject of resistance against this anonymous web about which I must not assume that it controls me completely. That is the concept of freedom, of philosophical freedom, of the autonomy of art that I defend. *The art work is the arena of the subject's alliance with incommensurability.*

Let us call chaos the incommensurable, the void or nothingness. There is no art work that did not border on chaos, that did not indicate the implicit incommensurability of social, political, cultural and historical commensurabilities. I distinguish between the evidence and measurabilities which mark the commensurable, and the incommensurable or chaos as the cut through all certainties and familiarities. Chaos is the implicit limit of this zone of evidence which I call the *space of facts* and which is usually addressed as *reality*. This zone includes the fantasy of its stability and order. And indeed, the space of facts is nothing other than the order of order which resists the order of disorder that is the order of chaos. Reality is already resistance against that which is called the unreal, which Lacan calls the *real*, the incommensurable valency of reality. Perhaps philosophy was never anything other than the movement between these two orders, hence the experience of the impossibility of entrusting oneself to one of these orders exclusively, because they belong together nevertheless in a problematic complicity. Translated into an old model, into that of psychoanalysis, this complicity could be grasped as the communication between two zones that are the dimension of the unconscious and latent, and the dimension of the conscious, of the manifest and patent. To which of these two orders would this complicity or communication between them have to be attributed? Obviously not to either alone since language, which performs this communication, remains related to consciousness and also to the unconscious that speaks within consciousness. The inkling of this inner voice, that by speaking, something speaks in me, has seduced art into all kinds of esotericism and experiments. The art work as the manifestation of chaos should avoid this temptation and also another one. It should, with the rigour of its vocabulary, resist its defusing into a sounding-board for this inner voice by demonstrating a maximum of awareness and self-awareness. The art work includes this resistance against the metaphysics of interiority by demonstrating its illusory softening of the work into a body representing a deeper or higher power. Under no circumstances does the art work serve a truth which preceded it, dictating itself to the work. Art begins here, with the knowledge that there is no such pre-existing truth. This knowledge that transcends the register of what is knowable is contact with a void that indicates the structural locus of a still uncoded exterior, place or non-place, heterotopia perhaps, since real and unreal to the same extent, both in the one and the same here-and-now. As a manifestation of chaos, the art work manifests this void, this meaningless place, this

nothingness of value and representation. A part of the ontological structure of the art work is to extend itself to this place, to have long since extended itself, to accommodate chaos within itself without becoming its master, without domesticating it. In the art work something is expressed which radically contests the logic of expression: the impossibility of an interior which is not already a touching of the exterior. That is the complicity of the incommunicability of these two orders of reality and the real (or chaos) whose communication remains an infinite task.

Art and philosophy are forms of self-acceleration toward the dimension of the impossible. Here at least, in art and philosophy, it makes sense to fight for the impossible. Once again, sound common sense will have, let us say, logical right on its side to contest that such a struggle is sensible. Against this I think that art and philosophy are, on the one hand, the confrontation with possibilities and, on the other, the refusal of possibilities in order at least not to exclude the opening of the optional texture: a *change*. The opening toward the impossible is part of the dynamics of a subject which affirms itself as the subject of self-acceleration toward the dimension of universal contingency. Insofar, art and philosophy exist not only as figures of resistance, but also especially as figures of self-affirmation, of an affirmation which, instead of being fantastic or illusory, recognizes its impossibility as the condition of possibility of its self-assertion. It is these two categories which combine in the art work: 1) *resistance* against established certainties and truths, and 2) *opening* toward truth as the implicit limit of the dimension of facts. An experience of truth shows me that reality is not everything. Not everything — that means: not a closed, determined space. The same holds for literature: there is no literature which is not already an opening to the dimension of that which must remain excluded from the realm of instituted reality, of culture. Instead of reducing itself to the ideo-cultural texture of reality (this self-reduction is *narcissism*), it is a matter of risking a transcending, surpassing and transgression of this texture in the here-and-now, of defining the art work as the arena of this transcending transgression.

What is an art work? The art work is the arena of self-transcending, self-surpassing, self-transgressing of a subject that refuses to assimilate itself to established realities. This subject protects itself against a self-defusing in that which is held to be justified or possible, in order to articulate something resembling new forms, new concepts, new thinking, new perspectives, or at least not to exclude them. This is where I see the courage of art and philosophy and what they share: the wager of an affirmative resistance against that which is regarded as real and reasonable.

Translated from the German by Dr. Michael Eldred