

Andrzej Krawiec

*Overcoming the Framework of Aesthetics in the Phenomenological
Search of the Origin of Art*

Summary

Phenomenological studies applied in the field of art have a long tradition, but the lack of answers to fundamental questions regarding the originary experience of art has spawned a new concept of understanding works and their reception in recent decades. The first chapter of this doctoral thesis presents the basic ways of understanding originarity (*Originarität*) in Edmund Husserl and origin (*Ursprung*) in Martin Heidegger. The second chapter outlines the development of phenomenological aesthetics in the second half of the twentieth century. The third chapter includes analyses of Martin Heidegger in *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, which were further expanded to include an analysis of the Dasein and its key phenomena of anxiety (*Angst*) and the moment of vision (*Augenblick*). The fourth chapter introduces the pioneering phenomenological project of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in which the invisible dimension of art contributes to our full participation in the living tissue of the flesh (*chair*) of Being. The fifth chapter presents the phenomenon of anamorphosis in art based on Jean-Luc Marion's phenomenology of givenness, where the work of art is considered a saturated phenomenon (*phénomène saturé*). The sixth chapter presents the philosophy of art of Vasyl Kandinsky and the phenomenology of art of Michel Henry in the context of the phenomenology of life. The seventh chapter demonstrates the presence of apophatic thinking in Henry Duméry's henology and the theory of the icon of Pavel Florensky and Jean-Luc Marion. The eighth chapter presents a cataphatic way of thinking in the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar. The ninth chapter, corresponding to the seventh chapter and apophatic thinking, shows the religious dimension of art using the example of Karol Tarnowski's aesthetics. The tenth chapter, corresponding mainly to the eighth chapter and cataphatic thinking but also partly to the seventh and ninth chapters, concerns the aesthetics of Władysław Stróżewski and the numinous dimension of art. The eleventh chapter is a phenomenological analysis of Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Art of Fugue* BWV 1080 in the context of Martin Heidegger's philosophy, taking

into account the research methodology proposed by Gottfried Boehm and Georges Didi-Huberman.

This doctoral thesis claims: surpassing the framework of aesthetics in the form of phenomenological pursuits of the origin of art involves not so much breaking ties with aesthetics but expanding its own research area. In connection with this thesis, answers were also given to five research questions. First, the phenomenological surpassing of the framework of aesthetics involves temporarily moving beyond issues closely related to art in order to return to them and place art on the horizon of originary experience (ἀρχή, *arche*). Second, the concept of the “framework” of aesthetics is so relative that it can also include issues from the field of religion and theology, and therefore theological aesthetics is an essential complement to philosophical aesthetics. Third, the phenomenological search for the origin of art leads to issues that go beyond the analysis of artistic works, but these works are the primary impulse for these philosophical reflections. Fourth, the work of art is indispensable for aesthetics itself and serves as a starting point for all further research. Furthermore, fifth, phenomenology transcends the framework of aesthetics only in the sense that it problematizes aesthetics itself and questions its own foundations, thus initiating originary-thinking about art, for which the only valid basis is the originary aesthetic or supra-aesthetic experience, founded on sensory perception of the artistic work.

The analyses presented in the doctoral thesis reveal three directions for transcending the framework of aesthetics in the course of phenomenological pursuits of the origin of art. The first important direction for transcending the framework of aesthetics was the overcoming of metaphysics by Martin Heidegger. The second direction for transcending the framework of aesthetics was the emphasis on the invisible dimension of the experience of art. The third direction for transcending the boundaries of aesthetics is revealed through the “theological turn” in phenomenology, which is also expressed in the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

During the analysis, three specific directions of phenomenological transcending the aesthetic dimension of works of art were also revealed. First, the originary experience of art can be a way of self-understanding. Second, the originary experience of art can open up horizons of being-in-the-world. Third, the originary experience of art can evoke a premonition of absolute transcendence. These three directions of phenomenologically transcending the aesthetic dimension of works of art make phenomenology the equivalent of *metaphysica specialis* in the understanding of Immanuel Kant. At the base of these three varieties of the originary experience of art – that is, the experience of oneself, the world, and transcendence –

is the experience of the origin qua *arche*, which simultaneously transcends and unites these three dimensions of *metaphysica specialis*. The experience of the origin (ἀρχή, *arche*) is characterized by a certain ambivalence that arises from the essential nature of the origin as both manifest and hidden. The nature of the origin (ἀρχή, *arche*), which appears as hidden, is attempted to be grasped both by apophatic and cataphatic thinking – it is, i.e., the origin (ἀρχή, *arche*), intangible and inexpressible, but at the same time something worthy of the greatest astonishment, admiration, and reverence. The bedazzlement (*éblouissement*) that arises from the revelation of the origin (ἀρχή, *arche*) through art transcends the framework of a narrowly understood aesthetics and expands the horizon of reflection on the suprasensual dimension – including issues from the field of theology and religion. Phenomenological reflection delves into these fundamental areas, being aware of their complexity and their own limitations, and through this, philosophical self-awareness tries to distance itself from proclaiming dogmatic statements. In this sense, phenomenology can serve a “corrective” function, which is why it was stated in the second chapter that phenomenological aesthetics is primarily the phenomenology of aesthetics and, as such, corresponds to *metaphysica generalis*, i.e., not only the a posteriori possibilities of knowing what is experienced but also the a priori conditions of the possibility of knowing the phenomenon of art as an aesthetic or supra-aesthetic intentional object.

In the dissertation, a particular feature of phenomenological thinking was also identified, whose aim is to return to the origins and originarity through methodologically repeated reductions. Firstly, phenomenology is the philosophy of the beginning, so it aims to “go back to the things themselves” in their originary appearance as the phenomenization of the phenomenon. However, it also aims to return to the origin (ἀρχή, *arche*) of appearance itself, that is, to the source of phenomenization itself. Secondly, to pose something as a problem or subject for contemplation is itself already the act of philosophical thinking, within which the most crucial question is the question of the source or origin of that thinking itself. Thirdly, the phenomenological return to the problem of the origin and the originarity ultimately does not claim the right to become the “first philosophy,” thanks to which phenomenology remains a living, open, and problematizing thinking, which calls into question the adequacy of our knowledge.

Based on the analyses conducted, the perspectives and directions for further research on the origin of art have been presented. It has been shown that research on the origin of art is inseparable from the issue of the originary experience of art, and only together do these two issues define a broad research area, which has been called “art’s originarity.” It has been noted

that one of the first essential paths in aesthetic research with a phenomenological orientation on the issue of the originary experience of art was determined by Gottfried Boehm, who proposed the combination of a phenomenological methodology and an ekphrastic description with the exact sciences of art. An example of the practical application of such a research methodology in the field of art history is the analyses of Georges Didi-Huberman, in which the invisible dimension of the visual arts was defined as “visuality” (*visualité*) – in contrast to “visibility” (*visuel*).

The analyses of Georges Didi-Huberman are an essential guide in the contemporary humanities for analyzing works of fine art, but there are still areas of art where this methodology needs to be tested and developed. A particular aspect of the art’s originarity is the issue of the origin itself (*ἀρχή*, *arche*). It is undeniable that art has always been an expression of the mysterious, and we have already witnessed numerous attempts to bring this invisible mystery, which manifests itself in the aesthetic or supra-aesthetic experience, to light. It has been found that previous philosophical research on the origin (*ἀρχή*, *arche*) to which art refers retains its validity, but what has so far relied on artistic intuition can, with the emerging new research perspective, receive a more compelling explanation. The effectiveness of the emerging new perspective or research methodology on the origin of art lies mainly in the possibility of demonstrating a closer connection between artistic and aesthetic properties, which can be extracted by ekphrastic description, combining both phenomenological and artistic competencies in equal measure. In this respect, the research proposal of Gottfried Boehm and Georges Didi-Huberman continues ancient endeavors. An example of such research in the field of musical arts was the attempt to analyze Johann Sebastian Bach’s *The Art of Fugue* BWV 1080, undertaken in Chapter Eleven of this dissertation.

In summary, the expansion of the framework of aesthetics within phenomenology is constantly guided by the principles initially established by Edmund Husserl, but these are not unquestioned or final. The expansion of the horizon of phenomenology in the second half of the twentieth century may appear to lose its research specificity compared to Edmund Husserl’s original scientific program, but this is only a guise. The expansion of the understanding of rationality to include the affective and religious dimensions presents phenomenology with new challenges, as these dimensions of human experience are characterized by particular transience and mystery. However, it is a path that phenomenology must take if it wishes to maintain its aspirations to be a rigorous science (*streng Wissenschaft*). In addition, the phenomenological consideration of the origin of art is conceived from the perspective of art, not philosophy, which demonstrates its own autonomous ability to reveal a philosophically understood origin (*ἀρχή*,

arche) through aesthetic or supra-aesthetic experience, the material basis of which is artistic works. Art and philosophy can therefore speak with a common voice about what is originary, although each does so in its own language.