

Activity and Passivity in the Creation of Art: Heidegger and Later Philosophers

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The article deals with the consideration that in spite of the fact that artistic creation is firstly an active work, the artist sometimes is not the only determinant factor of the value of the artwork, therefore some senses of the work that have not been predicted or consciously embodied by the artist might emerge. Creative inspiration, which creates the conditions for the appearance of something unpredicted, has been usually explained as the highest form of the creativity of the artist. We reconstruct Heidegger's innovative thought about the creativity as a partly passive attitude of the artist in the first chapter of the article. The second part deals with the development of the ideas of creation as a specific form of inactivity of the artist in the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Theodor Adorno and later French philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Alain Badiou. We look into their concepts that are formulated on purpose to explain the possibilities of the artistic creation, which might interrupt the standardized, stereotypical life, to promote the appearance of something unplanned and unforeseen.

Keywords: passivity, artist, value, artwork, creation

INTRODUCTION

The concept of passivity became one of the important philosophical themes a few decades ago, when the discussions on the Emmanuel Levinas' ethical theory of "radical passivity" and its development have started. Applying the ideas of Slavoj Žižek, the concepts of activity and passivity have been introduced into the field of the philosophy of art by the Austrian thinker Robert Pfaller, who has inquired into the interpassivity of the spectator and underlined the complexity of the interplay between the activity and passivity of the contemporary artist and spectator (Pfaller 2014: 17–19). Pfaller notices that after decades when artists tried to satisfy the demand for the spectator's participation in the process of creation, this demand has started to decrease. Not only is the need for the search of meanings of the artwork vanishing, but also is the need for the experience of simple pleasure lowering.

These are the circumstances, which form a new context for a question whether the creative work independent of the dictate of the society of masses is still possible, whether the artist is not involved into the prevailing, all life encompassing, self-oriented circle of production and consummation. The researchers notice that contemporary business manages to use for its purposes even the artistic creativity, which is determinately oriented against the "society of the spectacle".

On the other hand, prominent philosophers direct our attention to the fact that sometimes the artist is not the only determinant factor of the value of the artwork, that some senses of the work, which have not been predicted by the artist, might emerge. Thus in spite of the fact that artistic creation is firstly an active work, the art work becomes the real work of art not only because of the intention of its author, but it also depends on the factors, which are independent from his/her plans. Some ideas in the contemporary philosophy allow us to think that the true piece of art might appear as a result of a particular composition of the active work of the author and his/her passivity, which creates the conditions for the appearance of something unpredicted. For example, for several decades that, what is not possible to be explained by the conscious intention of the author, has been analyzed by the developing of the concept of “*punctum*” by Roland Barthes, indicating an aspect or detail, which unexpectedly attracts the attention of the spectator and reveals “the wakening of intractable reality” (Barthes 1981: 119). Similarly, the impulse toward inaction was spotted in Theodor Adorno’s concept of “*mimesis*” (Hulatt 2016). In the article published in “Philosophy. Sociology” analyzing the question of the hermeneutical activity and passivity, it was stressed that “the direct self-expression of the author is supposed to damage the artistry of work” (Kačerauskas 2007: 79). The contemporary object-oriented ontology that is attempting to expand the art outside the boundaries of human creativity similarly tends against the understanding of art as only of “a superficial and exclusively human-flavoured region of reality” (Morton 2015). In the last two years, the changing positions of creators and their audiences were analyzed in major philosophy journals. The special attention was paid to the role of spectators (Raubenheimer 2015); the luck (Brand 2015: 48–51), accidents (Stoller 2016); high-tech processes and materials, site and context specificities (Basbaum 2015: 131–135); confluences of agents, actions and events (Tromble 2016).

Certainly, philosophical considerations of the passivity of the creator are not new. Already Plato in his “Ion” stated that poet is only an instrument of gods, unrealizing himself what he is producing: “for all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed <...> For the poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and is out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles” (Plato 2001: 11). Creative inspiration has also been exalted in the later European philosophy, yet usually it has been explained as the highest form of the creativity of the artist. In the 20th century Martin Heidegger rethinks the creativity as a partly passive attitude of the artist; his ideas are followed and developed by the philosophers directly or indirectly affected by him. We shall reconstruct these ideas of Heidegger here in this article and we shall investigate what accents they acquire in the later philosophical interpretations of the artistic creativity.

HEIDEGGER’S APPROACH TO THE CONDITIONS OF THE CREATION OF ART

As is well known, the general definition of art in Heidegger’s theory is the self-disclosing of Being in the essent; one of several chances of coming into a contact with the Being itself¹. First we should ask whether this kind of creativity in the contemporary world is possible at all. The conditions of the creation of art are not valued unequivocally. Evaluation goes from the proposition that it is the very Being, absolutely independent of historic conditions of art’s

¹ In the major Lithuanian philosophical periodicals, the meanings of Heidegger’s concept of Being were recently analyzed by Nerijus Stasiulis (2016: 250–255), Tautvydas Vėželis (2015: 65–66; 2016: 258–259); the relation of Being and art was recently approached by Mindaugas Briedis (2015: 178–179).

creation and perception to another extreme – that art is not possible in our times. We make such points keeping in mind Heidegger's propositions: first – that the art might appear and remind us of totally forgotten Being even in our world of an industrial society; second – that “the beauty remains that, which it is, despite of the answer to the question “who admires it?”” (Heidegger 1983: 105). And we make the last point inferring Heidegger's words about contemporary art: “I say only that it is a question as to what place it occupies... I do not see anything about modern art that points out a way [for us]” (Heidegger 1966), that were said for the *Spiegel* in Interview “Only a God Can Save Us”.

Those unequivocal evaluations complicate the description of the conditions of real artistic creativity, since if art is absolutely autonomous, the changes in the modes of human being should not affect it. In his famous article “The Origin of the Work of Art” Heidegger talks about the being of work of art in itself and for itself. He emphasizes that “precisely in great art (which is all we are concerned with here) the artist remains something inconsequential in comparison with the work – almost like a passageway which, in the creative process, destroys itself for the sake of coming forth of the work” (Heidegger 2002: 19). We find his even more extreme concept of the autonomy of art in his letter to Emil Steiger on Eduard Mörike's poem “To a lamp”. In the interpretation of this poem about the forgotten work of art, Heidegger compares the true work of art with an epiphany (Heidegger 1983: 106), speaking in philosophical terms, with a manifestation of the transcendent, which appears in human work only by chance.

Following strictly such an interpretation of the modes of the appearance and existence of the work of art, we cannot even discuss what conditions determine its creation. We just have to state that sometimes Being comes to speak in the work, and when it happens, the work becomes a work of art. On the other hand, this way of the emergence of artistic quality is very important if we try to answer the question: what changes in the work and how when it experiences the transformation from the purposely produced equipment to the work of art. This transformation is also important, as the very mode of the production of the work – being it painted or sculpted, or written, or composed (we might add: or made by some extraordinarily innovative means of creation) – does not make it the work of art like that. Both the equipment and maybe the future work of art demand from its author only the mastery; while the work of art becomes only this thing where the truth reveals itself.

An artist creates the conditions for some happening of an unconsealment of things, enables an inconspicuously prepared beginning, which Heidegger explains as a leap, that “is always a leaping-ahead, a leaping-ahead in which everything to come is already leapt over, even if as something veiled” (Heidegger 2002: 48). We may analyze the conditions of such revelation looking into Heidegger's evaluation of specific artworks. The philosopher tries to prove that the Ancient Greek art was authentic and later only several personalities – mainly poets, sometimes painters (Raffaello Santi, Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, etc.) – were making such an art. The feature and condition of art, which makes it perfect, would be a taking into account of some essents, that are unintelligible, that resist being grasped with concepts or summarized. This particular relation with an environment determines the specific character of Ancient Greek art, while the said art on its own guarantees this kind of relation. The art of Greeks, according to Heidegger, is a way of being of such a reality where everything “rises by itself and discloses itself within the limits of its own unique boundaries and remains/stays there-in” (Heidegger 1993: 282). A human is a part of such a reality enclosed within its boundaries and therefore his activity is also limited: “the World in whole addressed the human as a φύσις, <...> human perception and production could and should have matched such

a request-demand, and being encompassed by it, could and should have provided by itself, according to its own capacities, – the being-here for the art work which is deemed to spread some world that hasn't yet been extended and manifested before" (Heidegger 1993: 283). On the one hand, the artist is not sovereign here, he as if submits to the necessity of the nature; on the other hand, this necessity contains within itself the preconditions of free human activity. The work obtains its shining only within its boundaries and because of them, yet these boundaries should rise naturally from within the work itself, should not be a result of human activity. They have an ambiguous character: the essential form, appearance, does not confront external and internal aspects of the work and appeases the appearance with its perception. In Heidegger's words, Beauty "grants entry into immediate sensuous appearances and yet at the same time soars toward Being" (Heidegger 1979: 196). The essential form is an appearance of the essent, but it is not the surface perceived with human senses, hiding its inside; it is rather immanent to essent, that what distinguishes this particular essent from other essents, that is, what actually is. These boundaries might be composed of the relatively most essential relations of the parts, thus producing a relative determination of the thing. Why the work of art might become a source of the perception of boundaries? Simply because the work of art, distinguishing itself from functional equipment, provides us with an exceptional possibility to experience a self-purposiveness, and also because it is not a mean subjected to more general goals. On the other hand, the artistic creativity conjoins the given with the freedom of creativity, and we can easily see that conscious construction does not become a sufficient condition of the perfect work of art. There is always something essential yet unknowable in the work of art. That is its feature, that distinguishes it from other human works and so it might serve us as an example of boundaries. In the philosophy of Heidegger, such things as "the incalculable <...> which, withdrawn from representation, is nevertheless manifest in whatever is, pointing to Being, which remains concealed" (Heidegger 1977: 154); as what is "inaccessible and not to be gotten around", as "inconspicuous" (Heidegger 1977: 177), might be references to the hidden Being, for one of its meanings would be to provide the essents with their boundaries. The work of art, according to Heidegger, might be among such references. In "The Lecture on the Origin of Art and the Determination of Thinking", he asks: "shouldn't the artwork as such demonstrate that what confronts human understanding, what doesn't allow itself to be manipulated, to be presented, what hides its inside; rather than simply state that what is already known, is well common and used to everybody? Shouldn't the artwork be relentlessly silent, silent about what is hidden, what by hiding itself wakes up human modesty, reticence against everything that doesn't allow itself to be planned, neither wielded nor counted nor recounted?" (Heidegger 1993: 291). On the other hand, these questions indirectly express the outlook of the philosopher on the possibilities of the creation and experience of art in modern times.

Heidegger describes a loss of a possibility to create a great work of art in the first volume of lectures on Nietzsche, "The Will to Power as Art". The general direction of changes, which are described by Heidegger in the lectures, could be conceived as a growing of the consciousness of creation. An important stage is Nietzsche's statements on art, which allow considering that he asserts the works as the means of effect for its own sake. The second development is Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, which passes into the manifestation of pure aesthetic, i. e. into the feeling that is abandoned to itself (Heidegger 1979: 87). The art becomes an instrument for making an impression, an effect, a feeling as such. It does not disclose the being as a whole. These ideas demonstrate that Heidegger should have agreed that conscious intention of the author to affect the spectator damages the true creation of art.

In the article “The origin of the Work of Art”, the philosopher emphasizes that art demands for a relative passivity both of creator and spectator. The creator lets what is already coming to the presence arrive, that is, he/she merely enables a thing that is created to become an art work (Heidegger 2002: 40–42). The art work can authentically exist and collect its world only in that place where it has been created. It also demands for a person who will perceive it in an authentic manner, in terms of the philosopher, for a preserver, who stands within the truth of the work (Heidegger 2002: 19–22), without being hindered by any other goals. This relatively sovereign preserver is indispensable for the truth manifested in the work only as a witness to the renewal and actualization of the artwork’s meanings.

RETHINKING OF THE CONDITIONS OF AN ARTISTIC CREATION AFTER HEIDEGGER

Further we shall consider the development of the ideas of creation as a specific form of inactivity of the artist in the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Theodor Adorno and later French philosophers Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Alain Badiou.

Explaining Heidegger’s concept of art, Gadamer points out that a true work of art becomes partly independent both of the author and the spectator: “this “*da*” of the work, which bows us over with its self-sufficient presence, does not merely share itself with us. Rather, it draws us entirely outside of ourselves and imposes its own presence on us. This no longer has the character of an object that stands over and against us; we are no longer able to approach this like an object of knowledge, grasping, measuring, and controlling” (Gadamer 1994: 191). While formulating his concept of art in the article “The Relevance of the Beautiful”, he also accentuates several moments of the activity not so much of the author, but of the activity of the creative work itself: “the work of art does resemble a living organism with its internally structured unity” (Gadamer 1986: 43); it is like “the pure autonomous regulation of movement” (Gadamer 1986: 24). According to the philosopher, the spectator of art is also only partly active – “the challenge of the work brings the constructive accomplishment of the intellect into play” (Gadamer 1986: 28), since he/she finds him/herself in an autonomous temporality, which is displayed by the work.

Similar ideas about the autonomous sense of the artwork are developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. As the examples of the creativity, which depends not only on the active intentions of the creator, he gives the periods in the history of art, where the problems of the painters are resolved as if by themselves, obliquely, if they used to “allow themselves to be attracted by other things” (Merleau-Ponty 1993: 148). Certain autonomy of the creativity is demonstrated also by the fact that new interpretations of the work of art “change it only into itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1993: 139); that they do not provide the work with new characteristics but only expand the meaning already present in the work, yet unnoticed. In summary we may notice that for these two philosophers, who developed the ideas of Heidegger, the artist is not the sole creator in the sense that the work of art is characterized by the surplus of meaning, which itself becomes as if a true “agent”, and determines the conditions of the adequate perception of the artwork.

Differently from Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer, Adorno stresses his disagreement with Heidegger’s concept of artwork. Nevertheless, there is some resemblance in their thinking. They both emphasize the incidental character of the truth of art, that is, its unpredictability and instability; they both interpret it as the possibility to transcend the limits of reality. As a determinant factor of the meaning of the work of art, Adorno proclaims the “objective spirit” independent of the creator. There are some ideas in his book “Aesthetic Theory” that directly suggest the passive posture of the artist. Explaining the origin of the beauty of some architectural ensembles of the cities, Adorno discerns there the only subject which “is

the continuity of history itself – truly the objective spirit – <...> and the individual architect need not even realize it (This historical subject of beauty largely determines even the production of art.) While it seems that the beauty of such cities is caused by external factors alone, it is actually something internal: an immanent historicity takes on appearance” (Adorno 1984: 384). The philosopher explains this “objective spirit” as the factor determining that works of art are always something more than a sensually experienced configuration of their properties, whereas the spirit “flashes in their sensuous appearance, it flashes only as the negation of that appearance” (Adorno 1984: 131). Thus we may understand the spirit as a factor ensuring the internal relations of the parts of the artwork and the relations of the artwork as a whole with the changing reality beyond the art. The spirit of true artworks is directed against the principle of power dominant in the contemporary reality, thus it is the social essence of the art, changing itself and *mutatis mutandis* changing the artworks themselves (Vabalaitė 1998: 93–97). Such artworks should have some transcendent aspect – directed against the empirical world, and yet unimplying the existence of the other reality. Adorno states that “artistic imagination hardly ever has been responsible for the whole of an artist’s creation” (Adorno 1984: 56) and emphasizes that the current experimental work “must contain qualities that were unforeseeable in its process of production; or, to put it in subjective terms, the artist has to be surprised by what he creates” (Adorno 1984: 55).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their work “What is Philosophy?”, similarly to Heidegger, look in the work of art for the opening of a new language, of something what interrupts the standardized, stereotypical life, for the appearance of something unplanned and unforeseen. They also talk about the relative independence of the true art from the human domain: the work of art is “independent of the creator through the self-positing of the created, which is preserved in itself. What is preserved – the thing or the work of art – is a *bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*. Percepts are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man <...> the work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself” (Deleuze, Guattari 1994: 164). The percepts are understood in this theory as existing separately from humans who experience them: creators, personages and spectators. The percepts do not repeat those which had been experienced in life, they emancipate living experience and understanding from the system of beliefs, existing in one or another natural, historical or social medium. The elements, the zones of indiscernibility, invisible cosmic forces are embodied in the work of art, and thus it allows to peep into and to hear into the inhuman reality. However, we should admit that the description of the activity of the artist provided by Deleuze and Guattari makes us understand the creation of art as an active work. The artist flows into the flux of the world, looks into the primordial chaos and puts into the frames a particle of it, which returns us the percept of novelty. In the words of the authors, the writer “twists language, makes it vibrate, seizes hold of it, and rends it in order to wrest the percept from perceptions, the affect from affections, the sensation from opinion” (Deleuze, Guattari 1994: 176).

Alain Badiou, a philosopher close to Deleuze, has posed the question about the creator in a different manner from that of Heidegger. He suggests to think not about what is “at its source or origin” (Badiou 2013: 70), but to think subjectivity as the power to transform the public lying in the artwork itself. In his “Manifesto for Philosophy”, he reminds that Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé insisted that there should not be an author as a subject in the poem. The philosopher interprets it as the idea that the truth happens in the poetry

when the experience unfolds in it independently both from the objectivity and subjectivity (Badiou 1999: 72–73). Explaining his concept of the artwork in the conversation with Fabien Tarby, he notes that “in reality, the creator is absent from this affair that is the work. The creator is not the centre of gravity. The creator is a vanishing cause. Of course, s/he is a cause because s/he is included in the work but a vanishing cause. There is never anything to be gleaned from the creator” (Badiou 2013: 72). Thus, according to the author, high artistic value is not dependent on an individual creator. This hardly explainable event of truth, which determines the high artistic value, might be conceived, in terms of Badiou, as some historical process, a series of artworks², which falls into line as if by itself and provokes the change and expansion of art forms, thus forming a condition of the possibility of new experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

According to Heidegger, the artwork of real artistic quality emerges because of its boundaries that rise naturally from the work itself and are not a result of human activity. Amplifying the Heideggerian idea, the later philosophers explain that an artist is not the sole creator in the sense that the work of art is characterized by the surplus of meaning, which itself becomes as if a true “agent”, and determines the conditions of the adequate perception of the artwork. They stress that the true artwork contains qualities, which were unforeseeable in its process of creation. The true “agents” of artistic creation might be the changing social relations and cultural traditions, the historical changes of art movements or some hardly explainable coincidences. Thus such partly passive posture of a creator might become the condition for the appearance of the artwork that interrupts the circle of social manipulations and slightly suspends the prevailing stereotypical consumerist lifestyle.

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² Danto – an author of the analytical philosophy line – declares the “Artworld” as the constitutive factor of the work of art – the existing and changing totality of the recognized artworks in some particular period, which determines what might be treated as the work of art (Danto 1964: 575–583).

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Aktyvumas ir pasyvumas meno kūryboje: M. Heideggeris ir vėlesni filosofai

Santrauka

Nors meno kūryba tiesiogine prasme yra aktyvi veikla, kai kada kūrėjas nėra vienintelis kūrinio vertė apsprendžiantysis, kartais kūrinys netikėtai atsiverti gali iš anksto menininko nenumatytos ir sąmoningai neįkūnytos prasmės. Kūrybinis įkvėpimas, sukuriantis sąlygas tam, kad atsirastų kažkas iš anksto nesuplanuota, dažniausiai buvo aiškinamas kaip aukščiausia menininko kūrybinė galia. Inovatyvios M. Heideggerio mintys apie kūrybą, kaip iš dalies pasyvią kūrėjo laikyseną, rekonstruojamos pirmoje straipsnio dalyje. Antroje – nagrinėjama idėjų apie kūrybą, kaip savotišką menininko neveiklumo formą, plėtotė Hans-Georgo Gadamerio, Maurice'o Merleau-Ponty, Theodoro Adorno bei vėlesnių prancūzų filosofų: Gilles'o Deleuze'o ir Felixo Guattari, Alaino Badiou darbuose. Pateikiama sąvokų analizė, kurias jie formuluoja siekdami paaiškinti, kaip meninėje kūryboje gali atsirasti tai, kas pertraukia standartizuotą, stereotipišką gyvenimą ir paskatina to, kas nesuplanuota ir nenumatyta, atsivėrimą.

Raktažodžiai: pasyvumas, menininkas, vertė, meno kūrinys, kūryba