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# Heidegger and van Gogh's *Shoes*

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**Abstract** Martin Heidegger's discussion of one of Vincent van Gogh's paintings of a pair of shoes plays a critical role in the development of his philosophy of art. Few passages in Heidegger's entire corpus have occasioned more controversy and commentary than his short discussion of this painting. Reception of Heidegger's philosophy of art has, to a surprising degree, been shaped by a sharply critical essay published by the art historian Meyer Schapiro in 1968, entitled 'The Still Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh'. In the decades since, Schapiro's critique has set the terms of the debate over Heidegger's interpretation of van Gogh's painting. The near consensus view seems to be that, as Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe puts it, 'every fact enunciated by Schapiro in that attack [...] is correct'. In this essay, however, I show that it is closer to the truth to say that every claim Schapiro made in his attack on Heidegger is false. Ever since, both critics and defenders of Heidegger have uncritically accepted and repeated Schapiro's basic factual errors. Once the record is corrected, this opens up space for a reappraisal of Heidegger's engagement with van Gogh's shoes, which I offer in the concluding sections of the essay.

**Keywords** Heidegger; van Gogh; phenomenology; ontology; philosophy of art

Martin Heidegger makes only passing reference to the arts in *Being and Time*, his *magnum opus* published in 1927. For instance, he notes that poetry has contributed (alongside psychology and anthropology) to a 'rich interpretation' of human 'behavior, faculties, powers, possibilities, and skills'.[1] At the same time, he suggests that the arts are, at best, of limited usefulness in an ontological study of human existence. Yet, just a few years later, Heidegger argues that works of art are at least on a par with philosophy in giving us insight into ontology. In a 1931–32 lecture course, Heidegger contends that works of art are capable of disclosing 'the concealed possibilities of entities [...] and thereby first give people sight to see the actually existing entities within which they blindly roam about'.[2]

Heidegger's account of art's relevance to ontology is most fully developed in the essay 'The Origin of the Work of Art', published in 1950. In order to demonstrate that art can facilitate enquiry into being, Heidegger describes in that essay the ontological insight he received while viewing one of Vincent van Gogh's paintings of 'a pair of peasant shoes'.[3] Few passages in Heidegger's entire corpus have occasioned more controversy and commentary than his scarcely two-page-long discussion of this painting.

Reception of Heidegger's philosophy of art has, to a surprising degree, been shaped by a short critical essay published in 1968 by the art historian Meyer Schapiro, entitled 'The Still Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh'.[4] In that essay, Schapiro claims to have identified the specific painting of van Gogh's shoes to which Heidegger refers—for Schapiro an essential prerequisite to evaluating Heidegger's use of the painting. A painting, Schapiro argues, is 'a personal object' and '[e]verything in the work of art—the attitude to the subject, the execution, palette, and forms—belongs then to the individual and is an expressive end as well as a means'.[5] On the basis of his own 'close attention to the work of art', Schapiro accuses Heidegger of basing his interpretation of the painting on an imaginative fiction, a 'fanciful description' that projects onto the painting 'a moving set of associations with peasants and the soil, which are not sustained by the picture itself', but which are 'grounded rather in [Heidegger's] own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and earth'.[6]

In the decades since Schapiro published his essay, his critique has set the terms of the debate over Heidegger's interpretation of van Gogh's painting. Scholars have by and large simply accepted Schapiro's claims about the work in question. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe expresses what is close to the consensus view: 'I have no doubt whatsoever that every fact enunciated by Schapiro in that attack [...] is correct.'[7]

I will argue, however, that it is closer to the truth to say that every claim made by Schapiro in his attack on Heidegger is false. Ironically, many commentators cast the Heidegger–Schapiro controversy as a triumph of art-historical attention to 'concrete particulars' over the 'lofty and nebulous' generalities of the philosopher, of Schapiro's 'good scholarship' over Heidegger's 'poetic projection'.[8] But these same commentators have uncritically accepted and repeated Schapiro's basic factual errors. As we will see, Schapiro's identification of the painting in question is based on assumptions that Schapiro should have known were not true. Moreover, he misunderstands Heidegger's reading of van Gogh's painting, and thus he misconstrues Heidegger's claims about the philosophical significance of art more broadly. Seeing where Schapiro went wrong thus opens up the possibility of reappraising Heidegger's engagement with van Gogh. Heidegger's approach to art is of a completely different kind than the aesthetic interpretation practiced by Schapiro. Heidegger is not interested in decoding the symbolic or representational meaning of the work. He is not interested in the subjective

intentions or psychology of the artist. This does not mean, however, that the actual features of van Gogh's paintings are irrelevant to Heidegger's analysis. But before we can fairly appraise Heidegger's reading of the painting, we first need to correct the record.

## The genesis of the controversy

Heidegger apparently began work in 1931 on the essay that would eventually become 'The Origin of the Work of Art'.[9] In 1935 and 1936, Heidegger offered a series of lectures on art. Three previously unpublished drafts of these lectures are now available:[10] an undated early draft,[11] a substantially revised 'second draft' which was presented as a lecture in Freiburg on 13 November, 1935,[12] and a 'reworking of the Freiburg lecture' from 1936.[13] Heidegger further revised and expanded the latter text, presenting it in three lectures in Frankfurt on 17 and 24 November and 4 December 1936.[14] The discussion of van Gogh's painting only appears in the 1936 Frankfurt lectures. These lectures (with some significant changes) were first published in 1950 in Heidegger's essay collection *Holzwege*.[15]

When introducing the painting into his discussion, Heidegger notes in passing that van Gogh 'painted such shoes several times'.[16] But he never explicitly identifies which particular work out of van Gogh's many paintings of shoes he has chosen to focus on. Catalogues of van Gogh's work[17] include seven different still-life paintings of 'shoes and nothing more' (figures 1–7).[18]

In 1965, Schapiro wrote to Heidegger asking when and where he had seen the van Gogh painting. Schapiro explained that he would like to identify the picture that underpinned Heidegger's essay, 'not as an historian of art but out of philosophical interest'.[19] Heidegger responded in a letter dated 6 May, 1965: 'I am happy to answer your questions to the extent possible. On the occasion of a lecture tour to the Netherlands in March 1930, I visited the large Van Gogh exhibition in Amsterdam that was opening there at the time'.[20]

In his letter, Schapiro did not ask Heidegger to identify the painting directly and it should be emphasized that Heidegger does not at any point in his response specifically identify the painting he discusses in the essay. One should also recall that, at this point, almost thirty years had elapsed since the passage on van Gogh's shoe painting was written. Yet, on the basis of

Figure 1. Vincent van Gogh, *Shoes*, 1886. Oil on canvas. 38.1 × 45.3 cm. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (catalogue numbers: de la Faille 255, Jan Hulsker 1124). Photo courtesy: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation).

Figure 2. Vincent van Gogh, *Shoes*, 1887. Oil on cardboard. 32.7 × 40.8 cm. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum (catalogue numbers: de la Faille 331, Jan Hulsker 1235). Photo courtesy: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation).

Figure 3. Vincent van Gogh, *A Pair of Shoes*, 1886–87. Oil on canvas. 37.5 × 41.5 cm. (catalogue numbers: de la Faille 332a, Jan Hulsker 1233) Private Collection.

Figure 4. Vincent van Gogh, *Three Pairs of Shoes* (F332/JH1234), 1886–87. Oil on canvas. 49.8 × 72.5 cm. Cambridge, MA, Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum, Bequest from the Collection of Maurice Wertheim, Class of 1906. Photo courtesy: Harvard Art Museums.

Figure 5. Vincent van Gogh, *A Pair of Boots* (F333/JH1236), 1887. Oil on canvas. 32.7 × 41.3 cm. Baltimore, The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland. Photo courtesy: The Baltimore Museum of Art.

Heidegger's response, Schapiro claims to be able to identify unequivocally which painting Heidegger 'has in mind':

> Professor Heidegger has kindly written me that the picture to which he referred is one that he saw in a show at Amsterdam in March 1930. This is clearly de la Faille's no. 255 [figure 1]; there was also exhibited at the same time a painting with three pairs of shoes [figure 4], and it is possible that the exposed sole of a shoe in this picture, inspired the reference to the sole in the philosopher's account. But from neither of these pictures, nor from any of the others, could one properly say that a painting of shoes by van Gogh expresses the being or essence of a peasant woman's shoes and her relation to nature and work.

Figure 6. Vincent van Gogh, *Shoes* (F461/JH1569), 1888. Oil on canvas. 45.7 × 55.2 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo courtesy: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 7. Vincent van Gogh, *A Pair of Leather Clogs* (F607/JH1364), 1889. Oil on canvas. 32.2 × 40.5 cm. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Photo courtesy: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

> They are the shoes of the artist, by that time a man of the town and city.[21]

This paragraph summarizes Schapiro's entire argument against Heidegger's account of the painting. We can identify here five key claims:

- In the Amsterdam van Gogh exhibition of 1930, there were only two paintings of shoes on exhibit (figures 1 and 4).
- Heidegger saw the painting of shoes in the exhibition in Amsterdam in March 1930.

- When Heidegger discusses van Gogh's painting, he is clearly not referring to figure 4, and thus must be referring to figure 1.[22]
- The shoes in figure 1 are the shoes of the artist, and thus cannot be peasant shoes.
- Heidegger interprets figure 1 as 'express[ing] the being or essence of a peasant woman's shoes and her relation to nature and work'.

## Assessing Schapiro's critique

Since the publication of Schapiro's critique, scholars have by and large accepted the first three claims. As a result, most even of Heidegger's defenders accept the fourth and fifth claims as well. But none of these claims survives careful scrutiny. Each will be considered in turn.

### *Which shoe paintings were included in the van Gogh exhibition in Amsterdam in* 1930*?*

To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of van Gogh's death, a great exhibition of his works opened at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1930. The exhibition 'consist[ed] of 600 paintings and drawings arranged in 17 rooms'.[23] This was surely the exhibition that Schapiro believed Heidegger attended, even though Schapiro does not explicitly say so. After all, this was the only exhibition of van Gogh's shoe paintings in Amsterdam in 1930, and the only exhibition in decades in which figures 1 and 4 had been exhibited together.

But Schapiro was mistaken in asserting that there were only two shoe paintings at this exhibition. It is possible that he was relying on de la Faille's list of exhibitions, which lists only figures 1 and 4 as involved in the 1930 Amsterdam exhibition.[24] Or he might have relied on C. W. H. Baard's catalogue for the exhibition—a catalogue that was itself the source for de la Faille's exhibition history.[25] Schapiro perhaps did not realize, however, that there were two separate catalogues for the great Amsterdam exhibition of 1930. Approximately half the works on display at the exhibition belonged to the collection of Helene Kröller-Müller, and the Kröller-Müller Foundation published its own separate catalogue for the works it loaned to the Stedelijk Museum.[26] In addition to the two shoe paintings identified by Schapiro (figures 1 and 4), it turns out that the great 1930 exhibition also included another painting (figure 6) from the Kröller-Müller collection: a still-life painting of a pair of leather peasant shoes.[27]

So, if Heidegger had in fact visited the great 1930 Amsterdam exhibition, Schapiro was too hasty in concluding that it was 'clearly' figure 1 to which Heidegger refers in 'Origin'. It could equally well have been figure 6.

But did Heidegger actually attend this exhibition?

### *Did Heidegger see van Gogh's painting of shoes in an exhibition in Amsterdam in March* 1930*?*

Heidegger did indeed travel to the Netherlands in March 1930, as he reports in his letter to Schapiro. He presented lectures in Amsterdam on 21–22 March, 1930, and a lecture in The Hague on 24 March.[28] But there is a problem with placing Heidegger at the great exhibition of 1930: *the exhibition did not open until September* 1930*, some five months after Heidegger's March visit to the Netherlands*. Therefore, the evidence is quite clear: Heidegger could not have attended in March 1930 the exhibition that Schapiro claims he did. Schapiro must have known this—both exhibition catalogues and de la Faille's catalogue clearly state that the exhibition in question was held from 6 September to 2 November, 1930.

Nor did Heidegger return to Amsterdam in the autumn of 1930. During the entire period of the great van Gogh exhibition of 1930, Heidegger was in Germany.[29] Heidegger never came within 250 kilometres (155 miles) of Amsterdam during the great exhibition.

It follows, of course, that Heidegger must have been mistaken when he recalled seeing a painting of shoes in an exhibition in Amsterdam in March 1930. There was no major exhibition in Amsterdam that March featuring any of the shoe paintings. Heidegger's mistaken recollection is perhaps understandable given that he was being asked to remember when and where he saw a particular painting more than three decades earlier.

### *How, then, did Heidegger see the shoe painting(s)?*

There are two likely explanations.

First, it is possible that Heidegger did in fact see one of van Gogh's shoe paintings as part of a large collection of van Gogh's works when he visited the Netherlands in March 1930. But if so, this would have happened not during his visit to Amsterdam, but during his visit to The Hague, where the Kröller-Müller collection was on display. At the time that Heidegger lectured in The Hague on 24 March, 1930, the Kröller-Müller Museum collection included some ninety-two paintings and 153 watercolours and drawings by van Gogh, including figure 6.[30] In fact, figure 6 is a particularly apt example of Heidegger's observation that 'a painting—for example van Gogh's portrayal of a pair of peasant shoes—travels from one exhibition to another'.[31] Figure 6 had been part of an exhibition of 143 works from the Kröller-Müller collection that had recently been touring throughout Europe. In fairly short order, figure 6 had been exhibited in Basel (16 June–16 August, 1927) and Bern (September–October 1927) in Switzerland, in Düsseldorf (August–September 1928), Karlsruhe (October–November 1928), Berlin (January 1929) and Hamburg (14 March–21 May, 1929) in Germany, before returning to The Hague in the Netherlands. So, if

Heidegger's discussion in 'Origin' was inspired by seeing a painting of shoes in March 1930 in an exhibition of van Gogh's works, it is most likely the case that he was referring to figure 6.

A second, distinct (but not incompatible) possibility is that Heidegger confused his March 1930 trip to Amsterdam with a subsequent trip to Holland in August 1931, when he led 'a small working group on *Being and Time* for eight days'.[32] During this trip, Heidegger again visited The Hague and Amsterdam. Regarding this visit, Heidegger wrote home to his wife Elfride that:

> I spent a whole morning with the van Goghs—almost the whole Autumn exhibition is still there. […] The paintings made a great and very deep inner impression on me. I went there again on my own one morning. […] The two mornings spent with these works were what was most rewarding & lasting for me.[33]

There was indeed another exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1931 that had significant overlaps with the great Autumn 1930 exhibition.[34] However, figure 4 was not part of this exhibition; it had returned to the United States in October 1930.[35] But figure 1 was still on exhibit in the summer of 1931,[36] as were other paintings from the shoe series, including figure 2,[37] figure 7,[38] and possibly figure 6. If figure 6 had not still been in Amsterdam in 1931, it would have returned to the Kröller-Müller Museum, where Heidegger could have seen it again when he visited The Hague during this same August 1931 trip to the Netherlands.[39]

In either case, it is clear that Schapiro was wrong to assert that Heidegger saw only figures 1 and 4 in March 1930.

Only a couple of scholars have since noted the discrepancy between Heidegger's recollection of the date and place for seeing the painting and the date of the Amsterdam exhibition at which Schapiro erroneously places Heidegger.[40] But they gloss over this without recognizing the disastrous implications this has for Schapiro's argument. Schapiro's entire basis for fixing on figure 1 is an argument by process of elimination: Schapiro (mistakenly) believes that Heidegger could only have seen two paintings of shoes (figures 1 and 4). Only one of those paintings (figure 1) contains a single pair of shoes; therefore figure 1 must have been the painting to which Heidegger's essay refers. In other words, Schapiro's conclusion that figure 1 was 'clearly' the basis for Heidegger's discussion of shoes in 'Origin' hinges entirely on the idea that figure 1 was the only painting of a single pair of shoes that Heidegger could have seen. But, based on the dates of Heidegger's visits to the Netherlands in 1930 and 1931, we can decisively rule out only three of the shoe paintings (figures 3–5).[41] That means that Heidegger's reflections on the shoe painting could have been inspired by any or all of figures 1, 2, 6, or 7. Unless there is some other basis for concluding that Heidegger was referring to figure 1, Schapiro's entire argument is called into question.

### *Can we uniquely identify which painting Heidegger is describing?*

Consider, then, whether there is another way to determine which painting Heidegger 'has in mind'. Since Heidegger's letter to Schapiro does not uniquely identify a painting, one remaining source of evidence is the description that Heidegger provides of the painting itself in 'Origin'. He notes:

- The shoes are 'empty, unused, just standing there in the picture'.
- The shoes have a 'sturdy well-built heaviness' (*derb-gediegene[n] Schwere*).
- The shoes are made of 'leather', and on the leather 'lies the dampness and richness of the soil'.
- The opening of the shoes is 'dark' and they have a 'worn out interior'.
- The painting shows 'a pair of peasant shoes and nothing more'.[42]

An argument can be made, however, that this fairly describes each of the remaining paintings.[43] As Schapiro himself observed, 'a reader who wishes to compare [Heidegger's] account with the original picture or its photograph will have some difficulty in deciding which one to select'.[44]

Two other pieces of evidence, however, might be relevant. In the first place, Otto Pöggeler reports that Heidegger helped Walter Biemel with the selection of pictures for Biemel's 'illustrated study' of Heidegger's thought,[45] and Biemel's book reproduces figure 6 for its illustration to accompany the discussion of Heidegger's interpretation of van Gogh's *Shoes*.[46]

Perhaps a weightier consideration comes from Heidegger's designation of the painting as a painting of 'peasant shoes'. This is in fact precisely how van Gogh himself refers to figure 6 in a letter to Emile Bernard: it is, van Gogh claims, 'a still life of old peasant shoes' (*une nature morte de vieux souliers de paysan*).[47] We know that Heidegger was an avid reader of van Gogh's letters,[48] and in both the German translation of van Gogh's letters and in the German version of the catalogue for the Kröller-Müller traveling exhibition, figure 6 is described as a painting of '*Bauernschuhen*'[49]—'peasant shoes'—precisely the same designation Heidegger uses when referring to the painting by van Gogh. So, if I had to hazard a guess as to which painting Heidegger 'had in mind' when writing the essay, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that it is figure 6, not figure 1.

Whether and how the identification of the painting matters to Heidegger's interpretation is a question to which we shall return. In any event, however, this much is clear: it is on the

strength of Schapiro's flawed reasoning-by-elimination that most commentators have accepted figure 1 unquestioningly as the painting that inspired Heidegger's discussion of van Gogh in 'Origin'. But we can now see that it is simply not possible to conclude unequivocally, as Schapiro does, that the painting in figure 1 is 'clearly' the painting to which Heidegger referred.

*Are the shoes in the painting 'peasant shoes'?*

Because Schapiro is certain that Heidegger is referring to figure 1, he objects forcefully to Heidegger's description of the shoes in the painting as 'peasant shoes'. Figure 1, Schapiro insists, depicts 'the shoes of the artist, by that time a man of the town and city'.[50] Most scholars have subsequently accepted without question Schapiro's identification of the owner of the shoes.

It is important for Schapiro's identification of the shoes' owner that the painting in question is figure 1, or at least not figures 6 or 7—Schapiro himself acknowledges that the leather shoes in figures 6 and 7 *are* peasant shoes.[51] Of course, despite Schapiro's flawed presentation of the facts, figure 1 is still a possible candidate for the picture Heidegger has in mind. Suppose we grant for the time being that figure 1 is the painting that Heidegger describes in 'Origin'. Does it follow that Heidegger is wrong to refer to the painting as a painting of 'peasant shoes'?

Schapiro's objection assumes that van Gogh could not have owned a pair of peasant shoes because he was 'a man of the town and city'. This is an implausible assumption.[52]

Schapiro's objection also assumes that van Gogh could not use his own shoes as a prop when making a painting of peasant shoes. Schapiro's critique, in other words, fails to recognize the obvious but important distinction between the person or object that the artist intends us to see in the painting, and the person or object that the artist has in front of them when making the painting. Something obviously can serve as a model for a painting in which the intended object is something other than the model. As Jeff Malpas points out, 'the identity of the actual shoes that figured as the models for the shoes depicted' need not be 'relevant to the reading of the work'.[53] To mark this distinction, I will refer to what the viewer is meant to see with the phrase 'the shoes in the painting'; I will refer to the shoes that served as a model for the painting simply as 'the shoes'.

Several commentators—including Iain Thomson, John Walker, Nikola Mirković, and Dietrich Schubert—have offered an independent argument in support of the claim that the shoes in the painting *cannot* be peasant shoes. Thomson explains this argument:

> *the shoes in the painting could not have been used by a farmer while farming*, for the simple reason that the Dutch farmers Van Gogh painted wore wooden clogs in the damp potato fields, not leather shoes like those worn by the farmers Heidegger knew in Southern Germany, which would have quickly rotted from the damper soil of the Netherlands![54]

It is true that most of van Gogh's paintings of peasants at work show the peasants wearing wooden clogs. But it is false to claim, as Schubert does, that in van Gogh's work 'only the old *Worn-Out-Man* by the fireplace in 1882 shows similar leather lace up shoes'.[55] In fact, there were numerous depictions of peasants in leather shoes on display in both the Kröller-Müller collection in The Hague and at the 1931 Amsterdam exhibition we know Heidegger visited.[56] The paintings and drawings exhibited along with the shoe paintings could have provided ample justification for referring to the leather shoes depicted in figures 1, 2, 6, or 7 as 'peasant shoes'. For instance, the 1931 Amsterdam exhibition included van Gogh's lithograph *Mealtime*,[57] depicting a Dutch farm worker in high-shafted muddy leather boots, 'cutting a slice of bread. On the ground a spade he's brought in from the field'.[58] Also on display was one of van Gogh's paintings of a *Digger*, showing a man wearing leather shoes that bear a close resemblance to the shoes in figure 1 (figure 8).[59] As van Gogh explained in a letter to his brother, a 'digger' is a Dutch 'peasant with a spade'.[60] Heidegger very likely would have seen both these drawings when he visited Amsterdam in 1931. The Kröller-Müller foundation also exhibited *Peasant Woman Feeding Fowls* in leather shoes (figure 9).[61] And there were also numerous other examples in the Kröller-Müller collection of Dutch farmers—both male and female—doing farm work in leather shoes, including several of van Gogh's paintings and sketches of *Sowers*.[62] (For an example of a sower in leather shoes, see figure 10.[63])

But perhaps the best evidence that van Gogh painted leather peasant shoes is the fact that (as noted above) he himself referred to figure 6 as 'a still life of old peasant shoes'. Thus, it is entirely possible that when Heidegger referred to the painting as a painting of peasant shoes—*Bauernschuhe*—he in fact took himself to be quoting van Gogh. The possibility that Heidegger was quoting van Gogh ought also to alert us to the further possibility that the designation 'painting of peasant shoes' might merely be a convenient way of referring to the painting, that the designation does no significant work in Heidegger's discussion of the painting, and that it should not be taken as an attribution of the shoes to a specific owner. Therefore, we need to ask: Does anything actually hang on the question of whether the shoes in the painting are peasant shoes? This is something we can only finally decide when we spell out the ontological insight Heidegger claims to receive from the painting. Toward that end, let us turn to Schapiro's fifth claim.

Figure 8. Vincent van Gogh, *Digger* (F906/JH 260), 1882. Pencil, chalk on paper. 50.6 × 31.6 cm. Amsterdam, Van Gogh Museum. Photo courtesy: Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

Figure 9. Vincent van Gogh, *Woman Feeding Chickens* (F1080/JH349), 1883. Pencil, grey wash, brush in black (printing) ink (diluted), white oils mixed with ink, and white opaque watercolour (diluted) on wove paper. 61 × 34 cm. Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum. Photo courtesy: Kröller-Müller Museum.

*Does Heidegger interpret van Gogh's painting of shoes as 'express[ing] the being or essence of a peasant woman's shoes and her relation to nature and work'?*

One of the most vexing aspects of Heidegger's discussion of van Gogh's painting is his introduction of an imaginary peasant woman into the discussion. There are here two distinct issues. First, does Heidegger claim that the shoes in the painting are a peasant woman's shoes? Second, if he does not make such a claim, what role is the peasant woman playing in the discussion?

Let us start with the first issue. According to Schapiro, Heidegger 'states more than once that the shoes are those of a peasant woman'.[64] *That is simply not true*; Heidegger never makes such a claim. But there are passages that are loosely translated in such a way as to create the impression that Heidegger identifies the shoes in the painting with a peasant woman's shoes. For instance, having offered his description of the painting, Heidegger considers a hypothetical objection to his description: 'Aber all dieses sehen wir vielleicht nur dem Schuhzeug im Bilde an. Die Bäuerin dagegen trägt einfach die Schuhe.'[65] The translation by Albert Hofstadter reads: 'But perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes. The peasant woman, on the other hand, simply wears them.'[66] The Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes translation does not differ in any important respects: 'But perhaps it is only in the picture that we notice all this about the shoes. The peasant woman, by contrast, merely wears them.'[67]

These translations have the clear effect of identifying the shoes in the painting with the shoes that the imaginary peasant woman wears. But this is an artefact of translation: in the second sentence, the translators substitute the pronoun 'them' for what is a noun ('the shoes'; 'die Schuhe') in the original. This leads the reader to take the nominal object in the first sentence as fixing the identity of the object referred to by the pronoun in the second sentence. There are, however, two

Figure 10. Vincent van Gogh, *Sower* (F852/JH 275), 1882. Pencil brush, China ink on paper. 61.0 × 40.0 cm. Amsterdam, P. and N. de Boer Foundation. Photo courtesy: Van Gogh Worldwide.

problems with this translation. First, if Heidegger had wished us to identify the direct object of the first sentence with the direct object of the second sentence, the most natural and straightforward way to do so would have been to refer to the footwear in the second sentence using the German pronoun 'es'. The fact that he did not use a pronoun suggests that he had no intention of identifying the peasant woman's shoes with the shoes in the painting. In addition, the English translations fail to preserve the fact that Heidegger actually uses two different nouns in the two sentences to refer, respectively, to the shoes in the painting and to the peasant woman's shoes. When describing the peasant woman's use of shoes, Heidegger always refers to them simply as 'shoes' ('Schuhe'). By contrast, whenever he is contrasting the shoes in the painting with the peasant woman's shoes, he refers to the shoes in the painting as 'Schuhzeug'—'footgear' or 'shoe-equipment'.[68] This makes it clear that Heidegger intends to draw a contrast between, rather than identify, the footgear in the painting and the peasant woman's shoes.

Thus, the grammar and semantics of the original German text imply that the shoes in the painting are *not* the peasant woman's shoes. A translation more faithful to the implicature


Figure 11. Albrecht Dürer, *Hare*, 1502. Watercolour and opaque paint on paper. 25.0 × 22.5 cm. Vienna, Albertina. Photo courtesy: Albertina Museum, 3073.

of the original German text would be: 'But perhaps we only see all this by looking at the footgear in the painting. By contrast, the peasant woman simply wears her[69] shoes.' When translated correctly, it becomes clear that, far from identifying the shoes in the painting as the peasant woman's shoes, Heidegger is *distinguishing* two different pairs of shoes—the shoes a peasant woman wears and the footgear in the painting. Indeed, as I will develop in the following section, the philosophical point of Heidegger's discussion depends on drawing a clear contrast between what *we* notice when we attend to van Gogh's painting of footgear versus what a peasant woman (or any other skilful shoe-wearer) notices when she is actively using her shoes. Heidegger is by no means asserting that the shoes in the painting belong to a peasant woman. Indeed, perhaps in response to Schapiro's confusion in this regard, Heidegger inserted a clarificatory note in his personal copy of 'Origin'. At the point in the essay that reads 'from van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes are', Heidegger added the marginal comment 'and to whom they belong'.[70]

Nor does it add anything to the point Heidegger is making in this passage if we identify the shoes in the painting with a peasant woman's shoes; on the contrary, it obscures Heidegger's point.[71] If someone nevertheless decides to infer that the shoes in the painting *are* a peasant woman's shoes, that person bears the burden of explaining why neither the

plain literal meaning of the text nor the philosophical point that Heidegger is making in this passage supports identifying the shoes in this way.

A few other passages, when in translation, might be taken to suggest that Heidegger is identifying the footgear in the painting with the peasant woman's shoes. But, upon inspection, none of these passages sustains such an identification. For instance, some readers point to the following aspect of Heidegger's description of the footgear in the painting as inviting us to infer that they are a peasant woman's shoes: 'This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, trembling before the impending childbed, and shivering at the surrounding menace of death.'[72] The inference here depends on assuming that the person who 'trembles before the impending childbed'—that is, before the pains of labour and delivery—must be a woman. But the perceived gendering, if any, is again an artefact of the translation. The German original makes no reference to a 'childbed' nor to labour and delivery: 'Durch dieses Zeug zieht das klaglose Bangen um die Sicherheit des Brotes, die wortlose Freude des Wiederüberstehens der Not, das Beben in der Ankunft der Geburt und das Zittern in der Umdrohung des Todes.' This passage would be more accurately translated as follows: 'The uncomplaining worry over the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of once again surviving poverty, the thrill at the arrival of birth, and the quivering at the surrounding threat of death, moves through this equipment.' Of course, men and women alike can tremble in thrilled anticipation of a coming birth.

The Hofstadter translation of this paragraph inserts one more gratuitous reference to a woman by translating 'die Zähigkeit des langsamen Ganges' as 'the tenacity of her slow trudge'.[73] There is no justification for using the feminine pronoun here. The passage in question should be translated without any reference to a person, man or woman: 'the toughness of the slow passage through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field, swept by a raw wind, is accumulated in the sturdy well-built heaviness of the footgear.'

But, a defender of Schapiro might persist, in describing the footgear in the painting, Heidegger says explicitly that it 'is sheltered [*behütet*] in the world of the peasant woman'.[74] Does this not amount to identifying the shoes in the painting with the shoes of a peasant woman?

To answer this question, we need to know what it means for a world to *shelter* an entity. When Heidegger says that some *X* is *sheltered* in a world, he means that that *X* plays a significant role in the lives of people who live in that world and—most importantly—that *X* is permitted to function in that world without any distortion to its essence. 'To shelter' is to 'free' an entity—that is, to create a relational context within which it can manifest its truth. To shelter is 'to let something rest in its own essence'.[75]

By contrast, when the world does *not* 'shelter' an entity, the entity is deprived of the contexts that would allow it to show itself in its 'own proper essence'.[76] In a later essay, for example, Heidegger claims that Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* is 'deprived of the opportunity to unfold its own essence' when it is removed from a church and placed in an art museum.[77] The painting can no longer function to determine the altar as a sacred place and is reduced to an object of aesthetic appreciation.[78] So, Heidegger argues, the world of the art industry *contains*, but does not *shelter*, the altarpiece. Only the world of the religious worshipper properly shelters the altarpiece.

Thus, Heidegger's reference to the world of the peasant woman amounts to saying that the peasant woman's world contains the referential contexts that let the footgear manifest its essence. This is a far cry from saying that the shoes are the shoes of a peasant woman. It is one thing to say that something is 'sheltered' or 'protected' or 'cared for' in a person's world. It is quite another thing to say that that person *owns* the thing. A peasant man's shoes or the carter's wagon or the fieldpath or the graveyard are also sheltered in 'the world of the peasant woman'. So, arguably, are the brushes, paints, canvases, and indeed the shoes of the self-proclaimed 'peasant artist' Vincent van Gogh. All those things can play a role for the inhabitants of that world and are permitted to manifest themselves as what they really are in that world. But that does not mean that the peasant woman *owns* all these things. So, Heidegger's paragraph describing the function of footgear in the world of the peasant woman does not amount to claiming that the shoes belong to a peasant woman.

In fact, a careful reading of 'Origin' shows that Heidegger never once attributes the shoes in the painting to any owner, let alone a peasant woman. This is important because, as noted above, the fifth claim in Schapiro's critique of Heidegger is the claim that Heidegger interprets van Gogh's painting as 'express[ing] the being or essence of a peasant woman's shoes and her relation to nature and work'.[79] On Schapiro's construal of Heidegger's interpretation, it matters a great deal whether the shoes in the painting are actually a peasant woman's shoes; for presumably one cannot expect to discover what a peasant woman's shoes *are* from a picture of an entirely different kind of shoe. But not only does Heidegger never identify the shoes in the painting as a peasant woman's shoes, he also never uses the phrases 'the essence of a peasant woman's shoes' or 'the being of a peasant woman's shoes'. And so it is sheer projection on Schapiro's part to think that *that* is what Heidegger claims to have learned from the painting.

* * *

Let us take stock. We have seen now that Schapiro's critique has been wrong on every count. He is wrong in unequivocally

identifying the particular painting that Heidegger is discussing. He is wrong in concluding with certitude that the shoes in the painting are not peasant shoes. He is wrong in claiming that Heidegger identifies the shoes in the painting as a peasant woman's shoes. And he is wrong in claiming that Heidegger attributes to the painting an insight into the being or essence of peasant shoes. The most that can fairly be said is that Heidegger claims that the footgear in the painting is sheltered in the world of the peasant woman—that it is able to function properly within that world. But Heidegger never identifies an owner of the footgear in the painting—indeed, he has no interest in doing so.

Subsequent generations of scholars, however, have largely accepted Schapiro's claims. Influenced by Schapiro's fixation on the peasant woman, the most common reading of Heidegger's essay attributes to Heidegger the claim that van Gogh's painting gives us insight into the world of the peasant woman.[80] But because they have also accepted Schapiro's factual claims about the painting, they have struggled to come up with a plausible account of the role that the actual van Gogh painting plays in Heidegger's analysis. And so, Heidegger's defenders have by and large adopted a strategy of conceding that van Gogh's shoe painting was a poorly chosen example: they admit that this painting does not actually teach us anything about the world of Dutch peasants.[81] Nevertheless, they argue, there is some merit to Heidegger's general approach to art. Lars-Olof Åhlberg, for instance, maintains that:

> even if we agree with Schapiro that the shoes in the painting cannot be interpreted as a pair of peasant shoes and that therefore everything Heidegger says about this specific painting is wrong, works of art could nevertheless fulfil all the functions Heidegger ascribes to them.[82]

Along similar lines, Andrew Bowie argues that '[e]ven though Heidegger's Van Gogh example is factually probably mistaken, what it suggests can still be used as a model of how art is world-disclosing'.[83] But this defence of Heidegger buys into Schapiro's mistaken account of Heidegger's reading of the painting. Heidegger in fact never claims to learn about the world of the peasant woman from the painting of the shoes.

Consequently, in their preoccupation with the peasant woman, Schapiro and, indeed, most subsequent commentators end up ignoring what Heidegger does in fact explicitly tell us that he learns from the painting.

What is it that Heidegger claims to have learned through his encounter with van Gogh's painting? When he 'put [himself] in front of van Gogh's painting', Heidegger tells us, '*the equipmental being of equipment was discovered*'.[84] In particular, Heidegger claims that the painting led him to the insight that 'the equipmental being of equipment' is what he calls 'reliability'.[85]

## Heidegger encounters van Gogh's painting

Having cleared away Schapiro's mistaken and misleading claims, we can now take a fresh look at Heidegger's actual engagement with van Gogh's shoe painting(s), with a view to seeing how the painting could teach us something about the equipmental-being of equipment. In this section, I offer a step-by-step reconstruction of Heidegger's account of his engagement with the painting, culminating in his claim that 'reliability' (Verläßlichkeit) is 'the fulness of an essential being of equipment'.[86] To appreciate what is at stake when Heidegger concludes that the being of equipment is reliability, some background is needed.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger developed a pluralistic account of ontology, according to which there are several distinct kinds of being (*Seinsarten*). In other words, Heidegger is committed to the view that 'things exist in fundamentally different ways'.[87] Each kind of being has its own way of determining which are the essential properties of entities, and each establishes different conditions under which an entity can be said to be actual.[88]

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger focuses on three kinds of being:

- The being of equipment, which he calls availableness (*Zuhandenheit*).
- The being of 'mere things', which he calls occurrentness (*Vorhandenheit*).
- The being of human beings or *Dasein*, which he calls existence (*Existenz*).

But these three are never offered as an exhaustive list of the kinds of being, and Heidegger suggests that plants, animals, numbers, and space also have distinct kinds of being.[89]

In 'Origin', Heidegger advances the thesis that works of art also have a distinct kind of being, which he dubs 'work-being' (*Werksein*).[90] In order to get a better grip on what is distinctive of work-being, Heidegger devotes the first section of 'Origin' to contrasting the kind of being of art with the kind of being of mere things (thing-being or *Dingsein*), as well as with the equipmental-being (*Zeugsein*) of equipment. Heidegger thus revisits in 'Origin' the account he offered of things and equipment in *Being and Time*, but now with an eye to providing an illuminating contrast with works of art.

Heidegger had argued in *Being and Time* that *usefulness* (*Dienlichkeit*; also translated as 'serviceability') is the key to understanding *availableness* (i.e., the kind of being of equipment). What equipment *is*, in other words, is determined by what it can be *used* to do. This clearly serves as at least a

partial account of equipmental-being; after all, equipment that is not useful for anything is a contradiction in terms. By contrast, something can be a mere thing even if it is not useful for anything.

But in 'Origin', Heidegger credits van Gogh's painting with leading him to recognize that usefulness provides at best a partial account of equipmental-being. An exclusive focus on equipment's use—on the immediate end or purpose served by the equipment—prevents us from recognizing the way in which equipment mediates between the normative demands of the world we live in, and the resistance our world encounters from the earth. Heidegger names this mediation 'reliability' (*Verläßlichkeit*). We will explore the concept of ontological reliability in more detail in the fourth section. For now, it is enough to keep in view the key distinction between *usefulness* and *reliability*, and to see that van Gogh's painting is introduced in order to explain Heidegger's transition from a usefulness-based account of equipment to a reliability-based account.

With this in the background, then, we can reconstruct Heidegger's engagement with the painting as proceeding in five steps.

### *Step* 1

Heidegger invokes a methodological principle central to his phenomenological approach to ontology. To address the question 'what is the equipmental-being of equipment?', Heidegger holds, one must start with a 'direct description'[91] of actual instances of equipment. A 'direct description' for Heidegger is a description that is unburdened by prior philosophical commitments or conventional philosophical theories, and that exhausts itself in guiding the reader to a first-hand experience of the matter in question:

> the procedure that is now necessary obviously must steer clear of those attempts that readily bring with them the encroachments of customary interpretations. We are best protected against this if we simply describe a piece of equipment without a philosophical theory. [ … ] [I]t is a matter here of direct description.[92]

Given that the aim is insight into the equipmental-being of equipment, then the right phenomenological starting point is to offer a direct description of an ordinary piece of equipment.

Heidegger chooses a pair of peasant shoes as the example of a particular piece of equipment he will use to ground his phenomenological description.[93] The challenge now will be to set before us a pair of such shoes, and to describe them simply, without any prior philosophical commitments—but to describe them in such a way that we can grasp the ontological structure of equipment as such. This is a subtle but important point that is lost on Schapiro: Heidegger has no interest in defining peasant shoes. Instead, he uses peasant shoes as an example to lead us to an understanding of equipmental being. If van Gogh's painting teaches us anything about peasant shoes—and Heidegger expresses doubts that it does—that is beside the point: '[t]he picture that shows the peasant shoes [ … ] does not merely express what these entities, taken separately, are as such—*if indeed it ever expresses that*'.[94]

### *Step* 2

Heidegger proposes that we look at a picture of shoes to assist with the direct description. One might be tempted simply to launch into a description of shoes, arguing that, as Heidegger puts it, 'we don't even need to look at actual pieces of this kind of use-object. Everybody is acquainted with them'.[95] But, Heidegger reminds us, we want a description uncontaminated by customary interpretations. Rather than relying on what we already know about shoes, we should take a fresh look at shoes:

> since it is a matter of direct description, it may be advisable to facilitate the visualization. To aid us in this, a pictorial depiction suffices. We choose for this purpose a well-known painting by van Gogh, who painted such footgear several times.[96]

As noted above, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that Heidegger was referring to figure 6. But by not specifying which of the shoe paintings in particular we should look at, Heidegger implies that the reader is free to choose for themself any one of them. And I will argue below that any one of them in fact will serve for Heidegger's purposes.

### *Step* 3

Heidegger considers a possible objection to the value of van Gogh's painting as the basis for his phenomenological description: 'in order to succeed' in 'grasping [ … ] the equipmental character of equipment', the objection goes, 'must we not seek out the useful equipment in its use? [ … ] It is in this process of the use of equipment that we must actually encounter the character of equipment'.[97]

This objection to van Gogh's painting is based on another methodological principle central to Heidegger's phenomenology. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger had insisted that equipment only shows itself as it is in itself when it is being used transparently and skilfully: 'equipment can genuinely show itself only in dealings cut to its own measure (hammering with a hammer, for example)'.[98] It was on the basis of attending to equipment in actual use that Heidegger had originally argued in *Being and Time* that *usefulness* makes up a definitive feature of the being of equipment: an entity's 'usefulness for [ … ]' is an 'ontological–categorial determination of equipment as

equipment'.[99] So in 'Origin', this objection to using van Gogh's painting turns Heidegger's own prior methodology against him.

It is precisely at this point in the essay that the peasant woman is first invoked: *not as the owner of the footgear in the painting, but rather as an alternative example to the painting.* The painting presents us with a static image of footgear, divorced from all actual use. It depicts the shoes as just sitting there, and as devoid of any equipmental context.

> From van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes are. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes to which and within which they could belong, only an undefined space. Not even clods of earth from the field or from the country path stick to them, which could at least point toward their use.[100]

By contrast, if we imagine or observe a peasant woman at work, we will have an example of shoes being used skilfully and transparently:

> The peasant woman wears her shoes in the field. Only here are they what they are. They are all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them. She stands and walks in them. That is how shoes actually serve. *It is in this process of the use of equipment that we must actually encounter the character of equipment.*[101]

And so, the objection concludes:

> so long as we merely envision a pair of shoes in general, or even look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the painting, we will never experience what the equipmental being of equipment is in truth.[102]

Now, Heidegger in fact accepts this objection. He agrees that if we need information about the *usefulness* of peasant shoes, van Gogh's shoe paintings are a particularly bad example on which to base our enquiry. The only way to learn about *usefulness* would be to observe peasants using their shoes. In light of Schapiro's influential misunderstanding, this point perhaps calls for special emphasis: Heidegger does not claim to have learned *from the painting* what peasant shoes are, or how the peasant woman uses her shoes to relate to nature and the world. He already knew that. If the aim is to describe a pair of peasant shoes, Heidegger insists, 'we do not need to exhibit actual examples of this sort of useful equipment. Everyone is familiar with them'.[103]

### *Step* 4

Despite having conceded that van Gogh's painting cannot teach us anything about the *usefulness* of footgear, Heidegger proceeds anyway with a description of the shoes in the painting, with the adversative 'and nevertheless [ … ]'.

We will return to Heidegger's description below, asking whether a case can be made for the claim that the specific features of van Gogh's painting underwrite Heidegger's insights into reliability. For now, it is enough to note that the description of the painting leads to the fifth and final step.

### *Step* 5

The final stage in Heidegger's encounter with the painting is to articulate the ontological insights afforded by this encounter. His experience of the painting leads Heidegger to conclude that 'reliability' is 'the equipmental-being of equipment. [ … ] The usefulness of equipment is however only the essential consequence of reliability'.[104]

At this point, Heidegger confesses to having, in a sense, misled the reader at step 2 in his discussion of the shoes:

> But above all, the work [of art] did not, as it might seem at first, merely serve to better visualize what one piece of equipment is. Rather, it is first through the work and only in the work that the equipmental-being of equipment expressly comes to light.[105]

This serves to reemphasize the points established above. Heidegger clearly denies that the painting could tell us anything substantive about what that one particular item of equipment—a peasant shoe—is. Nor does he ever claim to have learnt from the painting anything about a peasant woman's relation to work and to nature. Van Gogh's painting is not capable of showing us such things because it does not depict the shoes being used. Rather, Heidegger claims, the painting can lead us to the recognition of an *ontological* category—one that underwrites the 'full essence' of equipmental-being (rather than informing us about the specific use of any given item of equipment). Let us look now in more detail at the ontological category of 'reliability'.

## Heideggerian reliability

Given that the whole point of the discussion of van Gogh's *Shoes* was to lead us to the conclusion that reliability is the being of equipment, any adequate account of Heidegger's encounter with the painting owes us two things. First, it ought to define and explain the notion of Heideggerian reliability. What is reliability as an ontological category?—that is: In what way is reliability determinative of the being of equipment? Second, an adequate account ought to be able to explain how reliability so defined is disclosed by van Gogh's painting. We will turn to this latter issue in the next section.

With regards to the former issue, it is surprising how few scholars pay any significant attention to the concept of reliability when discussing Heidegger's encounter with van Gogh's painting. Many prominent commentators—including Hans-Georg Gadamer,[106] Hubert Dreyfus,[107] Julian Young,[108] Stephen Mulhall,[109] and numerous others[110]—do not so much as mention reliability in their accounts of Heidegger's reading of van Gogh. Many other commentators quote or paraphrase Heidegger's claims about reliability, but offer neither a definition nor an explanation of what Heidegger means by reliability as an ontological category.[111] Only a few scholars offer anything approaching a substantive definition of Heideggerian reliability. I discuss these different approaches to reliability in my 'Heideggerian Reliability and the Fulness of the Being of Equipment' (unpublished manuscript). Here, however, I will argue that the key aspects of Heideggerian reliability can be summarized as follows.

- Equipment has reliability when it mediates for its user the competing demands of the world and the earth.

This means that:

- The reliability of equipment grounds the usefulness of equipment by illuminating how the tasks facilitated by the equipment *matter* to us.
- The reliability of equipment atrophies (but does not entirely disappear) as the use of the equipment becomes commonplace and habitual.

Let us look at each of these aspects in turn.

### *Reliability as world–earth mediation*

In his 'Notes on *Being and Time*', composed at roughly the same time as he was writing 'Origin', Heidegger describes the reliability of equipment as a 'mediated struggle' (*geschlichtete*[*r*] *Streit*) between earth and world.[112]

To explain this, we need to start with a review of Heidegger's account of the distinction between earth and world. This distinction is one of Heidegger's most important conceptual innovations in 'Origin', and it turns out to be central both to defining the reliability of equipment, but also to determining the being of the work of art.[113]

The account of *world* in 'Origin' is largely continuous with the notion of *world* as it is developed in *Being and Time*. A world is not a mere collection of entities ('a sum of what is present') or a mental framework we use to organize entities conceptually.[114] Rather, a world is a coherent relational network of meanings that defines the significance of each particular entity that shows up in that world. As Heidegger puts it in 'Origin', a world is 'the all-governing expanse of th[e] open relational context' that organizes the shared practices and opens up the possibilities inhabited by an 'historical people'.[115] In the first draft of the essay on the work of art, Heidegger describes the world as a guide or escort (*Geleit*) that leads us about (*umleitet*) through the various paths we pursue in life. To be at home in a world is to feel the attraction or pull of the activities and aims that matter in that world. In its character as leading or guiding us, the world holds all our 'actions and omissions in a framework of references'.[116] And that framework, in turn, ends up defining the entities and events we encounter.

The account of *earth* in 'Origin' has proven more elusive than that of the world. In colloquial speech, the word 'earth' is a mass noun that refers to an undifferentiated quantity of stuff or substance (soil). As a first approximation, one can take Heidegger's concept of earth as functioning in a similar way—namely, as a mass noun referring to that out of which all the particular entities in the world are drawn. *Earth* first became a theme of sustained thought for Heidegger in his reflections on Friedrich Hölderlin's poetry. On Heidegger's reading, the Hölderlinian earth is one of the 'powers of origin'[117]—namely, that 'power' from which all entities arise, and to which they return.[118] Consequently, as I explained elsewhere, 'All the perceivable entities in the world are entities of the earth. The idea is something like this: world, the intelligible ordering of things, settles into the matter or substance out of which everything is drawn'.[119] But in using the term 'earth' in this way, Heidegger wants us to bracket any materialist presuppositions—the earth is not reducible to 'a mass of matter'.[120] A materialist conception of earth is a product of one particular world—the modern, scientific world—whereas earth (in the words of Karsten Harries) is a kind of 'material transcendence'—a materiality that exceeds any particular world's way of conceptualizing matter. Earth is 'that dimension of things that will always resist human mastery [ … ] that aspect of things that makes them incapable of being adequately expressed in some clear and distinct discourse'.[121]

Heidegger thus intends 'earth' to name 'that which deploys the constant abundance and yet always takes back into itself what was deployed, and withholds it'.[122] According to this description, there are two fundamental features of the earth: first, it emerges into the entities that make up a world, giving support to and sustaining worldly practices and activities. But second, the earth resists us—it resists our efforts to make it fully intelligible, and it also resists and constrains the uses to which it can be put. When cathedrals collapse or dirigibles explode in flames, we are encountering the resistance that the earth presents to our worldly practices. For Heidegger, sustaining and resisting are two sides of one and the same coin. It is because the earth has an independence and a force of resistance that it also has the power to support and sustain the practices that are adapted to it.

Thus, when a particular world comes into existence—in Heidegger's jargon, when 'the world worlds'[123]—the significance disclosed by that world can only endure to the degree that it is supported by the earth. And this support is mediated by equipment of all kinds. 'Equipment,' Heidegger says, '*supports* and *keeps* open the world.'[124] It does this in two ways. First, equipment harnesses the forces of the earth in such a way as to minimize the resistance and maximize the sustaining force that the earth gives to the world. As Heidegger puts it, through reliable equipment, the earth is disclosed in its 'conduciveness' (*Beiträglichkeit*) to the activities of the world. Through equipment, the earth becomes the 'contributor' (*das Beiträgliche*) to the world.[125]

Second, equipment supports and keeps open the world by changing *us*—adapting us to the normative order of the world we inhabit. Equipment gives us the means confidently to perform the tasks that are characteristic of the world. As we become skilful in employing equipment, and as it organizes our practices, it also alters our perceptual-motor response to the world. Learning to use reliable equipment shapes our dispositions in such a way that we see and respond immediately to what matters in the world. As Heidegger puts this point in notes that are contemporaneous with the composition of 'Origin', the 'equipmental being of equipment [...] makes you at home and secure—in practical use!'[126]

In sum, then, equipment has reliability when it holds an 'intermediating position' (*Zwischenstellung*) between earth and world:

- On the one hand, reliable equipment allows its user to flourish in 'the world it sustains and holds open'.[127] 'By virtue of the reliability of equipment,' the equipment's user 'is certain of her world [...] it is the reliability of equipment that first gives the ordinary world its security.'[128]
- On the other hand, reliable equipment harnesses the earth's 'powers of origin' while it 'envelops and preserves and protects'.[129] As Heidegger puts this point in 'Origin', it is 'by virtue of the reliability of equipment' that the equipment's user is 'engaged in the silent call of the earth [...] it is the reliability of equipment that [...] assures the earth the freedom of its constant pressure'.[130]

It should be clear at this point that Heideggerian reliability is not the same as reliability in the ordinary sense. Equipment is reliable in the ordinary sense when it is 'trustworthy'—that is, when it functions as intended and produces consistent results. Ordinary reliability is dependent on usefulness, because it is only once equipment has a proper use that we are in a position to tell whether it is a trustworthy means of obtaining the ends for which it is meant to be used. Heideggerian reliability, by contrast, gives us a reliable grip on our world—it reliably secures the world against the resistance of the earth, and it reliably secures our involvement in the order of significance that organizes the world.

### *Reliability grounds usefulness*

In 'Origin', Heidegger insists that reliability is a more fundamental feature of equipment than is usefulness: 'the usefulness of equipment is however only the essential consequence of reliability. The former resonates within the latter and would be nothing without it'.[131] This is a claim that needs to be treated with some care. It would be a mistake to regard reliability as a transcendental, necessary condition of usefulness, because that would mean that equipment which is obsolete—that is, equipment that no longer plays a vital role in our world—would no longer be usable for a given purpose. But that cannot be right. Consider, for instance, the bathing machines that were in broad use from the eighteenth to early twentieth century in Europe. Such machines, examples of which are sometimes displayed as quaint decorations at beach resorts, are still 'useful' or 'usable'—they could still be used to allow bathers to enter the water without being seen. The machines are obsolete, however, because what they are *useful for* makes little sense in the contemporary world. Although it is useful—it has a use—such equipment is not reliable in Heidegger's sense. Learning to use a bathing machine will do nothing to secure our hold on the current world.

As we get habituated in the use of reliable equipment, we find ourselves solicited by that equipment to act in ways that matter in our world. It is in this way that 'equipment in its reliability gives the world its own necessity and closeness'.[132] In a lecture presented the day after he delivered an early version of 'Origin', Heidegger connects reliability with the power entities hold to solicit us to act: 'when all reliability has withdrawn from things', then 'the historical human being in the midst of entities as a whole is at a loss as to what to do'.[133] I take this to mean that entities lacking in reliability can still show up as useful, but in the midst of all these useful things, no course of action shows up as really mattering. The upshot is that equipment has reliability (in Heidegger's special sense) only when it engages its users in activities that matter in the world. It is through acquiring the skills to use reliable equipment that we acquire the ability to navigate the distinctive network of possibilities that make up that world. At the same time, learning to use reliable equipment engages us in a specific role in the world. Thus, such equipment also plays a part in determining our identity or 'selfhood': '[t]he being-a-self of the human being is grounded in the reliability of the unconcealed entities and its surroundings'.[134]

In short, it is through the equipment that we come to belong to our world. Consider, for example, a pair of cowboy boots. The world of a cowboy organizes the network of possible activities that define the lives of people in that world. The boot is designed in such a way as to make it possible for the boot's wearer to play a role in the world of the cowboy. In order to be a cowboy boot, a boot must have a form that suits it for cowboy practices. Its pointed toe and smooth sole allow the boot to slide easily into a stirrup. Its tall angular heels keep the feet locked into the stirrup, allowing the rider to maintain control of his horse as it moves erratically over difficult terrain. Its high shafts of tough thick leather protect the legs from brush, cattle, venomous snakes and scorpions, and harsh extremes of weather. Each feature of the boot, in other words, secures its wearer against the resistance of the world, while syncing its wearer to a network of other significant features of the world. Wearing the boot helps secure the wearer's grip on a significant role in that world, and thereby orients her to what matters most in that world.

So, in holding that usefulness 'rests in' or 'reposes in' reliability, Heidegger does not mean that unreliable equipment lacks a *use*. He says instead that reliability is 'the *fulness* of an essential being of equipment'.[135] Equipment is most fully or richly in being when it serves a purpose that *matters* to us. In claiming that usefulness would be 'nothing' without reliability, Heidegger means that what unreliable equipment could be used to do would be a matter of relative indifference to us. And finally, reliability has an explanatory priority over usefulness in the sense that to really understand why we invent, build, and learn to use particular items of equipment, one needs to recognize how the characteristic uses of that equipment secure our grip on the world we inhabit.

### *The atrophy of reliability*

In his later work, Heidegger explores the way that equipment—such as a jug, for example—can be experienced as a gift precisely because it connects us to what matters most in our world.[136] Such equipment 'shines' or is 'lit up'; it fills us with a sense of grace as the reliable equipment affords us an engaging, vibrant, insertion into what matters. But Heidegger is also aware that the more reliable equipment is, and the more skilful its user becomes in employing the equipment, the more transparent the equipment's reliability tends to become. Reliability, Heidegger explains, can 'atrophy' into 'boringly obtrusive habitualness'. As 'the use itself is worn out, smoothed down, and becomes habitual', Heidegger says, 'equipmental being atrophies, it degenerates into mere equipment. [ … ] Nothing but mere usefulness is now visible'.[137]

When usefulness obtrudes and reliability withdraws from view—when things no longer shine—then equipment has an atrophied reliableness. It will still function as an earth–world mediator. But because use of that equipment has devolved into the habitual and ordinary, its users lose a sense of the grace involved in the gift of an identity in a world where things matter. One work performed by works of art is to reawaken us to the shining of ordinary things.[138] Indeed, Heidegger argues, one primary difference between equipment and works of art is that equipment tends to conceal the graceful contingency of the relationship between earth and world—even as it secures that relationship. Works of art, on the other hand, make salient to us the relationship between earth and world, sensitize us to the points of conflict between them, and thus fill us with a sense of grace.[139]

## Heidegger's interpretation of van Gogh's *Shoes*

Having defined the concept of Heideggerian reliability, and thus articulated what Heidegger claims to have learned from van Gogh's *Shoes*, let us now take a closer look at Heidegger's description of the painting. This description is undoubtedly the most controversial aspect of Heidegger's discussion of van Gogh's painting. Derrida calls it 'ridiculous and lamentable'.[140] Schapiro claims that Heidegger's description is 'not sustained by the picture itself'—that he has 'imagined everything and projected it into the painting'.[141] 'It is difficult to disagree with Schapiro', Harries concedes:

> Heidegger is substituting for the actual painting an experience or dream he had in the neighborhood of the painting. [ … ] [W]hat really speaks to us in this essay would seem to be a poetic meditation occasioned by the remembered painting.[142]

Such reactions are understandable if we follow Schapiro in thinking that Heidegger actually claims to find within the painting a depiction of a peasant woman, her world, and 'her relation to nature and work'. As we have now seen, however, Heidegger does not pretend to learn anything substantive about the peasant woman's world from the painting. Instead, his description of the painting is offered to show us what he learned about reliability by contemplating the painting. So, in approaching the description, we should be asking: What would a painting look like that makes equipmental reliability salient? Our discussion of reliability leads us to expect three things of such a painting:

- It should draw our attention to the way in which equipment engages its user in worldly practices.
- It should draw our attention to the way in which equipment makes the earth conducive to those practices.
- It should counteract the atrophy of reliability, that is, it should reawaken a sense for the grace involved in

equipment that mediates the relationship between earth and world.

Heidegger claims that van Gogh's *Shoes* does all three things. In making a case for this, Heidegger's description of the painting employs a two-step process. He first identifies a feature of the painting that we experience as significant; he then describes a context—one not represented in the painting—that determines the significance of that feature. To help illustrate this two-step process, we can consider another example where Heidegger employs this interpretive technique: his discussion of Albrecht Dürer's watercolour painting of a *Hare* (figure 11).

### *Heidegger, Dürer, and the two-step structure of Heidegger's phenomenological interpretation of artworks*

Heidegger offers a reading of Dürer's *Hare* in a lecture course he taught at exactly the same time as he was composing 'Origin'.[143] Like van Gogh's shoe paintings, Dürer's *Hare* presents its object, and nothing more. Like the shoes, only the hare's shadow allows us to situate the hare in space. And like the shoes, the hare is depicted as detached from its surroundings—there are no other animals, no plants, no objects at all to indicate where the hare is and what it is doing. And yet, Heidegger claims, it is precisely in virtue of the way in which the painting isolates and detaches the hare from its native environment that the painting succeeds in depicting the 'animal-being' of the hare.[144]

Heidegger describes Dürer's painting in this way:

> What is decisive is that Dürer's hare has a relationship to its environment without its environment being given along with it. [...] For: the hare listens (it holds its ears straight up), it sees (its eye is 'alive', it does not stare like the hare in the cabbage[145]), it sits with the possibility of being able to spring up (its sitting is animated by the organic connection of its limbs; its sitting-there arises from its own 'decision', which is capable of changing in an instant [...]); but all this means that the hare is directed beyond itself, it is not at all isolated; it looks into itself, that is, its being points to a whole that might constitute its hare-world, such as the sphere of food—the world of danger, and so on. It is a self-contained whole—a living being that, in this out-beyond-itself and into-itself, has achieved unity and self-sufficiency in this wholeness of 'inside' and 'outside'.[146]

In other words, Dürer depicts his hare in such a way that our attention is drawn to the hare's essential being in relation to its environment—and it succeeds in doing this precisely by *not depicting* its environment.

Here again, Heidegger deploys a methodological principle that he used to great effect in *Being and Time*: the principle that in order to notice what we are otherwise transparently involved in, our concern needs to be 'disrupted'. Equipment, as we have seen, is a prime example of things that tend to become transparent. As we are habituated in the use of equipment, we use it without expressly noticing how its use is guided by a rich network of 'references' to its surroundings. The optimal way to use a hammer, for instance, is defined by the size of nails, the hardness of the wood, the purpose of the finished product. For a skilful carpenter, this network of references is something she 'use[s] without expressly noticing. [...] The references themselves are not observed; they are rather "there" when we concernfully submit ourselves to them'.[147] 'But in a disruption of the reference,' for instance, when a vital piece of equipment is missing:

> the reference becomes explicit. [...] The equipmental context lights up, not as something that has never been seen before, but rather as a whole that is constantly seen in advance in circumspection. With this whole, however, the world announces itself'.[148]

By depicting the hare and nothing more, Dürer similarly disrupts the hare's normal immersion in its environmental context. This forces us to fill in the missing context. If we want to understand what we are seeing, we have to attend to something we do not normally pay attention to: namely, the way in which hares are defined by their constant interaction with their environment.

Thus, each feature of the hare (its ears, its eyes, its bodily poise) is depicted as responsively engaging with its surroundings. The painting of the hare directs our attention to the environmental being of the hare—its being-in-the-field—precisely by not depicting that environment. But when Heidegger claims that the hare in the painting 'points' to a 'sphere of food' and 'a world of danger', Heidegger is not claiming that the painting itself can teach us about what hares eat and what poses a threat to hares. Instead, the painting makes salient for us the relational structure of 'animal-being'—a relational structure that we already understand but might not otherwise have attended to as such.

### *Heidegger's description of van Gogh's Shoes*

Heidegger's description of the van Gogh's *Shoes* follows exactly the same pattern as his discussion of Dürer's *Hare*. In the first step, Heidegger identifies the salient features of the footgear—features which are readily discernible in the painting itself. He then explains how those features refer to specific aspects of the shoes' environment—aspects that are not depicted in the painting, but which explain the significance of the features of the shoes that are depicted. The thought is that by depicting the shoes and nothing else, van Gogh's painting makes us

focally aware of the fact that shoes can only be properly understood in relation to their earth–world context. It is this two-step method that explains why Heidegger's description of the painting alludes to furrowed fields, country paths, raw winds, etc. It is not that Heidegger 'sees' these things as represented in the painting. It is rather that these typify the contexts that make intelligible the features of the shoe that *are* actually depicted in the painting.

For instance, consider the shoes in figure 6. Heidegger calls our attention to 'the dark opening of the worn interior of the footgear', and claims that the particular activities in which the shoes are used, as well as the particular gait or tread of their wearer, 'stares out of the dark opening'.[149] Of course, the painting does not literally depict the way the shoes have been used. Nevertheless, if we pay attention to the opening of the shoes, we will notice that the shoes have a specific pattern of wear, and the shape of the leather is not symmetrical. We grasp the significance of these features of the shoes in the painting by recognizing how they refer to contexts outside of the painting. Because we have a background understanding of leather shoes, the painting lights up for us the way in which leather takes on a shape that reflects the way it is used and the foot of the person who uses them. The worn leather, readily discernible in the painting, thus refers us to the shoes' world—to the fact that shoes are designed to sustain their wearer in a set of practices that give significance to his existence.

Heidegger also points to all the features of the shoes that make salient the fact that they have withstood the 'constant pressure' of the earth, thereby making the earth 'conducive' to worldly practices.[150] The painting depicts the footgear as 'sturdy', 'well-built', and 'heavy'. 'On the leather,' Heidegger notes, 'lies the dampness and richness of the soil.'[151] We grasp the significance of these features of the shoe only because we understand how they refer us to the difficult terrain and the inclement weather in which the shoes have been worn: 'The toughness of the slow passage through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field, over which a raw wind blows, is accumulated in the sturdy well-built heaviness of the footgear.'[152] Thus, Heidegger reads the creases in the leather, the patterns of wear, even the scuffs on the shoes as what we might call 'indicia of reliability'. They show us that the footgear has mediated between, on the one hand, the demands placed on it by the earth, and, on the other, the practices required to sustain the world. The past use of the shoes is 'accumulated' in the present condition of the footgear that is depicted in the painting. The details of the past use, however, are not depicted in the painting. Instead, Heidegger's invocation of fields and furrows and raw winds, of poverty and death and birth, should be understood as typical of the types of things to which the depicted features refer. One might quibble with Heidegger about precisely which aspects of the earth and world are indicated by the features of the footgear in van Gogh's painting. But Heidegger is right to insist that the features of the shoes in the painting only have the significance they do for us because we understand them as referring to the world in which they function, and to the earthy conditions that shape that world. As Robert Pippin notes:

> all Heidegger needs is that the shoes are presented in a way to suggest, with a quiet intensity, labor, toil, a daily routine of such struggle, and so forth. None of that seems to me Heideggerian fantasy or projection, although at some point all one can say is 'Look at the *painting*!' as a response to Schapiro.[153]

If Heidegger was wrong about the specific usefulness of the shoes in the painting, and they are in fact, as Schapiro insists, the shoes of a 'man of the city', does this in any way affect Heidegger's analysis of reliability? Not really. Steven Crowell puts this point well. Although he mistakenly follows Schapiro in believing that Heidegger ascribes 'the shoes in van Gogh's painting to the peasant woman', Crowell observes quite rightly that:

> in the folds and flags of its line, the painting represents the denoted shoes in such a way as to connote age, wear, and the particular materiality of leather, thereby inserting them back into some specific praxis, be it that of a peasant woman or of the urban van Gogh himself. This connotative movement toward a practical world is what reveals the shoes under the guise of reliability, reveals them *as* reliable.[154]

And, in fact, Schapiro himself inadvertently gives an alternative description of the reliability of the shoes as mediating the earth and the world of the artist and city dweller. One could excise without loss Heidegger's references to the shoes in the world of the peasant woman and replace those passages with Schapiro's own description of the shoes of the artist. As to the earth, Schapiro writes:

> In isolating his own old, worn shoes on a canvas, [van Gogh] turns them to the spectator; he makes of them a piece from a self-portrait, that part of the costume with which we tread the earth and in which we locate strains of movement, fatigue, pressure, heaviness—the burden of the erect body in its contact with the ground. They mark out our inescapable position on the earth.[155]

Meanwhile, the shoes simultaneously 'convey a concern with the fatalities of his social being',[156] that is, the inherited worldly exigencies and norms.

In sum, Heidegger's analysis of van Gogh's painting depends on the following two plausible points:

- The paintings of the shoes make salient certain indicia of reliability.
- By inviting us to reflect on the significance of these indicia of reliability, the paintings of the shoes help us

recognize that reliability involves a mediation between worldly norms and activities on the one hand, and earthy constraints on the other.

In order to recognize the indicia of reliability in the shoes, it is true that one must have some prior notion of the specific usefulness of the shoes. But since the goal is an understanding of reliability as such, and not the specific usefulness of these specific shoes, it does not matter whether one takes the shoes as useful in farming activities, or as useful in the activities of an itinerant 'peasant painter'[157] such as van Gogh. The indicia of reliability will be the same either way.

### *Which shoe painting?*

All this allows us to see that—and this is a key point—Heidegger's failure uniquely to identify the painting he was describing should not be taken to mean the paintings are irrelevant. There is a reason that Heidegger uses one of van Gogh's still life paintings of shoes rather than one of a myriad of van Gogh's works that show people using shoes. When van Gogh paints shoes in use (e.g., figures 8–10), the shoes themselves tend to be overlooked. Our attention is drawn to what the peasant men and women are doing, and we are oblivious to the way in which their shoes give them a grip on their world while harnessing the forces of the earth.

In each of van Gogh's still life shoe paintings, by contrast, the attentive viewer can see the sturdiness, the scuffs, the dirt, the patterns of wear, etc., which demonstrate that the shoes have withstood the weather, the rough terrain—in short, the 'constant pressure' of the earth. The shoes are depicted as *simultaneously useful but not being used*. They show all the marks of having served their purpose well in the past, and of being ready or on call to be useful in the future.

The attentive viewer is drawn to notice these things in large part because the footgear is the sole focal object in the paintings. It is precisely *because* van Gogh's shoe paintings do not depict the shoes in use that they succeed in drawing our attention to their reliableness. We are called by the idle shoes to spell out our understanding of them by reflecting on the people and worldly contexts within which such shoes could reliably be used. And that shows us that the being of equipment is rooted in its ability to secure us in the intermeshing of earth and world. These are insights that come to the attentive viewer of those specific paintings. By the same token, we understand Heidegger's phenomenology of reliability best by reading his discussion of reliability alongside one of van Gogh's paintings.

Schapiro, then, did get one thing right about Heidegger's encounter with van Gogh. Schapiro notes that Heidegger 'does not identify the picture he has in mind, as if the different versions are interchangeable, all disclosing the same truth'.[158] And, as it turns out, any of van Gogh's shoe paintings serve nearly equally well at directing our attention to the reliability of footgear. So perhaps we can take Heidegger at his word when he introduces the painting with the observation that van Gogh 'painted such footgear several times',[159] that is, several shoe paintings by van Gogh would serve Heidegger's purposes. And thus, it really does not matter which of the shoe paintings Heidegger 'has in mind', any more than it matters which hammer Heidegger was thinking of in his ubiquitous discussions of hammers in *Being and Time*. Any of van Gogh's paintings of shoes would do, because each of them makes salient a very similar set of indicia of reliability.

Thus, Heidegger concludes his description of the footgear in the painting with two overarching claims:

- 'In the footgear, the silent call of the earth oscillates,' that is, the shoes resonate with the earth's swinging back and forth between sustaining us and resisting us. Heidegger gives two examples to illustrate this oscillation: the earth brings the 'quiet gift of the ripening grain', but it also confronts us with an 'undeclared self-refusal in the bleak fallow ground of the wintry field'. The earth's oscillation between upholding and undermining our existence is 'quiet' and 'undeclared' or 'unexplained' because it resists being made intelligible.
- Worldly practices and events 'pull' on us by means of or 'through' the shoes—the very act of wearing the shoes changes the affordances and solicitations we encounter. The shoes in van Gogh's paintings would not work for ballet dancing or playing basketball because they would not successfully mediate the norms and demands of the dance floor or the basketball court with the earthly constraints of gravity, friction, etc. But the shoes could aid farmers or itinerant artists when they need to address a specific set of worldly concerns: 'The uncomplaining worry over the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of once again surviving poverty, the thrill at the arrival of birth, and the quivering at the surrounding threat of death, moves through this equipment.'[160]

The footgear, then, shows up in the painting as the medium through which its wearer has successfully conducted his or her affairs—both engaging in the practices that characterize his or her world, but also withstanding the challenges and the resistances posed by the earth. When we experience the beauty and dignity the humble shoes enjoy in van Gogh's painting, this counteracts the atrophied reliability of our own shoes and reminds us of the gift we enjoy—the gift of

equipment that secures our world while making the earth conducive to our needs.

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NOTES

1– Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* [1927], 7th edn (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1953), 16; *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 37. This and all other translations from the German have been altered for consistency. Note that page numbers refer to the pagination of the seventh German edition of *Sein und Zeit*. These numbers are found in the margin of English translation of *Being and Time*, as well as the Klostermann edition: Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977).

2– Martin Heidegger, *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1988), 64; *idem*, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, trans. T. Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002), 47.

3– Martin Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', in *Gesamtausgabe*, 102 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), Vol. 5: *Holzwege*, 1–74, at 18; *idem*, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–56, at 13; also trans. as 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 1971), 15–86, at 32. Future page references for Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', will be to Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 5: *Holzwege*; Heidegger/Young and Haynes, *Off the Beaten Track*; and Heidegger/Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

4– Meyer Schapiro, 'The Still Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh', in *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), 135–42.

5– Ibid., 104.

6– Ibid., 138.

7– Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, 'Van Gogh, Schapiro, Heidegger, and Derrida', in *Van Gogh* 100, ed. Joseph D. Masheck (Westport: Bloomsbury, 1996), 273–80, at 276.

8– For example, John Walker, 'Art History versus Philosophy—The Enigma of the Old Shoes', in *Van Gogh Studies—Five Critical Essays* (London: JAW, 1981), 61–71, at 63; Suzanne Bloom and Ed Hill, 'Borrowed Shoes', *Art Forum* 26, no. 8 (1988): 111–17, at 114.

9– In a letter to Elisabeth Blochman, dated 20 December, 1935—shortly after the first public presentation of the essay—Heidegger describes the essay as 'dating from the happy working hours of the years 1931 and 1932'; Martin Heidegger and Elizabeth Blochmann, *Briefwechsel* 1918–1969 (Marbach: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1990), 87.

10– Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 80.2: *Vorträge. Teil 2:* 1935–1967, 563–658.

11– Probably dating from 1935; ibid., 1351.

12– The lecture was repeated in Zurich on 17 January, 1936.

13– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 80.2: *Vorträge. Teil 2:* 1935–1967, 563.

14– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 375/285/xxiii.

15– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 5: *Holzwege*.

16– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 18/13/32.

17– Jacob-Baart de la Faille, *L'Œuvre de Vincent van Gogh, Catalogue raisonné* (Paris: G. van Oest, 1928); Jan Hulsker, *The Complete Van Gogh: Paintings, Drawings, Sketches* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1980).

18– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19/14/33.

19– Draft of a letter from Meyer Schapiro to Martin Heidegger; undated correspondence with Martin Heidegger, Series II: Correspondence 1920s–2001, MS #1121, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University, City of New York.

20– Letter from Martin Heidegger to Meyer Schapiro, 6 May, 1965; Meyer Schapiro Collection, 1919–2006, MS #1121, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University, City of New York.

21– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 136–38.

22– Apparently misled by the strength of Schapiro's self-assurance in identifying the painting, some scholars falsely believe that Heidegger specifically 'identifies the actual painting he is referring to' in his letter to Schapiro; e.g., Geoffrey Batchen, *What of Shoes? Van Gogh and Art History* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 2009), 23. He does not.

23– 'Van Gogh: Exhibition in Amsterdam', *The Times*, London, 5 September, 1930, 10.

24– Jacob-Baart de la Faille, *Vincent van Gogh*, trans. P. Montagu-Pollack (London: William Heinemann, 1939), 196–97.

25– C. W. H. Baard, *Stedelijk tentoonstelling 'Vincent van Gogh en zijn tijdgenooten': met steun van het Rijk en met medewerking der Vereeniging 'Vincent van Gogh en zijn tijd' ter herdenking van den sterfdag van Vincent van Gogh (*29 *juli* 1890*)* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1930), 6, no. 6 (i.e., figure 1), and 8, no. 20 (i.e., figure 4).

26– Kröller-Müller Stichting, *Tentoonstelling van Werken van Vincent van Gogh, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam* 6 *September–*2 *November* 1930 (S'-Gravenhage: Kröller-Müller Stichting, 1930).

27– Ibid., 69, no. 218.

28– Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 80.1: *Vorträge. Teil 1:* 1915–1932, 541–43.

29– Heidegger was in Todtnauberg between August and 14 September, then in Freiburg until 28 September, when he travelled to Cologne; letter from Martin Heidegger to Elisabeth Blochmann, dated 20 September, 1930, in Heidegger and Blochmann, *Briefwechsel* 1918–1969, 36–39. He next travelled from Cologne to Wiesbaden, and then on to Frankfurt on 1 October, before visiting Bultmann in Göttingen; letter from Martin Heidegger to Elfride Heidegger, dated 2 October, 1930, in Martin Heidegger, *Letters to his Wife:* 1915–1970, ed. Gertrud Heidegger, trans. Rupert D. V. Glasgow (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 124. From Göttingen, he travelled to Bremen, where he gave the lecture 'On the Essence of Truth' on 8 October. Heidegger visited his brother in Messkirch on 14 October. He then spent ten days, 16–26 October, in a monastery in Beuron; letter from Martin Heidegger to Elisabeth Blochmann, dated 8 April, 1931, in Heidegger and Blochmann, *Briefwechsel* 1918–1969, 40; letter from Martin Heidegger to Elfride Heidegger, dated 19 October, 1930, in Heidegger/Heidegger and Glasgow, *Letters to his Wife*, 125–26. From Beuron, Heidegger returned to Freiburg, where he spent the remainder of the Winter

Semester lecturing on Hegel every Tuesday and Thursday; *Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau, Vorlesungs-Verzeichnis für das Winter-Semester* 1930/31 (Freiburg i. Br.: Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, 1930), 18; see also Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 32: *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 217; and *idem*, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 150.

30– Kröller-Müller Stichting, *Vincent van Gogh* (The Hague: Kröller-Müller Stichting, 1928), 69.

31– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 3/3/19.

32– Letter from Martin Heidegger to Elisabeth Blochmann, dated 7 July, 1931, in Heidegger and Blochmann, *Briefwechsel* 1918–1969, 41.

33– Heidegger/Heidegger and Glasgow, *Letters to his Wife*, 128. Heidegger specifically mentions seeing 'Wheatfield with Crows' (F779/JH2117) and 'Irises' (probably F678/JH1977). Strikingly, Heidegger makes no mention of seeing any shoe paintings on this occasion.

34– W. Steenhoff, *Catalogus Vincent van Gogh: Werken uit de verzameling van Ir. V.W. van Gogh, in bruikleen afgestaan aan de Gemeente Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Stadasdrukkerij Amsterdam, 1931).

35– Personal correspondence with the Harvard Art Museums, 20 July 2022.

36– Steenhoff, *Catalogus Vincent van Gogh*, 28, no. 22, 'Oude Rijgschoenen'.

37– Ibid., 28, no. 29, 'Oude Bottinen'.

38– Ibid., 32, no. 66, 'Schoenklompen'.

39– Heidegger/Heidegger and Glasgow, *Letters to his Wife*, 128.

40– Nikola Mirković, *Werk und Wirkung: eine hermeneutische Untersuchung der Kunstphilosophie Martin Heideggers* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 26; Dietrich Schubert, 'Van Goghs Sinnbild "Ein Paar alte Schuhe" von 1885, oder: ein Holzweg Heideggers', in *Habitus: Norm und Transgression in Bild und Text*, ed. Tobias Frese and Anette Hoffmann (Berlin: Akademie, 2011), 331–54, at 337 n. 19.

41– Contrary to Schapiro's assertion, the painting of six shoes (figure 4) was not in Amsterdam when Heidegger was there—neither in March 1930 nor in August 1931. Figure 5 was first exhibited in Amsterdam in 1990. Figure 3 was not exhibited anywhere until 1946–47—a decade after the composition of 'The Origin of the Work of Art'.

42– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 18–19/14/33.

43– In fact, it also describes the paintings in figures 3 and 5 which Heidegger could not have seen in the 1930s, but which he might have seen through de la Faille's 1928 catalogue or via postcards. Pöggeler notes that Heidegger 'also worked with picture postcards'; Otto Pöggeler, *Bild und Technik: Heidegger, Klee und die Moderne Kunst* (Bonn: Wilhelm Fink, 2002), 168.

44– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 136.

45– Pöggeler, *Bild und Technik*, 168.

46– Walter Biemel, *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study*, trans. J. L. Mehta (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 70.

47– 'Letter 696. To Émile Bernard, Arles, Wednesday, 3 October 1888', in *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters: The Complete Illustrated and Annotated Edition*, 6 vols, ed. Leon Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009), 4: 306–07; German translation by Louis Bellmont and Hans Graber, *Vincent van Gogh: Briefe an Émile Bernard* (Basel: Benno Schwabe & Co., 1941), 81.

48– 'Letter to Karl Löwith, Freiburg 25 Jan 1921', in Martin Heidegger and Karl Löwith. *Correspondence* 1919–1973 (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 18; see also 'Letter to Karl Jaspers, Freiburg I. Br., 27 June 1922', in Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (*1920–1963*)* (Amherst: Humanity, 2003), 33; and Hans-Georg Gadamer's observations, reported in Pöggeler, *Bild und Technik*, 161.

49– National-Galerie, *Vincent van Gogh:* 143 *Werke aus dem Besitz von Frau Kröller-Müller im Haag* (Berlin: National-Galerie, 1929), 38, quoting 'Letter 696. To Emile Bernard, Arles, Wednesday, 3 October 1888', in Jansen et al., *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters*, 4: 306–07.

50– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 137.

51– Ibid., 136, 139.

52– Schapiro himself relates an anecdote first told by François Gauzi about van Gogh visiting a flea market and purchasing 'the shoes of a carter'; ibid., 145. Of course, many carters were peasants, so it is entirely possible that the shoes of a carter were also 'peasant shoes'. But the more important point is that if, as Schapiro concedes, a 'man of the city' could own a carter's shoes, then surely he could also own a peasant's shoes.

53– Jeff Malpas, 'Objectivity and Self-Disclosedness: The Phenomenological Working of Art', in *Art and Phenomenology*, ed. Joseph D. Parry (London: Routledge, 2011), 54–76, at 71.

54– Iain Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117; original emphasis. For similar arguments, see Walker, 'Art History versus Philosophy', 64; Mirković, *Werk und Wirkung*, 25; and Schubert, 'Van Goghs Sinnbild', 336 n. 16.

55– Schubert, 'Van Goghs Sinnbild', 336; Schubert is apparently referring to de la Faille's 1928 edition, 997.

56– Ironically, Schubert criticizes Heidegger for failing to notice that none of the peasants was wearing leather shoes; Schubert, 'Van Goghs Sinnbild', 336 n. 16. But such a criticism is itself based on a failure to notice that many of van Gogh's works on exhibit in the Netherlands in 1930 and 1931 do indeed depict peasants in lace-up leather shoes.

57– F1663/JH272; Steenhoff, *Catalogus Vincent van Gogh*, 47, no. 176.

58– 'Letter 184: Letter to Anthon van Rappard, Etten Saturday 12 November 1881', in Jansen et al., *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters*, 2: 314.

59– Steenhoff, *Catalogus Vincent van Gogh*, 44, no. 136.

60– 'Letter 172: To Theo van Gogh, Etten, mid-September 1881', in Jansen et al., *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters*, 1: 280.

61– Stichting, *Tentoonstelling*, n. 8.

62– Stichting, *Tentoonstelling*, lists six different sowers on display from the Kröller-Müller collection: 9 no. 9, 10 nos 13–14, 48 no. 154, 75 no. 232, 883 no. 251. The last listed is F689/JH1836, and pictures a sower striding through ploughed fields in leather clogs similar to those depicted in figure 7.

63– See also F853.

64– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 150.

65– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 5: 19.

66– Heidegger/Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 33.

67– Heidegger/Young and Haynes, *Off the Beaten Track*, 14.

68– In other passages in the essay, Heidegger does refer to the shoes in the painting as 'Schuhe' or 'Bauernschuhe', but he is not in those passages contrasting the painted footgear with actual shoes.

69– German tends to use a definite article when referring to articles of clothing ('*die* Schuhe') in contexts where English would use a possessive determiner ('*her* shoes'); e.g., Martin Durrell, *Hammer's German Grammar and Usage*, 7th edn (London: Routledge, 2021), §4.6.1. Indeed, Hofstadter and Young and Haynes usually and correctly translate the definite article in such contexts with the possessive 'her'; e.g., Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 18/13/32: 'The peasant woman wears her shoes ['die Schuhe'] in the field.'

70– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 5: *Holzwege*, 18; Heidegger/Young and Haynes, *Off the Beaten Track*, 14.

71– Derrida is the only commentator I have come across who acknowledges this fact. '[R]elying on the manifest logic of the text, the peasant woman [...] only appears in the passages where it is less than elsewhere a question of describing a picture, when the painting is as far

away as possible'; Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), 409; *idem*, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 358 (trans. modified).
72– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19/14/33.
73– Heidegger/Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 33.
74– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19/14/33.
75– Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 73.2: *Zum Ereignis-Denken*, 78; see also 704.
76– Martin Heidegger, 'Über die Sixtina', in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 13: *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, 119–121, at 120.
77– Ibid.
78– Ibid., 120–21.
79– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 138.
80– For example, Francisco de Lara, 'Kunstwerke und Gebrauchsgegenstände: Ding, Zeug und Werk in ihrer Widerspiegelung', in *Heideggers* Ursprung des Kunstwerks: *Ein kooperativer Kommentar*, ed. David Espinet and Tobias Keiling (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2011), 19–34, at 26–27: 'van Gogh's work opens up the world and the earth of the peasant woman who, in Heidegger's description of the painting, does her work and while doing so relies on her shoes'; Shane Mackinlay, 'Heidegger's Temple: How Truth Happens When Nothing is Portrayed', *Sophia* 49, no. 4 (2010): 499–507, at 502: 'the painting shows itself to [Heidegger] as portraying a peasant woman's whole existence'; Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Background Practices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 128: 'Heidegger claims that [ … ] Van Gogh's painting reveals to us the shoes themselves in their truth, which means that the shoes reveal the world of the peasant woman.'
81– For example, John Richardson, *Heidegger* (London: Routledge, 2012), 391 n. 22: 'much of the story Heidegger tells [about van Gogh's painting] is false'; Lars-Olof Åhlberg, *Notions of the Aesthetic and of Aesthetics: Essays on Art, Aesthetics, and Culture* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2014), 246: 'Schapiro seems to be right when he charges Heidegger with misidentifying the shoes in van Gogh's painting as the shoes of a peasant woman.'
82– Åhlberg, *Notions of the Aesthetic*, 246.
83– Andrew Bowie, 'Art', in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Heidegger*, ed. François Raffoul and Eric S. Nelson (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 257–62, at 260.
84– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 21/15/34–35; emphasis added.
85– Ibid., 20/15/34.
86– Ibid., 19/14/33.
87– Kris McDaniel, 'Ways of Being', in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, ed. David J. Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 290–319, at 290; Kris McDaniel, 'A Return to the Analogy of Being', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81, no. 3 (2010): 688–717, at 688.
88– Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 24: *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 169–70; *idem*, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 119–120.
89– One year after the publication of *Being and Time*, Heidegger offered the following partial list of kinds of being: 'With respect to the different kinds of being of entities, we can distinguish—the existing: human beings; the living: plants and animals; the occurrent: material things; the available: use-objects in the broadest sense; the subsisting: number and space'; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 27: *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, 71–72; *idem*, *Introduction to Philosophy*, trans. William McNeill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2024), 51.
90– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 5: *Holzwege*, 5–6; see also Martin Heidegger, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt–Endlichkeit–Einsamkeit*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 29–30 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983), 514; trans. as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
91– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 18/13/32.
92– Ibid., 17–18/13/32.
93– Ibid., 18/13/32.
94– Ibid., 43/32/54; emphasis added.
95– Ibid., 18/13/32.
96– Ibid.
97– Ibid., 18/13–14/32.
98– Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 69.
99– Ibid., 78.
100– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 18–19/14/33.
101– Ibid., 18/13–14/32; emphasis added.
102– Ibid., 18/14/32–33.
103– Ibid., 18/13/32.
104– Ibid., 20/15/34.
105– Ibid., 21/16/35.
106– Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Die Wahrheit des Kunstwerks', in *Hegel Husserl Heidegger* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), 249–61, at 256.
107– According to Dreyfus, the lesson to be learned from Heidegger's encounter with the shoe painting is that 'art is capable of revealing someone else's world. [Heidegger] shows this by describing a Van Gogh painting of a peasant woman's shoes. [ … ] The Van Gogh painting [ … ] manifests the peasant's world to the viewer of the painting. Art, then, can be seen as manifesting a world *to those outside* it'; Dreyfus, *Background Practices*, 128. Reliability plays no part in his account of Heidegger's interpretation of the painting. Dreyfus does mention the concept of reliability in passing when discussing Heidegger's account of equipment, but he neither defines the concept nor does he explain how van Gogh's painting could support an insight into reliability; ibid., 146–47.
108– Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
109– Stephen Mulhall, 'Two Shoes and a Fountain: Ecstasis, Mimesis and Engrossment in Heidegger's The Origin of the Work of Art', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 119, no. 2 (2019): 201–22.
110– Some works that discuss Heidegger's encounter with van Gogh's painting, while failing entirely to mention reliability, include: Batchen, *What of Shoes?*; John Bruin, 'Heidegger and Two Kinds of Art', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 4 (1994): 447–57; David Espinet, 'Kunst und Natur: Der Streit von Welt und Erde', in Espinet and Keiling, *Heideggers Ursprung des Kunstwerks*, 46–65; Udo Kultermann, *Kleine Geschichte der Kunsttheorie* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987); Toni Hildebrandt, '"Bildnerisches Denken": Martin Heidegger und die bildende Kunst', in Espinet and Keiling, *Heideggers Ursprung des Kunstwerks*, 210–25; Mackinlay, 'Heidegger's Temple'; Jeff Malpas, 'The Working of Art', in *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 237–50; Tobias Keiling, 'Kunst, Werk, Wahrheit: Heideggers Wahrheitstheorie', in Espinet and Keiling, *Heideggers Ursprung des Kunstwerks*, 66–94; Kerstin Thomas, 'The Still Life of Objects: Heidegger, Schapiro, and Derrida Reconsidered', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 60 (August 2015): 81–102; Justin F. White, 'Heidegger's Conception of World and the Possibility of Great Art', *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 56 (March 2018): 127–55; and Manuel Schölles, 'Die Kunst im Werk. Gestalt–Stimmung–Ton', in Espinet and Keiling, *Heideggers Ursprung des Kunstwerks*, 95–109. Else Buddeberg not only overlooks completely the

concept of reliability, but also mistakenly reports that Heidegger believes that the painting discloses the *usefulness* of equipment: 'that [the pair of peasant shoes] could be placed into unconcealment was only possible because it was revealed in its usefulness as equipment'; Else Buddeberg, *Denken und Dichten des Seins* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1956), 14. This gets things precisely backward: Heidegger insists that the painting *cannot* show us usefulness while it can disclose to us reliability.

111– Crowell tells us what reliability *does*—it 'locates the implement in the so to speak "subjective" horizon of life'—but he never explains what it *is*; Steven Crowell, 'Phenomenology and Aesthetics, or, Why Art Matters', in Parry, *Art and Phenomenology*, 31–53, at 43, 48. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann and Joseph Kockelmans both offer extended paraphrases of what Heidegger says about reliability, but neither attempts to define the concept or specifically to connect reliability to van Gogh's painting of shoes; Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann, *Heideggers Philosophie der Kunst* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980), 82–89; Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Dordrecht: M. Nijhoff, 1986), 132–34; *idem*, *On the Truth of Being* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 176–77. In general, when reliability is mentioned at all, it is mentioned only in passing; e.g., Steven Haug, 'The Artworks in Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art"', *International Philosophical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2020): 57–74, at 65; Michael Kelly, *Iconoclasm in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28–29; Michael Watts, *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (Durham: Acumen, 2011), 211; Hugh J. Silverman, *Textualities: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 53; Alison Ross, 'The Work of the Art-Work: Art after Heidegger's *Origin of the Work of Art*', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 37, no. 2 (2006): 199–215, at 203; Åhlberg, *Notions of the Aesthetic*, 243–44; and Reiner Schürmann, 'Heidegger and Meister Eckhart on Releasement', *Research in Phenomenology* 3, no. 1 (1973): 95–119, at 103. John Richardson recognizes that some definition of reliability is in order, and he promises to 'return to this notion, and its difference from *Being and Time*'s "to-handness"'; Richardson, *Heidegger*, 297. Sadly, by some oversight, Richardson does not keep his promise and reliability is never again mentioned in his book. Harries makes claims *about* reliability, but he does not explain what it *is*; reliability, he says, 'presupposes' 'a way of being in the world or a way of dwelling'. Consequently, he suggests, there can be no reliability in 'our modern world'; Karsten Harries, *Art Matters: A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's 'The Origin of the Work of Art'* (New York: Springer, 2009), 88. The thought seems to be that reliability presupposes dwelling. But no account is given of what reliability is, such that it has dwelling as a necessary precondition.

112– Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 82: *Laufende Anmerkungen zu "Sein und Zeit"*, 7–136.

113– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 36/27/48.

114– Heidegger, 'Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks: I. Ausarbeitung' in *Gesamtausgabe*, 80.2: *Vorträge. Teil 2:* 1935–1967, 563–590 at 570–71.

115– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 28/21/41.

116– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 80.2: *Vorträge. Teil 2:* 1935–1967, 571.

117– 'Mächte des Ursprungs'; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe,* Vol. 39*: Hölderlins Hymnen »Germanien« und »Der Rhein«*, 243, 256;; *Hölderlin's Hymns 'Germania' and 'The Rhine'*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014).

118– Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen*, 61; Heidegger/McNeill and Ireland, *Hölderlin's Hymns 'Germania' and 'The Rhine'*, 57.

119– Mark Wrathall, *How to Read Heidegger* (London: Granta, 2005), 77.

120– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 80.2: *Vorträge. Teil 2:* 1935–1967, 565–593, at 573.

121– Harries, *Art Matters*, 177.

122– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 80.2: *Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. I. Ausarbeitung* 1935–1967, 565–593, at 574.

123– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 30–31, 23, 43–44.

124– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 82: *Zu eigenen Veröffentlichung*, 493.

125– Ibid., 64.

126– Ibid., 63.

127– Ibid., 493.

128– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19–20/15/33–34.

129– Ibid., 63.

130– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19–20/14/33.

131– Ibid., 20/15/34; see also Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 82: *Zu eigenen Veröffentlichung*, 493: '[t]he reliability of equipment—more originally than usefulness—[…] makes the world certain and clear'.

132– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 31/23/43–44.

133– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 80.2: *Vorträge. Teil 2:* 1935–1967, 667.

134– Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 48: *Nietzsche: Der europäische Nihilismus*, 180; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 6.2: *Nietzsche II*, 123.

135– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19/14/33; emphasis added.

136– For example, Martin Heidegger, 'Das Ding', in *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 7: *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 173–75, 179–81; and 'The Thing', in Heidegger/Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 169–71, 175–77.

137– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 20/15/34.

138– Ibid., 43/32/54.

139– In his 'Notes on *Being and Time*', composed in the same year as 'Origin', Heidegger claims that 'equipmental being is not availableness'. Instead, Heidegger argues, 'availableness is the character in which [equipmental being] is encountered'. Equipment is 'a concealing bringing near of the world as a sheltering (earth) of being-there in a reliability—no world-installation and earth setting-forth—and yet reliability—sheltering–world–concealing of the world–earth-relation (custom/practice)'; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 82: *Zu eigenen Veröffentlichung*, 64.

140– Derrida/Bennington and McLeod, *Truth in Painting*, 292.

141– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 206.

142– Harries, *Art Matters*, 90–91.

143– Heidegger lectured on Dürer's *Hare* during a seminar in Freiburg on Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. The seminar ran from 4 November, 1936 to 17 February, 1937. 'The Origin of the Work of Art' was presented in Frankfurt between 17 November and 4 December, 1936; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 84.2: *Seminare. Kant–Leibniz–Schiller*.

144– 'Tierhaftsein'; Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 84.2: *Seminare. Kant–Leibniz–Schiller*, 539; 'Tiersein'; Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 6.1: *Nietzsche I*, 190.

145– Heidegger refers here to Hans Hoffmann's *The Hare* (1585–90), a copy of Dürer's hare, which Hoffmann placed in a naturalistic landscape surrounded by plants and insects; Rome, Gallerie Nazionali Barberini Corsini, inv. 224; https://www.barberinicorsini.org/en/opera/the-hare/(accessed on 9 July, 2024).

146– Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 84.2: *Schillers Briefe Über die Aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen*. Wintersemester 1936/7, 487–708.

147– Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 74.

148– Ibid., 74–75.

149– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19/14/33. As Heidegger puts it, the worn interior exhibits 'die Mühsal der Arbeitsschritte'. This could be translated as 'the toil of the stages of work' or 'the toil of the worker's tread'. Heidegger is probably exploiting the ambiguity to suggest that shoes wear in a way that responds to both the activities in which they are used and the person who wears them.

150– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 19/14/33.

151– Ibid.

152– Ibid.
153– Robert Pippin, *After the Beautiful* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 99 n. 6.
154– Crowell, 'Phenomenology and Aesthetics', 48.
155– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 140.
156– Ibid.
157– This is how van Gogh described himself; 'Letter 492. To Theo van Gogh. Nuenen, Monday, 13 April 1885', in Jansen et al., *Vincent van Gogh—The Letters*, 3: 224.
158– Schapiro, *Theory and Philosophy of Art*, 136.
159– Heidegger, 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes', 18/13/32.
160– Ibid., 19/14/33.