

# THE WITNESS OF BEING



THE UNITY OF HEIDEGGER'S  
LATER THOUGHT

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## *F o r e w o r d*

In the second half of Martin Heidegger's philosophical career, he made a *turn* toward explaining the metaphysics of language through poetry. Heidegger's ontology of language relies largely upon the work of Friedrich Hölderlin, whose poetry Heidegger understands as giving 'voice' to Being in a peculiar proximity. For Heidegger, Hölderlin's articulations are not those of a subject 'expressing' a meaning (according to the classical theory of language from Aristotle to Husserl), but rather those of a poet whose 'remembrance' recalls a sense of Being metaphysics has forgotten. Heidegger argues that Hölderlin's language is *of* Being, beyond the self as defined by humanist notions of subjectivity which reduce Being, along with beings, to the subject's objectifying examination. In "dialogue" with poetic language, Heidegger's philosophy aims to achieve a genuine thinking of Being, as well as *Gelassenheit*, which is the stance of receptivity.

According to Heidegger, only the poetic power of language is able to open up an historical world. It does this by awakening a basic mood in the people and leaving "the unsayable unsaid" in saying. Heidegger takes his essential concept of language as such from poetic language. Everyday language, communication, statements are for Heidegger not language in a primary sense, but poetry as the "originary language of a people" is, compared to which language in the conventional sense as understood by theories of language and in linguistics is only an insipid dilution. (The concept of the "originary" historical time of the peoples is therefore the time of the poets, thinkers and creators of states, i.e. of those who properly found and reinforce the historical existence of a people.)

This invites a number of interesting questions to address within this study. For example, where does this priority of language come from, even if it be a priority of poetic language? This question becomes even more urgent considering the fact that originary poetical language that founds history is supposed to primarily awaken a basic mood. Can a basic mood eventuate or be awakened originally only in (poetic) language? If the basic mood is supposed to call an opening of being and entities in their totality into temporal being, then, according to Heidegger, only language is able to unlock an historical world. How so? Is world only where language is? For Heidegger, language is and will remain “the house of being.”

Hölderlin’s philosophical writings, however, challenge some of Heidegger’s views both of poetic language and of the self or subject implied by language. Hölderlin offers a critique of Kantian and Fichtean transcendental idealism and a theory of poetic language as promising a non-transcendental grasp of the ‘ideal,’ ‘spirit’ (*Geist*), or Being. Hölderlin’s examination of the ‘poetic I’ involves both skepticism and utopianism, in which a self is understood to encounter the world outside the auspices of possessive, determinative, or objectifying relations.

The aim of this study is to show how the depth of Heidegger’s continued commitment throughout the second half of his career to a number of fundamental assumptions of transcendental philosophy constitutes both a source of significant insight and deep philosophical confusion for the completion of his project outlined in his work, *Being and Time*. More specifically for this study, the subject of the *turn* toward poetic language is examined in Heidegger’s writings. The guiding concern of this study is: the question of finitude as it presents itself in relation to the self-definition (or self-

affirmation) of *Dasein* in a project of Being, and more specifically, in Heidegger's later thought. This will involve: (1) a purposive introduction to his writings before the turn; (2) a basic historical and biographical understanding of what called Heidegger to move beyond his initial analysis of Being toward language; (3) and finally, I will show that Hölderlin suggests a model of 'poetic subjectivity' which conforms to dimensions of Heidegger's critique of the modern subject, yet which also does not leave behind the self and the human concerns of that self.

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## ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY MARTIN HEIDEGGER

BPP	<i>The Basic Problems of Phenomenology</i> , tr. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
BT	<i>Being and Time</i> , tr. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).
BW	<i>Basic Writings</i> , 2nd edn, D.F. Krell (ed.) (San Francisco: Harper- San Francisco, 1993).
<i>Contributions</i>	<i>Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning)</i> , tr. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).
EHP	<i>Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry</i> , tr. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000).
GA	<i>Gesamtausgabe</i> , the collected edition (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976- ).
IM	<i>An Introduction to Metaphysics</i> , tr. R. Manheim (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1959); tr. G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).
OWL	<i>On the Way to Language</i> , tr. P.D. Hertz and J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).
PLT	<i>Poetry, Language, Thought</i> , tr. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).
QCT	<i>The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays</i> , tr. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).
SW	Hölderlin, Friedrich. <i>Sämtliche Werke</i> . Ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1941-).
WCT	<i>What is Called Thinking?</i> trs. F.D. Wieck and J.G. Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).
WP	<i>What is Philosophy?</i> tr. W. Kluback and T. Wilde (New Haven, Connecticut: College and University Press, 1958).

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

I preface my comments by citing a poem by Hölderlin, which may have directly influenced Heidegger, who had been familiar with Hölderlin's poems since 1908.<sup>1</sup> It also explains my thesis in this dissertation in its most succinct form. The poem is Hölderlin's "Natur and Kunst" [subtitled "Saturn and Jupiter"]. In the ode, Jupiter, who is identified with art, triumphs over Saturn, who symbolizes everyday, ontic time and, in the myth, is the "father of Art":

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<sup>1</sup> As early as 1908, Heidegger had come into contact with the poetry of Hölderlin, which, of course, had great impact on him. Cf. his "Antrittsrede" (1957), in *Gesamtausgabe* 1, 1978. (*Frühe Schriften*), 56. This is the text of an Inaugural Address, given at Heidelberg, which later served as his preface to the first editions of his *Early Writings* in 1972. The translation appears in *Heidegger, The Man and the Thinker*, ed. T. Sheehan (Chicago, Illinois: Precedent, 1981), 21. With regard to the influence of Hölderlin, Heidegger said in the *Spiegel* interview:

My thought stand in an unavoidable relationship to the poetry of Hölderlin. I consider Hölderlin not [just] one poet among others whose work the historians of literature may take as a theme [for study]. For me, Hölderlin is the poet who points into the future, who waits for a god, and who, consequently, should not remain merely an object of research according to the canons of literary history.

These lines appear in the translation of the interview in *Heidegger, The Man and the Thinker*, 61-62.

High up in day you govern, your law prevails,  
You hold the judgment scales, O Saturn's son.  
Hand out our lots and well-contented  
Rest on the fame of immortal kingship.

Yet, singers know, down the abyss you hurled  
The holy father once, your own parent, who  
Long now has lain lamenting where the  
Wild ones before you more justly languish.

Quite guiltless he, the god of the golden age:  
At once effortless and greater than you, though  
He uttered no commandment, and no  
Mortal on earth ever named his presence.

So down with you! Or cease to be ashamed of your thanks!  
And if you stay, defer to the older god  
And grant him that above all others.  
Gods and great mortals, the singer name him!

For as from clouds your lightning, from him has come  
What you call yours. And, look, the commands you speak  
To bear him witness, and from Saturn's  
Peace has ever power developed.

And once my heart has felt his life most living,  
And things that you shaped grow dim,  
And in his cradle changing Time has  
Fallen asleep and sweet quiet lulls me –

I'll know you then, Kronion, and hear you then,  
The one wise master who, like ourselves, a son  
Of Time, gives laws to us, proclaims  
That which lies hidden deep in holy twilights.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, tr. Michael Hamburger, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 164-67.

In the ode, the theme of naming is central, but now it is the hidden meaning of time that is to be named in the conflict between nature (Saturn) and art (Jupiter).

Hölderlin has identified Saturn with Time (Kronios, Chronos). Kronion (son of Kronos, i.e., son of Time) is the law-giver who reigns when the “golden age” of Saturn’s hegemony has ended. Jupiter has gone down to the dwelling place of the mortals, most of whom will be oblivious to the presence of Saturn – Time – until the son of Time, Kronion, has come to earth.

Jupiter is asked to grant to those “great morals,” the poets, the power to name time. In Hölderlin’s fable titled, “Nature and Art,” Jupiter is the god who gives shape to, formulates, and arranges things. But the poet does not find time present in art until Time “has/Fallen asleep” and all of Jupiter’s creation (works of art) have “grown dim.” Only then does the poet see the laws that govern the arts.

Though the ode manifestly takes up the themes of the triumph of art over nature, it is also concerned with the relation between art and time. The connection between the themes of this poem and those of the fable lies in the problem of *naming*. In “Nature and Art,” it is a question of the possibility of naming time, and in the fable it is a question of what to name the creation of Sorrow. The possibility of naming time rests on determining the laws of creating works of art, while naming the creation of Sorrow, the human being, is a matter of determining the mutuality of belonging that holds between the human being and Sorrow. This mutuality is named in the word *homo*. The problematic of what is named by this word must be sought in the meaning of the word.

In both the ode and the fable, Jupiter and Saturn represent time as it is passed on to mortals with the awareness provided by *spiritus* – ontic time [*Zeit*]. What appears as Kronion? I would suggest that the *Dasein* is portrayed as Kronion in Hölderlin's ode. This interpretation may be helpful for a clearer understanding of (1) the seed of what this current work concerns, and (2) the relation between the *Dasein* and its ontological structure, Sorrow. Heidegger's concept of the *Dasein* can be fixed in this way as an ontological determination somewhere between the concept of *Gestalten* (forms) of the work of art and *Gebild* (creation) of Sorrow, mortal Man.

The key to this determination is found in Heidegger's concern for art, and the place of art in humanity's relation to Being, which, of course, includes poetry.

An admonition appears near the beginning of Heidegger's essay "Identity and Difference" which should give pause to any commentator of Heidegger's work:

When thinking attempts to pursue something that has claimed its attention, it may happen that on the way it undergoes a change. Thus it is advisable in what follows to pay attention to the path of thought rather than to its content.<sup>3</sup>

These sentences suggest that we do not begin to read Heidegger until the surface intelligibility of the language is shaken and we follow not the content,

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<sup>3</sup> *Identity and Difference*, tr. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 1. This edition contains the German text.

a series of propositions or theses (or even a series of what may seem to be poetic figures), but the very *movement* of thought in its becoming-other.

Heidegger suggests to us that the claim upon thought and thought's transformation are to be understood in terms of an arrest or capture of thought by its "thing" or affair (*die Sache*). This latter, for the earlier Heidegger at least, is the finite transcendence of *Dasein* – a relation to something other than what is that makes possible any relation to being in the world (including other human beings) and any self-relation. It makes possible the very structure of representation and therefore cannot be posed before us (*vor-gestellt*) in a theoretical or formal manner – hence Heidegger's effort to draw us beyond the conceptual and figurative levels of his discourse.

Of thought's transformation, we may say that the questioning relation provoked by the arrest of thought (described most frequently by Heidegger as an astonishment or perplexity – an uncanny experience of alterity that marks the presence to us of things in the world) bears not only upon the object of this questioning but also upon the act of questioning itself. Thought comes increasingly into question as it discovers ever more profoundly its initiative to have been a repetition of a determination to question – and no reflexive act can define absolutely the measure of its engagement in the history defined by temporal precedence of the origin or opening of its act. To the extent that a thing opens to that which claims it and assumes the temporal structure of its activity – assumes its finitude – it carries itself into a movement that exceeds it and carries it beyond itself.

This is an unsettling movement. It is unsettling, first, because it refuses itself to any conceptual definition or mastery and calls into question the normally secure position of the thinking subject, the position defined by the

metaphysics of subjectivity in its elaboration of the structure of representation. Clearly, Heidegger did not find this situation to be an impediment for the task of thinking and even (initially) for the founding of a science. Near the end of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, he points explicitly to one consequence of assuming the finitude of metaphysical questioning:

It remains to be considered that the working out of the innermost essence of finitude required for the establishment of metaphysics must itself always be basically finite and can never become absolute. The only conclusion one can draw from this is that reflection on finitude, *always to be renewed*, can never succeed, though a mutual playing off, or mediating equalization of standpoints in order to finally and in spite of everything to give us an absolute knowledge of finitude, a knowledge that is surreptitiously posited as being "true in itself."<sup>4</sup>

By virtue of its inescapable temporal determination, thought can achieve no final definition of its own situation and thus cannot transcend the history in which it finds itself as it turns back upon that which give it its impetus. The repetitive nature of Heidegger's course of thinking – his constant return to what he calls the "fundamental experience" of *Being and Time*<sup>5</sup> throughout his career – points to his own assumption of this understand of finitude. But Heidegger suggests that, if thought cannot hold this movement in its grasp, it might hold itself in this movement in such a way as to find in it a certain measure. For the movement to which thought opens is understood by Heidegger to have a gathering and unifying character. Whether we speak in

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 245.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, , tr. D.F. Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 260.



terms of the temporality of *Dasein*, the history of Being, or Appropriation (*Ereignis*), that which claims thought and sets it on a path that is without any assignable end also gathers it within what Heidegger terms an intimacy.

Yet there are also elements in Heidegger's thinking that make this fundamental assertion problematic, just as his consistent refusal of certain dimensions of the thought of those to whom he turns in his interpretive encounters (I refer in particular to the encounters with Hölderlin and Nietzsche, the former for which this study is centered upon after an thorough introductory examination of *Dasein*) takes on a symptomatic character. Heidegger failed to recognize in his *Kantbuch* (and, in some ways, throughout his career) just how unsettling his meditation on the finitude of Being and of thought might be. He points to this fact himself when he remarks much later (in 1956) that he has been unable to find a satisfactory answer to the problem of finitude. What was assumed affirmatively in the *Kantbuch* is now the source of a distress. I refer here to the statement in the "Addendum" to "The Origin of the Work of Art"<sup>6</sup> in which Heidegger recognizes that his formulation of the role of man in art as creator and preserver remains ambiguous in his essay. He notes that, if truth is taken as the subject of the phrase by which he defines art, namely, "the setting into work of truth," then art is conceived in terms of disclosive appropriation." He adds:

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<sup>6</sup> All references to "The Origin of the Work of Art" will hereafter be referred to as *Origin*, unless context demands the full title.

Being, however, is a call to man and is not without man. Accordingly, art is at the same time defined as the setting into work of truth, where truth *now* is the “object,” and art is human creating and preserving.... In the heading, “the setting-into-work of truth,” in which it remains undecided, but *decidable*, who does the setting or in what way it occurs, there is concealed *the relation of Being and human being* [*Menschenwesen*], a relation which is unsuitably conceived even in this version – a distressing difficulty, which has been clear to me since *Being and Time*, and has since been expressed in a variety of versions. [GA 5 (*Holzwege*) 74/87]<sup>7</sup>

This statement does not necessarily contradict the more assumed statements in the later work concerning the place of mortals in what Heidegger calls the Foufold. But it is a sign that the relation between Being and human being is very much open to question in Heidegger's text and, necessarily with it, Heidegger's assertions concerning the gathering nature of the experience of difference (in thought's becoming-other), and thus the nature of difference itself and with it Being and Ereignis. This statement from Heidegger's “Addendum,” indeed Heidegger's own methods of reading and the entire pedagogical thrust of Heidegger's project, invites us to question his path of thinking, even to repeat it in a more questioning manner. The remainder of this work represents an initial attempt to question in this way the relation between Being and human being as it is articulated in Heidegger's work of the period between 1927 and 1947 (that is, between the dates of publication of *Being and Time* and the *Letter on Humanism*).

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<sup>7</sup> Abbreviated references indicate the page number in the German edition, followed, where available, by the page number in the English translation. In some cases, I have modified the translation for the sake of clarity or terminological consistency. I wish to thank Harper & Row for granting me this privilege in regard to their translations, in this and other works.

This questioning does not take the form of a complete exposition of Heidegger's thought during this period; it consists (after an extensive review of *Dasein*), rather, in a series of individual readings that seek in each case to enter into the movement of Heidegger's thought as he refers to it in the passage from which I started. Only a most attentive reading of Heidegger's texts – one that seeks the place and function of any particular theme, figure, or statement within a larger textual disposition or configuration – leads to an experience of the dynamic quality of his thinking and to an apprehension of the strangeness or perplexity that claims his thought and gives it its movement. And such a reading is a prerequisite for a more profound textual reading that moves beyond this still phenomenologically determined apprehension of the movement of a thought and begins to follow the movement of the "letter" of the text (though the task of defining the meaning of this "moving beyond" is still very much before us).

I should at least note that this movement does not lead to the impasse of restricting thought to an examination of textual phenomena in the restricted sense. The notion of finitude I attempt to elaborate in this work points to the necessary "tracing" or "inscription" of thought (just as truth must be "set into" the work, according to Heidegger's argument in *Origin*). But it should become clear that this does not dictate a kind of formalism. The movement to which I am referring is perhaps properly named deconstruction, in the sense of this term developed by Jacques Derrida. Though I have not taken up here Derrida's relation to Heidegger (in order to retain my focus on Heidegger's text, and because such a question requires an extensive, contextual analysis of Derrida's work), in the latter part of this study, I will be working very much in view of his thought. But I want to emphasize that this work remains somewhat short of a deconstruction in the Derridean sense (or in the sense developed

more recently by Paul de Man). If I were to attempt a full deconstruction of Heidegger's text in the terms I have sought to develop in this work, – out of Heidegger's own thought, therefore – I would begin by trying to fold back upon the language and structure of the text itself at least the following: Heidegger's own discussion of a work's form (in "The Origin of the Work of Art," for example), the notion of figurality that I present briefly in later chapters, an understanding of the performative dimension of his use of language (which I begin to develop in the second half of this study), and other clues offered by Heidegger concerning his use of language, including his reference to a "fugue" articulated around the word "but" that he discovers Hölderlin's poem "Andenken." I hope that the analyses present in this study will give some indication of the difficulty of the questions involved here and explain why I approach them with a certain prudence.

The unity of the examined readings that follow derives from the fact that, in seeking the dynamic element in the writings by Heidegger under consideration, I have been led to focus on the "circling" in Heidegger's thinking, whose necessity Heidegger has described as the hermeneutic circle. I analyze this movement first in *Being and Time* and attempt to describe how the circle in which Heidegger situates the questioning of *Dasein* in a project of Being is to be thought not in a circular fashion but rather in terms of a double movement like that which Heidegger describes elsewhere as a play of presence and absence, distance and proximity. In subsequent chapters I describe this paradoxical movement in terms of an experience of "disappropriation" that accompanies man's effort at appropriation (indissociably of history and of self). Before World War II, Heidegger names the poles of human experience, but by 1940, Heidegger no longer speaks in terms of *Selbstbehauptung* [self-affirmation], but the effort to articulate a less

willful mode of creative existence in a concept such as *Gelassenheit* (releasement or letting be) still obeys the structure to which I refer.

The hermeneutic situation described in *Being and Time* as “a remarkable ‘relatedness backward or forward’ of what we are asking about (Being) to the inquire itself as a mode of being of being” (*BT*, 8/28), structures Heidegger’s interpretation of both Nietzsche and Hölderlin. In my reading of Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*, I attempt to demonstrate that, if Heidegger’s encounter with Nietzsche is understood in the light of this hermeneutic situation (and it is described quite explicitly in the first volume of *Nietzsche*), then a richer interpretation emerges than the one commonly attributed to Heidegger, which consists merely in a violent resituation of Nietzsche within the history of metaphysics. I approach Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin in a similar manner, though I do so in the light of readings of *An Introduction to Metaphysics* and “The Origin of the Work of Art.” The meditations on *technē* and art in these latter texts, and on what we might call the finitude of Being, lead me to a somewhat more precise formulation of the double movement of appropriation and disappropriation; thus I come to describe a creative project of Being as the tracing of the limits of *Dasein* whereby these limits are brought forth *as limits*, and thus as the mark of a relation to an alterity. I consider Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin, then, in relation to this description of a creative project, and by contrasting Hölderlin’s understanding of the nature of the experience of difference with Heidegger’s interpretation of it. I bring into question Heidegger’s assertions concerning the gathering and founding character of a poetic project. In light of the claims Heidegger makes for poetry (*Dichtung*) and the role he assigns to Hölderlin, this questioning should give some suggestion of what Heidegger finds so distressing in the question of the relation between Being and human being.

Within the hermeneutic situation I have described, I will address the problem of the constitution of identity. This problem arises first in relation to the question of *Mitsein* in *Being and Time*. One of Heidegger's fundamental theses in this volume concerns the individuating aspect of *Dasein's* solitary assumption of its mortality. But the reading of *Being and Time* that I offer will suggest that *Dasein* is not alone in being-toward-death. In his description of the originary experience to which resoluteness of being-towards-death opens, Heidegger points furtively but consistently to an uncanny experience of the other *Dasein*. We might conclude from *Being and Time* that the call of Being (which takes form in *Being and Time* as the call of conscience) first comes by way of another – strictly speaking, by way of another's presentation of the finitude of their being.

In light of this perspective on *Mitsein*, the nature of Heidegger's interpretive stance in relation to figures such as Nietzsche and Hölderlin calls for particular attention. In each case we may observe something like a fascination on Heidegger's part (and here I mean to refer beyond the psychological category, for fascination belongs to *Dasein's* originary experience of difference as it is described by Heidegger) and a corresponding violence in his interpretation. I have recourse in this context to René Girard's very rich notion of mimetic rivalry,<sup>8</sup> though I seek a philosophical understanding of the grounds of this relation – an experience of the other that is more unsettling than Heidegger wishes to acknowledge. Nietzsche and Hölderlin both claim Heidegger's attention, over and above the reason he offers for given them privileged placed in the history of Being, because their self-presentation entails something other than the withdrawal (or the reserve)

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<sup>8</sup> See René Girard, *To Double Business Bound*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

that belongs to an assumption of finitude.<sup>9</sup> The identity posited by them (hence, their “address”) is marked by a certain instability or ambiguity, and both invite us to ask whether any measure offers itself in the assumption of finitude as Heidegger describes it. Their testimony brings into question Heidegger’s assertions concerning the gathering nature of the relation between Being and human being and thus the possibility of anything like a “dwelling” as Heidegger defines it in his readings of Hölderlin.

Thus I might say that I am seeking to pose in this examination the question of man – a question that might seem of preliminary and even secondary importance in relation to the thing or affair of Heidegger’s thought as it takes shape along his path of thinking. For the pertinence of this question, according to most commentaries on the “turn” (*Kehre*),<sup>10</sup> would appear to be limited to the first steps of Heidegger’s path: specifically to the foundational thinking that precedes the *Kehre* and thus, for example, to the final pages of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, where it is said that the repetition of the Kantian effort to found metaphysics must be rooted in the question of the *Dasein* in man. The effort to go beyond the metaphysics of subjectivity and to elaborate a thought of difference would appear to require an abandonment of an essential reference to man.

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<sup>9</sup> In 1936 he began his lectures on Nietzsche, which continued into the early 1940s and were published in 1961. Heidegger’s friends claim that these lectures contained covert criticism of Nazism and tried to rescue Nietzsche from the use made of him to support racist doctrines and practices.

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger used the word ‘turn’ (*Kehre*) to refer to two things: the shift of perspective involved in the transition from Divisions I and II of *Being and Time*, the analytic of *Dasein*, to Division III, on being and time; and the change from forgetfulness of being to the remembrance of it that he hoped would come. Often ‘the turn’ is used to refer to the change in Heidegger’s own thought after 1930, beginning with the essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art.”

But to this possible objection, I would offer this initial response: The overcoming of the metaphysics of subjectivity and the anthropocentrism of modern thought – in short, the overcoming of humanism – in no way implies that the question of man should lose its gravity. On the contrary, when man can no longer be taken as the ground for truth, then the question of man should grow weightier for thought *as a question*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, a rigorous examination of the problematic of *Dasein* will reveal why it must unsettle any foundational project and ultimately any project of appropriation of man's essence (any project that does not simultaneously account for the impossibility of its full accomplishment and thus open to a history that it cannot master), even if this appropriation is thought as a gathering of self in the intimacy of a response to Being.

The question of man does of course lead beyond itself. I try to show, for example, that it must be posed in relation to Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek notion of *thesis* (and his argument concerning the nature of any positing in general) as it is proposed in *Origin* – an argument that leads into the questions of language, *Technik*, et cetera. But if I persist in holding to the question of man as the crucial point of access to the “thing” of Heidegger's thought, it is because it poses itself the question of access. A later chapter will adumbrate how Heidegger arrived at this question to the end of *Being and Time*. “Dasein” names man's situation in relation to Being, and no thought of

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<sup>11</sup> The assertion of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy that the question of man is not a question among others in philosophy but involves its very essence and possibility has played a significant role in orienting the focus of this study.



the history or topology of Being can proceed without situating itself in relation to this topos.<sup>12</sup>

I affirm this while recognizing, again, that Heidegger rethinks this topos in his later work in relation to the problem of language. We are dealing here with another version of the hermeneutic circle. One cannot, finally, think the situation of Dasein without coming to grips with the problem of language, a point that can already be drawn from Heidegger's remarks on language in *Being and Time* and from his very definition of hermeneutic investigation. But we cannot approach this problem in a rigorous manner without a critical examination of the earlier problematic of human finitude. The question of man must not be forgotten at any point. I might also add here for the sake of clarity that I do not mean to assert that the question of man *alone* is ever the sole way of access to the question of Being, for the question of man, as Heidegger thinks it, cannot be posed alone. It can be posed only in relation to, in the context of, and as the question of man's relation to Being, which implies the question of Being. Likewise, as Heidegger states most explicitly in *What is Called Thinking?* a lecture course of 1951-52 (thus well after any dating of the *Kehre*), the question of Being cannot be posed except in relation to the question of man.

Likewise, no reading of Heidegger's text, if it seeks to become a *repetition*, or *Auseinandersetzung*, can neglect this question of access – a question that becomes in repetition both the question of Heidegger's access to the thing of his thought and the question of our access to that which claims our

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<sup>12</sup> My attention to the finitude of *Dasein* is meant to answer to this hermeneutic situation. But the notion of finitude, as I will attempt to demonstrate, points to the "positive necessity" (*BT*, 310/358) that constrained Heidegger to take as his starting point an "existential analytic."

interpretive attention in this relation. If we follow Heidegger in an effort to articulate something like a thought of difference, we must be wary of reassuming the all-too-comfortable place of the meditating subject of theory, a place of supposed neutrality. A thought of difference becomes no more than a repetition of the same if it repeats the ahistorical or nonsituated thinking whose place is defined by the metaphysics of subjectivity.

But in neglecting the question of man in a reading of Heidegger, there is more than the danger of failing to situate the act of questioning. Heidegger's self-criticism regarding the echoes of the metaphysics of subjectivity in his early writings, together with the evident movement in his thinking away from the existential analytic – toward a description of the epochal history of Being and finally toward a topological understanding of Being – might well lead us to conclude that the *progress* of Heidegger's thought as it moves at the limits of metaphysics and toward a nonmetaphysical thought of difference entails a resolution of the questionable element in the problematic of Dasein, or entails a kind of shift in perspective that reveals the problematic character of this question to have been merely a specter of metaphysics. Thus Reiner Schürmann's study of Heidegger, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*<sup>13</sup> – to take a challenging example – argues that we should read Heidegger's text from end to beginning in order to distinguish in his thought the emerging strains of the effort that moves it through its entire trajectory and emerges fully in the latest texts: the effort to “grasp presence as pregnant with a force of plurafication and dissolution.”<sup>14</sup> Schürmann argues that Heidegger's path of thought leads him away from any reference to man as

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<sup>13</sup> Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> *Le principe Dasein'anarchie: Heidegger et la question de l'agir* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1982), 22.

origin (“The ‘origin’ henceforth, is no longer simple”)<sup>15</sup> and finally to the effort to think without reference to man except as a component in the play of the Foufold. But just as Schürmann must overstate the “antihumanism” of Heidegger’s later work in his effort to distinguish Dasein and thought, he must pass over the complexity of Heidegger’s early meditation on man and fail to recognize that Dasein does not prove “simple” for Heidegger, even if he seeks in it a ground. The danger of reading in reverse order to bring forth the essential thought of difference in Heidegger is that we may lose sight of the most unsettling dimensions of his experience of difference. By crediting Heidegger’s own reading of his path of thought, we might we follow him in avoiding what is “distressing” in the question of man. And by losing sight of the *question* of man, we may well lose the possibility of thinking the constitutive role of Dasein (what Schürmann designates as the “practical *a priori*”) in the event of Appropriation – and thus the possibility of thinking the political import of Heidegger’s thought.

In presenting as I have the thematic unity of this examination to follow, I may give the suggestion that it takes the structure of an *argument*; in fact, it proceeds in a less continuous fashion (and not always chronologically) – following the related topics of the question of man through language and the structure of a project of Being as a kind of *fil conducteur* (to borrow Mallarmé’s phrase)<sup>16</sup> in a series of largely immanent readings of Heidegger’s texts. The assertion I made above concerning the contextual nature of these analyses might bear some elaboration in that it marks the point at which this analysis diverges most significantly, in my opinion, from most other readings

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>16</sup> I would translate this phrase as “guiding element.” See Mallarmé’s preface to “Un copu de dés,” in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1945), 455.

of Heidegger. I do not want to claim of course that I attend to the thematic level of Heidegger's texts (I used the phrase only for heuristic purposes – the thematic content of Heidegger's writings cannot be divorced from its place in a textual configuration) in a way that differs significantly from that of other studies. I am convinced that an approach to Heidegger that confronts the theoretical ambiguities of the work before the *Letter on Humanism* (including the questions posed by its political dimensions) will ultimately offer a far richer reading of the entirety of his path of thinking – richer for our understanding of Heidegger and, more important, richer for the ongoing task of elaborating a thought of difference – than one that reads Heidegger for “results,” as I might put it, and interprets his texts in the light of his most developed later thought, screening out the more troublesome elements in the path of his thinking. This reading necessarily takes a more critical approach to the work preceding the *Letter on Humanism* than that which characterizes most efforts to proceed from the existential foundation of Heidegger's thought (Gadamer's, for example) and also points to the fact that a modern thought of difference cannot assume too easily Heidegger's later thought; the notions of the Foulfold, of *es gibt*, and so forth must be situated in their history for their force to emerge.

But beyond these theoretical arguments, I consider my approach to Heidegger's *text* to be the most distinctive aspect of this interpretation. Like any text, Heidegger's body of writing is a construct that has won its apparent unity and coherence of meaning through a conflictual process of differentiation and exclusion – a process that always leaves its marks in the form of gaps, inconsistencies, aporias, et cetera. Like a dream, as Freud describes it, it is woven around an umbilicus that its self-reflection cannot account for. Heidegger's own description of a work, as I try to demonstrate,

points to the way in which it manifests the precariousness of its limits and thus points beyond itself. I would like to suggest that Heidegger's text must be read in the light of such a concept.

Thus I have sought the openings in Heidegger's in readings that do not draw their primary interpretive leverage from other theoretical domains (e.g., psychoanalysis, et cetera.) or from other perspectives on the history of thought and culture; critiques that proceed on this basis without submitting their own presuppositions to a Heideggerian form of questioning must of necessity close upon the question of Being I advance and can never come to grips with Heidegger's text. I consider my reading to be fully "Heideggerian" in this sense, but also very "suspicious" of Heidegger's text – unwilling to take it at face value, so to speak, or to be limited to what it purports to say (however obscure or difficult its meaning might seem and however important the task of explication might be). They seek instead those points where the text marks its relation to something that exceeds it and that provokes its movement. They seek to define, in other words, what gives the text its fundamentally historical character.<sup>17</sup> Needless to say, these readings can only begin such a task.

One can undertake such a reading only on the basis of an interpretation of the text's argument, of course; though I do not carry out the kind of exposition of Heidegger's thought that characterizes most presentations of his work and though I provide relatively few evaluations of existing studies, I instead direct my energies to the limits of thinking and language during his later thought. This analysis is not an introduction to Heidegger, except perhaps in the sense defined by Heidegger at the beginning of *An Introduction to*

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<sup>17</sup> For a development of this concept of the historicity of thought, see Derrida's admirable essay "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79-153.

*Metaphysics*, when he argues that the only possible introduction to his thinking is one that provokes a subsequent questioning. By seeking the historicity of the text of the thinker who has posed more powerfully than any other in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the question of temporality, I seek the conditions of renewed questioning. An analysis of the enabling historical background of Heidegger's thinking, a careful conceptual articulation of Heidegger's terms, and an evaluation of the philosophical merits of his arguments are all essential and important. But an *Auseinandersetzung* (argument, confrontation) with Heidegger – a confrontation that is also the elaboration of another historical position of questioning – also requires something more, as Heidegger himself would insist. Even if the history of metaphysics comes to an end in Heidegger's thought, as he suggests and as commentators such as Schürmann and Marx are willing to assume, the historical character of this thought still demands attention: the most fundamental claim of Heidegger's text concerns its own historicity. The questioning in which a response might take form must be willing to submit this claim to the same interpretive treatment that Heidegger reserves to those who claim his own thinking. His thinking, in other words, must be situated in a movement that exceeds it, and a new understanding of this movement must be articulated. The chapters that follow only begin to meet this exigency, but it defines the measure for an evaluation of their success.

## Chapter 2

### HEIDEGGER AND THE HERMENEUTIC TURN

The closing decades of this century have been marked by a wide-ranging, multidisciplinary exploration of the theory of interpretation and its practical implications. To speak of a revolution in the history of thought is perhaps too grand, but certainly there has been a general movement that can be called the “hermeneutic turn.” This turn has taken various forms, including poststructuralist cultural studies, deconstructive literary studies, interpretive anthropology and social science, and critical legal studies. Of course, the specific turns taken in each of these fields are reactions to older ways of practicing each discipline. But in each case the emphasis on interpretation is used as an antidote, usually to objectivistic conceptions of the discipline’s methods. However, none of these particular turns would have been imaginable without a dramatic change earlier in this century, the change brought about in philosophy by Heidegger in 1927 in *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s hermeneutic turn is taken most explicitly in Sections 31 and 32 of that book, where Heidegger makes interpretive understanding the central mode of human existence (or *Dasein*).

In 1927 Heidegger himself could not have foreseen the diverse effects of his theory on later thought, and in the final section of this chapter I will describe his influence on the hermeneutic and deconstructive philosophies that emerged in the latter half of the century. But at the time Heidegger did see his account of understanding as a revolutionary break from the traditional philosophical emphasis on problems about knowledge and on the dichotomy between

subjectivity and objectivity. To explain this break I will begin by working through the details of Heidegger's account of understanding and interpretation in *Being and Time*, situating this material against the background of traditional hermeneutics as well as Cartesian and Kantian philosophy.

#### A. The Metahermeneutic Turn in Philosophy's Self-Conception

Hans-Georg Gadamer, who in *Truth and Method* (1960) was the first philosopher to develop Heidegger's account of interpretation into a general hermeneutics, defines hermeneutics as the philosophical enterprise for which the central question is, How is understanding possible?<sup>18</sup> This formulation is a reasonably straightforward way to characterize the hermeneutic philosophy that Gadamer himself has contributed to twentieth-century thought. However, before Heidegger, or to any who has not read Heidegger, the question would be misleading, since hermeneutics might thereby seem to be merely one branch of philosophy, the one that analyzes the phenomenon of understanding in contrast to other human activities such as knowledge or language. Hermeneutic philosophers before Heidegger did think of understanding in this way, and they therefore distinguished disciplines that could acquire knowledge in an objective way, as in the natural sciences, from those that could not give lawlike explanations but instead offered interpretations, as in the humanities (or *Geisteswissenschaften*).

So classified, since the humanistic disciplines like history, law, literary, and cultural studies (and perhaps philosophy itself) rarely or never give

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<sup>18</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed., tr. Joel Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), xxx.



explanations emulating the causal laws of natural science, they seem to be poor cousins in the family of knowledge. One defense of these *Geisteswissenschaften* is to claim a separate status for them and to take them as examples of a distinct cognitive operation called understanding. This move, which ran through traditional hermeneutics from Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), has a weakness in that it seems to leave understanding as a derivative and deficient subspecies of knowledge.

A central part of Heidegger's legacy comes from his strikingly different conception of hermeneutics. Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world changes our understanding of understanding from a derivative phenomenon to the central feature, the keystone, of human experience. As Gadamer remarks,

“Heidegger's temporal analytics of *Dasein* has, I think, shown convincingly that understanding is not just one of the various possible behaviors of the subject but the mode of Being of *Dasein* itself... and hence embraces the whole of its experience of the world.”<sup>19</sup>

When understanding becomes the central phenomenon for philosophy, hermeneutics is no longer conceived of as simply one minor branch of philosophy. Instead, philosophy itself becomes hermeneutic. Or at least one can now speak of a distinctively hermeneutic approach to philosophy in contrast to the traditional approach running from Descartes through Kant to Husserl. This traditional approach conceived of the human being as a “subject,” a knower disengaged from the world and from practical activity in the world.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Heidegger's hermeneutic turn is more radical than earlier philosophy, then, in that it avoids the traditional model of the subject as the knower standing over against what is to be known, the objective world. His hermeneutic turn shows both that the mentalistic vocabulary of the subject-object model is not the only possible starting point for philosophy and that this vocabulary is derivative from the more basic starting point where *Dasein* and world are coterminous in understanding. Heidegger conceives of *Dasein* and world as forming a circle, and he thus extends the traditional hermeneutic circle between a text and its reading down to the most primordial level of human existence. Traditionally the paradigm for the hermeneutic circle is the reading of a text, where the parts cannot be interpreted without an understanding of the whole, but the whole cannot be grasped without an understanding of the parts. As I shall explain, in Heidegger's deeper conception of the hermeneutic circle as a feature of human existence in general, the relation of knowledge and understanding is one neither of antagonism nor indifference, but one in which the legitimate task of achieving knowledge is a *subspecies* of the more general phenomenon of human understanding.

Heidegger begins his radicalization of the hermeneutic turn in Section 31 of *Being and Time* by distinguishing his conception of understanding from a different conception of how a philosopher might be interested in analyzing understanding:

‘Understanding’ in the sense of *one* possible kind of cognizing among others (as distinguished, for instance, from ‘explaining’) must, like explaining, be interpreted as an existential derivative of that primary understanding which is one of the constituents of the Being of the ‘there’ in general.”  
(*BT*, 182)

Traditional, pre-Heideggerian hermeneutics distinguished humanistic understanding and interpretation from the lawlike explanations of the natural sciences, and it thus put itself in a weak position when the metaquestion was raised, What is the status of the knowledge claimed by hermeneutic philosophy itself? Is hermeneutic philosophy itself the one right explanation, or is it only one possible interpretation? Obviously, hermeneutics is not itself giving causal explanations, so it appears to be at best only one possible interpretation, not the definitive explanation, of human inquiry and existence. Traditional hermeneutics, and Dilthey especially, was thus plagued by the threat of relativism, particularly by the relativism of its own philosophical status.

Now Heidegger too will want to say that *Being and Time* is an interpretation. But because he has a deeper conception of what understanding is, he will have a different conception of interpretation, and a different account of how interpretation arises from understanding. What he means by understanding is not simply one form of cognition among others, but our most basic ability to live in and cope skillfully with our world. Of course, this ability must take into account that the ways in which features of the world show up are constantly changing, and this constant change requires us to form particular interpretations. For instance, sometimes must interpret ourselves as students, as family members, sometimes as consumers, and perhaps sometimes as philosophers. Yet Heidegger suggests that all these interpretations presuppose a primary understanding of the world that runs through them. Our shift from one interpretation to another at the appropriate moment is a sign that we do understand the world. So a change in interpretation is not necessarily a sign of lack of understanding, since in these cases the change of interpretation shows that we can cope with the various demands the world places on us.

Heidegger is describing the “primary understanding” that runs through our various ways of existing in and interpreting the world. What is the status, then, of this philosophical activity of description? The philosophical description is itself an interpretation, but it is on a plane different from the interpretations that flow naturally from our everyday ways of coping with the world. Heidegger thus distinguishes between *Auslegung* and *Interpretierung*. *Auslegung*, the standard translation of which is “interpretation” with a lower-case “i,” includes the everyday phenomena of ordinary skills like hammering, typing, or driving. *Interpretierung*, translated as “Interpretation” with an upper case “I,” includes thematized, discursive articulation and theorization. *Interpretierung* is itself said to be a derived form of *Auslegung*, but Heidegger obviously does not mean to denigrate *Interpretierung* since that is what *Being and Time* is. An *Interpretierung* is a reflective working through of phenomena, such as is done in philosophy and philology. So Heidegger claims the status of philosophical *Interpretierung* and not “knowledge” or “explanation” as description for what he is doing.

Whereas the ordinary interpretations are more or less automatic, philosophical Interpretation of these ordinary interpretations is reflective in two senses. First, it is reflective in that it must explicitly articulate or thematized what goes on more immediately and less explicitly in everyday coping. Second, it is logically self-reflective in that it must itself be one possible manifestation among others of primary understanding; it will not be a representation of something that is of a different order from it, but it will be of the same kind as what it captures. Philosophical Interpretation can be “true to” the phenomenal activity of ordinary world interpretations because it is itself a form of the same phenomenon, although a more articulated or explicit form. So philosophical Interpretation is not simply arbitrary,, and not threatened by the problem of

relativism, because it is a case of the primary understanding that it is trying to capture. Philosophical Interpretation may be refined, or it may be supplanted by later redescrptions of what philosophy should be, but if it is agreed that there is a primary understanding of the world, then the philosophical articulation of that understanding will be binding to the degree that it is adequate to phenomenal manifestations of understanding, which include philosophy itself.

Is there any way to *test* Heidegger's philosophical Interpretation? Such an Interpretation will aim not merely to clarify ordinary usages of terms like "understanding," "explanation," and "knowledge," but will *reinterpret* or *reorder* them. This reordering is what goes on when Heidegger argues that something is *derived* from something else. If Heidegger can argue successfully that explanatory knowledge is a derived case of understanding, he will thus be in a stronger philosophical position than traditional hermeneutics, where understanding is simply an alternative mode of cognition. Heidegger's "derivations" are reminiscent of Kant's "transcendental deduction" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant claims to demonstrate and justify our assumption that our experiences are not simply subjective but objective. Heidegger points to Section 31 as an attempt to go deeper than Kant did by explaining what Kant left unexplained (*BT*, 184). One metaproblem with Kant's attempt to explain the possibility for our scientific knowledge of nature is the status of the synthetic *a priori* knowledge claimed by the *Critique* itself. That is, Kant is often accused of trying to give philosophical explanations of scientific explanation without reflecting sufficiently on whether the philosophical knowledge propounded in the first *Critique* had the same conditions as scientific knowledge.

Heidegger can avoid this problem by consistently claiming that *Being and Time* is an Interpretation. This Interpretation does not eliminate ratiocinative operations like explaining, deliberating, reflecting, and deciding, but situates them within a more general account of how they fit together in a primary understanding that also includes our everyday interactions in and with the world. Heidegger's account tells a story about how cognitive explanation always inheres in a context of intelligibility that is projected in understanding. Heidegger's account is thus properly construed not as a single, decisive transcendental argument, but as an Interpretation, that is, a reasonably complete and plausible reconstruction of the conditions that obtain if the things of the world make sense, and if beings like ourselves are also part of the world. Understanding is among these conditions and is a projection of an inclusive context or pattern of intelligibility as the background against which particular instances of sense making succeed.

In sum, contrary both to Kant and to traditional hermeneutics, Heidegger is trying to show us that we need not take "knowledge" as primary and see "understanding" and "interpretation" as derived, but that we can reverse this derivation. Even if the reversal is successful, however, a further problem arises if this result tells us simply that either direction or derivation is equally valid. The entire strategy of reordering or deriving would be undermined if that were the only conclusion, and relativism would again threaten. But Heidegger thinks that since traditional philosophy has come up against unsolvable antinomies and unbridgeable dichotomies, his reordering acquires greater plausibility to the degree that it avoids such difficulties. Also, Heidegger can urge that by starting from the more primary phenomenon of understanding, he can make better sense than the tradition of how knowledge is really possible. Traditional philosophy from Descartes to Kant wanted to offer not only a definition of knowledge (for

instance, as correct representation of the real world), but also an account of how the knower is connected to the known. Heidegger's strategy is different from the Cartesian strategy, which starts by assuming a basic ontological disconnection (e.g., between mental and physical substance) and then looks for instances of epistemological connection that cannot be doubted (e.g., the knowledge of the existence of a thinking subject). Heidegger's strategy is to see *Dasein* as already in the world, which suggests that what needs to be explained is not the connection, which is the basis, but the disconnection. Instances of disconnection happen obviously and frequently, as when humans make mistakes, not only cognitively but also practically. The Cartesian strategy runs into difficulty when it fails to explain (e.g., to skeptics) connection. The Heideggerian strategy must show that it does not run into similar problems when it tries to explain how apparent disconnections could arise, as in the breakdown of a ready-to-hand tool and its transformation into a merely present-at-hand or piece of junk. A crucial part of Heidegger's account of the connection of *Dasein* and world is the section on understanding as the projection of possibilities, and I will now focus on how the details of that section contribute to the hermeneutic turn.

## B. Understanding, Projection, and Possibility

One question that arises if philosophy is itself a mode of interpretation is, How can one such Interpretation be said to be better than others? Is it "true"? Are there other such Interpretations that could be "true" in the same sense? To clarify these questions Heidegger distinguishes two senses of truth. One is the ordinary philosophical sense of truth, where an assertion uncovers or discovers some fact about the world. Heidegger usually describes truth in this sense as

being about things that do not have the character of *Dasein* (BT, 118), using the term *Entdecktheit* (discoveredness). The contrasting term, “disclosedness” (*Erschlossenheit*), suggests that the total context is opened up through understanding. Understanding thus does not consist only of making assertions about the world, but also of grasping the entire mode of Being-in-the-world. Understanding grasps the world as such, without which the discovery of particular features of the world would not be possible. However, understanding grasps not only the world, but also *Dasein*'s way of being in the world. So an understanding of the world is always also a self-understanding.

To speak of self-understanding can be misleading, however, if it suggests a Cartesian or Kantian ego, which stands at a remove from the objective world as if it occupied a different, subjective world. Heidegger says instead that disclosure involves both the world and *Dasein* at the same time. *Dasein*'s understanding of its world is thus not distinct from its understanding of itself, but is at the same time an interpretation of itself. This self-interpretation thus does not discover facts about the properties of a mental substance or a noumenal self, but discloses how *Dasein* has dealt with and is dealing with the question or “issue” of its own existence. A student of physics, for instance, is not simply learning some facts about the physical world, but is learning how to do physics. The student is thus becoming a physicist, at least to some degree. Being a student is generally best described neither as finding innate abilities in oneself nor as acquiring a mass of facts about the world. Instead, being a student on Heidegger's account is learning how to go about in the world in a certain way, for instance, as a physicist or as a philosopher, where who one is and what one does are inseparable.



Understanding involves, therefore, more than the discovery of facts about particular features of the world. Understanding is more primordially the disclosure of what Heidegger calls possibilities. Heidegger suggests that the disclosure of possibilities could not be derived from the discovery of factual features. His philosophical Interpretation is trying to show that both discovery and disclosure are necessary to human activity. Focusing on the discovery of facts alone (e.g., as empiricist philosophers might) will obscure the dimension of disclosure. So Heidegger's Interpretation shows that if the dimension of disclosure is recognized, then both discovery and disclosure can be accounted for, since disclosure makes the phenomenon of discovery intelligible. The isolated, atomistic discovery of one fact after another would not generate an understanding of a world that was significant and intelligible, but only of a disconnected aggregate. An interpretation is precisely not a heap of facts but an account of how these facts are *possible*.

Possibility for Heidegger is not simply logical possibility, since understanding is of real relations and situations. Possibility also does not mean not-yet-actual, since *Dasein* is itself currently one possible way of existing or understanding. *Dasein* exists as "definite" or concrete possibilities (BT, 183), which it does not choose arbitrarily. *Dasein* finds itself as already having these possibilities. We can begin to see what Heidegger means by returning to my example of what it is to be a student. Heidegger is not describing the process of explicitly planning to be, say, a physicist or a philosopher, and possibilities are not the abstract thoughts a student might have about what it would be like to be a physicist or a philosopher. Possibilities are recognized only in the concrete activity of doing physics or philosophy and are what limit the range of what it makes sense to do or to try to do in those activities. What it is sensible to do in a particular situation is already laid out in advance in a genuine understanding of

the concrete possibilities. *Dasein* may not be explicitly aware of those possibilities it has let go by, or even of the ones that currently characterize it. *Dasein* can also be mistaken about its possibilities, for instance, by trying to fix them so rigidly that it takes them as necessities instead of as possibilities, thereby misunderstanding itself and becoming disconnected from a more primary understanding of itself (*BT*, 183).

*Dasein*'s understanding of itself as possibility, and its "knowledge" of those possibilities of which it is capable, is thus a matter of degree. This "knowledge" is often more implicit "know-how" than explicit "knowing-that," and it is more a grasp of the worldly situation than a reflective turn inward. Insofar as *Dasein* finds itself already thrown into a situation that is not of its own making, it has "in every case already gone astray and failed to recognize itself" (*BT*, 184). *Dasein* thus does not "know" itself from the start, but if it is to recover or "find itself," it must come to understand what it can do given its own possibilities in its particular worldly situation.

Understanding thus involves possibilities, and these are not simply subjective or inner phenomena, but are always tied to worldly situations. Heidegger wishes to distance himself from the traditional idea that these possibilities should be thought of as spontaneously free choices, and he rejects the "liberty of indifference" (*BT*, 183). So he avoids making "choosing" the starting point for his analysis of primary understanding, and instead starts from what he calls "projecting." Projection involves an understanding of what matters, and there will always be two sides to what matters. First, there must be a context of significance, of meanings that are really possible in the "current world." Second, nothing could matter or make a difference unless it mattered or made a difference to beings that cared, so Heidegger suggests that *Dasein*'s

own Being is also projected as that “for-the-sake-of-which” whatever matters or makes a difference.

Projection is not simply reasoning from a list of all the particular possible choices that one has, as well as the pros and cons for each choice, to some decision. Listing all the “facts” about oneself and one’s situation would be an interminable process, and the idea of specifying all that could be known about anything may even be unintelligible. Furthermore, “facts” about humans are always already meaning-laden and interpretive. Heidegger thus draws a distinction between “factuality” and “facticity.” Factuality has to do with nonhuman things, discrete facts about which could be entered in a list. Trying to draw up such a list for any particular instance of *Dasein* would always fall short of characterizing that *Dasein*, and thus *Dasein* itself always is something “more’ than it is (factually). But a central aim of Heidegger’s account of understanding is to show *Dasein*’s inherence in the world, which is to say that *Dasein* is not some free-floating spirit that transcends its material situation. As a projection (*Entwurf*, from the German stem “to throw), *Dasein* finds itself “thrown” into a situation with concrete possibilities. Possibilities that are concrete (or definite, *bestimmte*) differ from purely logical possibilities in that they come with concrete limitations. So Heidegger speaks of these limitations as *Dasein*’s “facticity,” in contradistinction to the other kind of fact that he calls “factuality.”

Now exactly *why* something matters or makes a difference may be difficult to say or explain, either to oneself or to others. Hence, Heidegger wants to distance his concept of projective understanding not only from spontaneous choice, but also from deliberate decisions, conscious planning, or the weighing of alternatives. He denies that projection consists of making explicit plans or of

grasping its possibilities “thematically” as explicit contents of the mind. Does explicit planning or conscious weighing of alternatives and deciding *never* enter human action? In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre takes the strong position that conscious reflection (or deliberation) has little to do with real choice, and that one is really just fooling oneself by such reflection to put off the inevitable need to act. As Sartre says, “a voluntary deliberation is always a deception,” one that really postpones a choice that has already been made; so conscious decision always comes too late, and “les jeux sont faits” (the dice are cast).<sup>20</sup>

Heidegger need not make such a strong claim, precisely because he has a different Interpretation of what understanding is. Understanding involves a holistic projection of a context in which particular possibilities first become intelligible. Much of what we understand thus remains largely inexplicit. However, it does not follow that when Heidegger says that understanding does not grasp its possibilities “thematically” that he must be denying that understanding is ever thematic in any way. Unlike Sartre, he need not assert that thematizing (deliberating or deciding) is only ever a way of postponing the need to take action and is thus inefficacious. The point is instead that more reflective operations such as explaining, deliberating, or deciding would ever be possible only by supervening on a larger background features that could never be explicitly thematized, but that nevertheless were part of the understanding and thus of the concrete possibilities.

In contrast to Sartre’s claims that “les jeux sont faits” Heidegger’s argument is focused on a different claim, “Become what you are” (*BT*, 186).

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<sup>20</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), 581.

This slogan has an ancient tradition, going back to the Greeks, but it also features famously in Nietzsche. The imperative that one should become who one is seem paradoxical, for one would seem able to become only what one was not (yet), and a being that already was what it was could not even try to become that way. Heidegger's solution is to say that the paradox may indeed hold for beings that do not have the character of *Dasein*. But he asserts that not only can *Dasein* become what it is, it can also fail to become what it is. The facticity-factuality distinction thus clarifies how "Become what you are" expresses an imperative that is genuine. *Dasein* is not its factuality, so it is not what it is *factually*. However, because *Dasein* is understanding, and understanding involves projection into a concrete "current world," *Dasein* is what it is *factically*. But because the projection also involves concrete possibilities, *Dasein* can *become* what it is by becoming what it is already possible for it to be. There is a genuine alternative here, for *Dasein* can equally fail to face these possibilities, and thus it can become disconnected from itself by failing to own up to all that it has been and can be.

### C. Interpretation

Becoming who we are requires interpretation for two reasons. First, we cannot become who we are unless we have an interpretation both of who we are and of how we can continue to be who we want to be. Second, what we are interpreting is already interpretive. How we get to be who we are is through interpretations, not only of ourselves but also of the possibilities inherent in the public world, which is already interpreted meaningfully for us. A question that has plagued hermeneutics, however, is, What makes some interpretations better than others? Are some interpretations true and others false?

Since interpretations involve possibilities and not simply facts, the true-false distinction may not be the most pertinent one to use when judging interpretations. If an interpretation of any sort can be said to be “true,” one must be using truth in a different sense from that in which a statement is said to be true. Interpretations typically contain or imply many statements, so in speaking of the truth of the set of statements, the sense of truth is extended. One might say that an interpretation is true only if all its assertions are true, but this reductive claim seems to misconstrue what calling an interpretation true means. An interpretation may consist of more than simply those assertions that are uttered, since a good interpretation frees up the possibility of uttering many other significant assertions. There is also no reason to think that the set of possible assertions generated by an interpretation is closed. Furthermore, two interpretations could conflict with each other on some central claims while each one contained many other claims that either interpretation would grant to be true. In sum, interpretive understandings may be better judged by labels other than true or false, and Heidegger invokes such contrasting normative terms as authentic or inauthentic, genuine or not genuine, and transparent or opaque.<sup>21</sup>

Already this traditional philosophical obsession with the truth or falsity of interpretive claims may be on the wrong track in trying to understand Heidegger's account. In Section 32 of *Being and Time* Heidegger is not primarily concerned with explicit, deliberate Interpretation (*Interpretierung*) but with the phenomenon of *Auslegung*, that is, with interpretation of a practical sort that may not always involve articulated judgments or thematizing. Contrary to present tendencies to think of the reading of texts as the paradigm case of

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed account of these terms, see Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's "Being and Time," Division I* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), ch. 11.

interpretation, Heidegger's paradigm cases are everyday activities like opening a door or hammering. Even Heidegger's philosophical Interpretation is an interpretation not of a text, but of *Dasein*. But these cases are analogues of texts insofar as Heidegger's point is that even the most obvious ordinary objects taken by themselves do not have their characteristics inscribed in them. Instead, the characteristics of the tools come into being in the concrete interpretation manifested in activity of using them.

Contrary to an empiricist epistemology that presupposes that we first "perceive" objects with their particular properties and only secondarily apply or use them, Heidegger's suggestion is that this type of perception is primary. Seeing does not simply perceive the properties of external objects with the bodily eyes (*BT*, 187). Instead of construing seeing as seeing *that* an object has such and such a property, Heidegger construes seeing as already interpreting something *as* something (e.g., seeing something as a hammer, as a door, or as a table). Another example of such "seeing-as" (not Heidegger's own) is found in the hermeneutic phenomenon of reading. When we read a text, we do not first perceive black marks on a white page and then construe their meaning. Instead, the meaning of the text, and indeed the text itself, comes to be only in the reading. Hence, for later hermeneutic theory the text and the reading form the paradigm case of the hermeneutic circle. While the early Heidegger does not emphasize textuality to the same degree, his account does not underwrite the shift of philosophical attention from the epistemological model of perception to the hermeneutic model of reading.

Since reading involves grasping the meaning of the text, it is appropriate that Heidegger features the notion of meaning (*Sinn*) centrally. He does so in a way that will be congruent with this hermeneutic model and that will block

some traditional problems that arise from construing meanings as private, internal, mental states. Meaning for Heidegger is not something that one imposes on an object, and it is neither a distinctive object of perception nor an intermediary between the subject and the object. Strictly speaking, says Heidegger, what is understood is not the meaning but the entity. There is thus a sense in which Heidegger eliminates the traditional philosophical notion of meaning from his vocabulary. He thinks that we grasp entities as entities in their nexus of relations with other entities, not as aggregates of perceptual qualities. Thus we do not first see some colors or hear some noises and only secondarily infer that we are seeing or hearing a motorcycle. Instead, we first encounter a motorcycle, and only secondarily (if at all) do we abstract its properties (perhaps to hear its “noise”).

“Meaning” for Heidegger thus involves the holistic way in which something can become intelligible *as* something in a nexus of relations (*BT*, 193). Independent of the nexus of meanings, entities are not meaningful, (in this special sense). Since this nexus of meaning requires *Dasein*, only *Dasein* can be said to be meaningful or meaningless, as Heidegger understands the notions. In other words, unless objects inhere in an interpretive context, they could not be understood. So they cannot be said to have meanings that are prior to and independent of their interpretive uses.

The context of meaningfulness is thus what makes it possible to interpret something *as* something. For the most part this context is not explicit, but makes up the background of understanding, or what Heidegger calls the “fore-structure” of understanding. For an explicit interpretation of something as something to occur (e.g., in picking up the hammer and hammering), there are three levels at which understanding must be running in the background. First,



there must be a general grasp of the whole situation (e.g., of the workshop as a whole). Heidegger calls this the “fore-having” (*Vorhabe*), where, before making any particular object explicit, we *have* a background grasp of the totality of possible practices involved. But to have a grasp of the whole is not yet to make any particular feature explicit, so the second level required before anything can become explicit is “fore-sight” (*Vorsicht*), where we *see* in advance the appropriate way in which things can appear. But for something to become fully explicit in an act of interpretation there would have to be some particular concepts under which it would be appropriate even to begin interpreting it. So the third level required before an explicit interpretation can occur is the “fore-conception” (*Vorgriff*), where we grasp conceptually in advance the appropriate way to interpret something.

Each of these levels brings the interpretation close to being explicit, but none of them is fully explicit. Should we infer from this insistence on the fore-structure of understanding that it is “prior to,” which genetically or logically, the explicit articulation of an interpretation? That Heidegger might be giving a priority to the prereflective and prelinguistic levels is perhaps reinforced by his examples, which come from everyday activities such as using hammers and opening doors, not from more explicitly cognitive activities like reading texts. Heidegger warns us, however, not to break interpretation up “into pieces” (*BT*, 192), and we should not infer that the implicit levels of the fore-structure of the understanding would function independently of explicit interpretations. The fore-structure of understanding goes together with the as-structure of interpretation, and the levels of *Vorhabe*, *Vorsicht*, and *Vorgriff* are all in play at once in any given act of interpretation.

Furthermore, while Heidegger wants to show that interpretation takes place in areas of activity other than those where language is involved, he would not need to claim that understanding is more essentially prelinguistic than linguistic. While not all interpretation involves uttering sentences or making assertions, Heidegger's point is not to deny but to affirm that asserting is itself an interpretive practice. He will have a separate argument in later sections that although not all interpretation involves explicit linguistic thematization, the being who is *Dasein* and is able to interpret would also need to be a being who could thematized and assert. In this section, moreover, he does include textual interpretation as a case of interpretation. If he says that philological Interpretation is a derivative case, he is not making a derogatory claim about textual interpretation (*BT*, 194). On the contrary, he objects to the philosophical tendency to contrast the "textual" disciplines like historiography and literary studies with the natural sciences and to conclude that the former are "less rigorous" than the latter. While he recognizes that natural science is a "legitimate task" (*BT*, 194), as we have seen, he thinks that science is a subspecies of understanding. So instead of thinking that science is a separate domain of knowledge, and then puzzling about whether history and literature should count as knowledge, Heidegger is giving an account of human understanding that will accommodate these different disciplines as subspecies. Hence, he does not see them either as unrelated enterprises or as a family in which the humanities are poor cousins of the natural sciences.

To make this case he need not privilege the textual disciplines over the sciences. So he does not invert the hierarchy and privilege historiography over mathematics. Mathematics is "narrower," he says (*BT*, 195), which is not to say that it is poorer, but simply that it has defined its limits in a different way than the humanities. Historiography on his model is not criticized because it is

incapable of precise definitions and rigorous demonstrations. Instead, when properly practiced, it can highlight the possibilities, and not simply the factual consequences, of human action. Historiographic understanding is circular, but this circle is not the vicious one of an allegedly rigorous deduction that succeeded only in proving what it already presupposed. Instead, all understanding is circular, says Heidegger, in the sense that “any interpretation which is to contribute understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted” (*BT*, 194). This “hermeneutic circle” thus characterizes all understanding, for there must already be a context of intelligibility for any discovery to be made, or for any conclusion to be proved.

This insistence on the circularity of understanding raises the problem of whether one is always trapped within one's own assumptions, or whether there is some way to get out of the circle. The solution to this problem will depend on how “getting out” is construed. Heidegger, of course, believes that interpretations can make discoveries and that they can correct their own inadequacies. Heidegger grants that we do not simply prove things that we already know, or limit ourselves to “popular conceptions.” *Genuine, primordial* understanding will see that these popular conceptions or standard assumptions are hindrances to better ways of interpreting (*BT*, 195). However, Heidegger's way of explaining how fanciful interpretations and popular conceptions are to be avoided may confuse some readers. He says that the task is to check our prior understanding of the subject matter against “the things themselves” (*BT*, 195). This phrase “the things themselves” might suggest that there is a domain outside the circle against which our beliefs can be tested. However, Heidegger's main point is to undermine this strong philosophical assertion of a radically independent “outside.” His point is instead that beliefs can be checked only against other beliefs. Understanding is holistic and includes a dense pattern of

interlocking beliefs and skillful know-how, so the idea of “getting out” of it is not really intelligible. Heidegger thus insists that interpretation is never a “presuppositionless apprehending” of some *given* (BT, 191).

Even if one is willing to abandon the idea of an independent given “outside” the circle of understanding, one still might object to the holism in the thesis that all understanding is interpretive.<sup>22</sup> That is, one might think that understanding is *prior to* interpretation. This claim could mean that there is an understanding of something, and that this understanding then gets “interpreted,” for instance, by applying that understanding to a particular situation (as when a judge interprets a statute by applying it to a case not explicitly covered by the abstract legal language). Or the claim might be that when we really understand something we do not describe ourselves as interpreting it, since to say that we were interpreting would suggest that there were features that we had not yet grasped correctly or adequately. Either way expresses the feeling that there must be something “beneath” interpretation, such that interpretation is not a circle but an “arch” that remains firmly grounded in its object.<sup>23</sup> Behind this insistence on the priority of understanding over interpretation would be an *epistemological* intuition, since the worry would be that understanding needs to be adequate to its object, which somehow anchors interpretation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Or at least, all understanding is interpretive in the sense of *Auslegung*, not necessarily in the sense of *Interpretierung*. Richard Shusterman raises the objection under discussion here in his article “Beneath Interpretation: Against Hermeneutic Holism,” *Monist* 73, No. 2 (1990), 181-204.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Ricoeur appeals to the metaphor of the arch in the account of interpretation in “Qu’est-ce qu’un Texte? Expliquer et comprendre,” in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik: Aufsätze II*, ed. Rüdiger Bubner, Konrad Cramer, and Reiner Wiehl (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970), 181-200.

<sup>24</sup> For the Heideggerian critique of epistemological foundationalism see Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1983), especially 150-82.

Although many philosophers before Heidegger started from this epistemological worry, Heidegger's own project is to show that this problem can only arise *within* the circle of understanding. To start from the problem is already to disconnect the interpretation and that which is being interpreted to such a degree that it becomes impossible to reconnect them. Heidegger's insistence on the circle sees a particular misunderstanding arising only against a tacit background of shared understanding. While any interpretation may involve particular points of misunderstanding, it would be a mistake to infer that all readings are misreadings or that, as Jonathan Culler characterizes the literary theories of Paul de Man and Harold Bloom (but not Jacques Derrida), "understanding is a special case of misunderstanding."<sup>25</sup> Understanding must generally be a successful practice before particular aspects of the interpretive understanding could even emerge as mistakes or misunderstandings. Of course, in the process of interpretive understanding, the interpreter has the sense that there is something "out there" that is to be understood. Heidegger himself insists on this phenomenon and gives the following explanation of what is really happening:

If, when one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation, in the sense of exact textual Interpretation, one likes to appeal to what 'stands there,' then one finds that what 'stands there' in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious, undiscussed assumption of the interpreter, which necessarily lies in every interpretive approach as such, that is, as that which is pre-given through fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception" (*BT*, 192).

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<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 176. Jacques Derrida explicitly rejects this thesis in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 157.

So Heidegger does not deny that interpretations include some apparent givens, commitments, or purchase points. However, these points do not lie outside the circle of understanding, but are already at play within the circle as tacit aspects of our prior understanding of our world and ourselves. The world is itself in the circle, both in general as its horizon and also concretely as the commitments of any successful practice of understanding. Any particular assumption may become problematic, and therefore move from being tacitly taken for granted to being explicitly called into question. Then the assumption may show itself to be merely a popular misconception or a fanciful, superficial glossing over of difficulties. But any challenge to any particular assumption can be made only by appeal to other commitments that the interpretation is not willing to give up. So the challenge is from within the circle and is not to some independent given “outside” or “beneath” the circle.

If there is no outside to the circle, understanding should not itself be taken as a mental operation that is distinct from interpretation. Understanding is itself always realized in interpretation and is not a separate, prior operation that then gets reprocessed in a secondary operation of interpretation. Understanding functions concretely only as interpretation: “In interpretation, understanding does not become something different, but instead it becomes itself” (*BT*, 188). Interpretation is the concrete working through of the possibilities projected by the understanding. That is, the context of intelligibility that is tacitly understood provides the background against which specific interpretive actions make sense. The tacit background and the explicit interpretive action are integral functions of any instance of interpretive understanding.

#### D. After Heidegger

If the pieces of Heidegger's account of understanding and interpretation are now in place, some concluding reflections on the outcome of the hermeneutic turn later in the twentieth century are in order. Two thinkers in the second half of the twentieth century whose work would not have been possible without these sections of *Being and Time* are Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jacques Derrida. Yet the hermeneutic theory developed by Gadamer and the deconstructive movement fathered by Derrida takes the Heideggerian account in different and apparently opposed directions. Gadamerian hermeneutics appear to deconstructionists to harbor the hidden assumption that the text has an internal unity of meaning, and that meaning is a single thing that interpretation must aim at *reconstructing*. The deconstructionists see this faith in the unity and the coherence of the text as a vestige of metaphysical faith, which they aim to *deconstruct*. In contrast to the hermeneutic move to recover and reconstruct *the* meaning of the text, deconstruction is the operation of questioning this faith in the meaning of the text by finding in the rhetoric and style of the language of the text moments where the assumption of the unity of meaning fails.

At least two problems, then, are raised by these two different ways of developing Heidegger's analysis of the circle of understanding. One problem is whether interpretation should be reconstructive or deconstructive in intent. The other is whether the interpretation's account of the meaning of the interpreted entails a metabelief that the interpretation is approximating the ideal of the one right interpretation. I will call the position that believes that this ideal is posited in all interpretation *monism*, and the denial of monism I will label *pluralism*.

The debate about deconstruction is too complex to be summarized in this study, and I therefore limit myself to the issue of what follows directly from

Sections 31 and 32 of *Being and Time* for this controversy. The issue has two sides, a methodological one and a political one. The methodological one turns on the question whether Heidegger's insistence on the circle of understanding does not simply imprison us in our own outlook, blocking us from recognizing the otherness or alterity of the text. The political issue arises from Heidegger's further insistence that the fore-structure of understanding forms our interpretations *in advance*. Thus, interpreters inherit from their tradition much of background of their readings. From the deconstructive point of view the hermeneutic position that accepts Heidegger's analysis is too traditionalist and thus politically suspect because it seems unable to challenge the cultural and political status quo.

The countercharges against deconstruction are easy to imagine. Methodologically, deconstruction will appear to be fantasizing an escape from the circle of understanding by its dalliance with an impossible "outside" where meaning is undecidable and thus hopelessly multiple and fractured. Politically, its critique will seem pointless, since the fantasy of a complete break with tradition can lead nowhere. Deconstruction will seem to be neglecting Heidegger's insistence that we find ourselves already thrown into a social situation, which has specific concrete possibilities but also real limitations. Deconstruction's own faith that any construction can be deconstructed will lead to an undirected resistance that will be ineffectual because of its inability to generate a positive construction of its own.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, these charges and countercharges may obscure the reach of Heidegger's original account of the hermeneutic circle. That account did not

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<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Habermas advances this line of attack on deconstruction in Chapter 7 of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, tr. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).



envision the specific controversy that I have sketched. Without minimizing this controversy, that is stimulating much current work in literary theory and social philosophy, I will briefly outline some ways in which Heidegger's account can accommodate central features of both reconstructive and the deconstructive enterprises.

Before this reconciliation can begin, however, the issue of monism versus pluralism must be clarified. Part of the deconstructive worry about the hermeneutic recovery of meaning may be caused by a suspicion that this recovery presupposes that monistic ideal of the one final, right interpretation. Much can be said for that ideal, yet in the exposition that I have given of Heidegger's account I have deliberately stressed the elements in it that I find pointing toward an antimonistic pluralism. Heidegger's account of "meaning" in his technical sense may seem monistic because it posits a whole, a totality of involvements, a single context in which interpretation may take place. My insistence on the holistic nature of meaning in this special sense suggests, however, that the context is always revisable, and that revision will come from within the context of belief itself. This holism implies, therefore, that while the task of understanding strives to be coherent and unified, it must always recognize that there are elements in it that have not been worked through explicitly and that may be inconsistent with other central commitments. So the context can always turn out to include inadequate elements. The drive of understanding toward a single coherent position is thus compatible with its allowance for the inevitability of hidden error and bias, and the recognition that no interpretation is final.

Other aspects of Heidegger's account that support the metaposition of pluralism includes his revision of the ordinary conception of truth and his

description of the fore-structure of projective understanding. While interpretations contain true statements, one cannot adjudicate between two conflicting interpretations simply by counting the true statements that would be entailed by each one. Other criteria (such as richness, relevance to the present, genuineness, or authenticity) come into play, and these more normative considerations can lead us to prefer some interpretations to others. But the criteria are themselves interpretable and do not obviously support the monistic belief in a single exclusive interpretation. Furthermore, Heidegger's account of understanding as projection suggests that explicit interpretations always arise from implicit needs. The appearance of a new interpretation is likely to generate new needs, and these will in turn stimulate further interpretation. That the circle of understanding is never closed need not raise the specter of epistemological relativism. The nihilistic conclusion that our present interpretations are mostly false and does not follow from the pluralistic thought that they will be altered by future generations, for whom the context and the background conditions will have changed.

Heidegger may not have fully accepted this pluralistic conclusion about his own theory of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. I noted Heidegger's apparent desire to outdo Kant with Heidegger's own suggestion that Section 31 rivals Kant's transcendental deduction. But I also pointed out another reading of Heidegger's enterprise, one that takes seriously this metaposition of interpretive pluralism allows us to imagine ways in which Heidegger's account of understanding could be expanded and modified. One way it can be modified is to take the hermeneutic turn more radically than Heidegger did in 1927, allowing language a more central role by modeling the account of understanding more explicitly on reading, as Gadamer did in 1960. Another way would be to recognize more explicitly and strategically how understanding

can directly challenge meaning and how much more conscious the rhetorical play of language can become. The latter way was the achievement of Derrida and the deconstructive movement from the late 1960s to the present.

If these modifications are granted, it must also be recognized that they are prefigured in *Being and Time* itself. Whatever Heidegger's personal politics were, the text of *Being and Time* allows for the deconstructivist suspicion of simply recovering the tradition. Heidegger insists that the tradition may need to be criticized, and he reminds us that the "tradition" is not simply the "past." The past is finished, and there would be no point in criticizing it since criticism could have no effect on the past. What we (and poststructuralists like Derrida and Michel Foucault) may need to criticize is the present, or more specifically, the present's interpretation of how it has come to be what it is, which is what "tradition" is. The criticism of the "traditional" in the present need not be presented as a complete break with tradition, but more reasonably as a break with a prevalent but mistaken understanding of the tradition's possibilities. So an effective criticism will see places where the present has misconstrued the possibilities inherited from the tradition, and it will also draw our attention to concrete possibilities in the tradition that have currently been lost from sight.<sup>27</sup>

If political, social, and historical criticism is to be genuinely possible on the Heideggerian account, however, there must be some resolution of the methodological question that I rose about whether we are not always imprisoned in our own cognitive and normative standpoint. This problem seems to follow from Heidegger's general claim that we can understand something only from within a context that we bring with us already. If the circle of understanding were static, this worry would be justified. But close attention to

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<sup>27</sup> See §74 of *BT*, especially 438.

Heidegger's text shows that he thinks of the circle as a dynamic process of making aspects of the implicit background explicit and then testing standard assumptions to see if they really hold up, given the rest of what we believe and do. Hence, he speaks of testing assumptions against the "things themselves" to make "the scientific theme secure" (*BT*, 195). Gadamer's own theory in *Truth and Method* (see pp. 254-71) is built around an explication of these sections of *Being and Time*. Gadamer replies to the charge that, on the hermeneutic account, understanding is always imprisoned in its own standpoint by pointing out that in interpreting a text our own preconceptions often do not work out. The text may give us a shock by showing us a side of the subject matter that we had not anticipated. So the circle of understanding is a dynamic one where preconceptions will either work out or fail. Heidegger had spoken of genuine understanding as that which gets beyond "fancies" and "popular conceptions," and these are precisely what come to nothing when the interpreter tries explicitly to work them out.

Gadamer thus insists that it is false to conclude that the hermeneutic circle cannot recognize the alterity of the text. I would add that deconstruction could indeed be a crucial moment in the circle of interpretation, for its techniques could be used to ensure that the alterity of the text was taken seriously enough. The circle of understanding should not be purely reconstructive, if by that is meant either that the interpreter reads only what is already familiar back into the text or that in the effort find a unity of meaning the interpreter should overlook tensions and contradictions that are also at play. But the circle could also not be purely deconstructive, since there must first be an assumed meaning that is deconstructed, and the discovery of tension and contradiction is itself a projection of an understanding of what is really going on in the text.

Heidegger's model of projective understanding can therefore recognize both reconstruction and deconstruction as necessary moments of interpretation. How these are balanced in particular cases is itself a matter of judgment and may be a part of what makes interpretations interestingly different. What makes some interpretations more interesting or insightful than others is a question that I suggested at the beginning of this chapter and is an appropriate one with which to conclude. While the question is a large one, there is at least the outline of an answer in these sections of *Being and Time*. At least one central aspect of what makes an interpretation better will be whether it understands not only its object and subject matter, but also itself. Interpretations that are methodologically more self-aware are therefore better if they bring to light unnoticed features not only of the object of interpretation, but also of the conditions and procedures of interpretation. A good interpretation, on Heidegger's model, will show something about the possibilities of interpretation as such. An interpretation presupposes a self-understanding, and bringing crucial features of this implicit self-understanding to light will make the interpretation insightful (in Heidegger's special sense of sight, which is not simply the perception of present-at-hand objects, but the disclosure of the total background or context).

As I have suggested, however, self-understanding is not to be taken in the traditional sense in which it might suggest grasping some inner, private self. In German, "self-understanding" (*Sichverstehen*) has to do with knowing one's way around. So for Heidegger, who construes *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world, self-understanding thus has to do with knowing one's way around in the world or in some specific worldly subject matter, such as physics or carpentry, or bond trading, for example. That Heidegger was interpreting *Dasein* and not simply a text does not, in itself, signify a conflict with later hermeneutic theory.

Instead, his *Interpretierung* of *Dasein* brings out a double-sided possibility of interpretation. On the one side, genuine interpretation will reflect the being that is interpreting. So there must be some dimension of the interpreter's context that is itself brought into focus. On the other side, who this being is will itself depend on its interpretations of the world, including its beliefs and its activities. So on the Heideggerian account any good interpretation should disclose something about both *Dasein* and the world. Interpretation is, after all, the way that both meaningful human existence and a significant world become what they are.

### Chapter 3

#### ART IN HEIDEGGER'S EARLIER THOUGHT

In this chapter and in the one that follows, I intend to fill out this account of Heidegger's thought by dealing with various topics which have either not yet come to our notice or have been treated only briefly by most authors or as they found expression in his early writings. Following that, I will deal more intimately with Hölderlin and other thinkers that Heidegger engaged. We have already seen that, beginning from the inaugural lecture, "What is Metaphysics?" and that additions that were made to it, Heidegger was moving away from the apparently atheistic and narrowly humanistic or even Promethean beliefs that some interpreters, notably Sartre, had read into *Being and Time*. By the time we get to the *Letter on Humanism*, which belongs to the year 1947, we seem to be in a very different world, though Heidegger himself tended to minimize the extent of the "turning" (*Kehre*) that had taken place in his thought and interpreted the new or apparently new ideas as developments of what was already implicit in the early writings. But, of course, even he plainly admitted that the path that he had first tried to follow had broken off, and this fact is amply attested by the unfinished state of *Being and Time*.

The first topic to be considered is Heidegger's answer to the question, "What is a thing?" and the way he was answering this question in the 1950s was decidedly different from what he was saying in 1927 in *Being and Time* (96-

97).<sup>28</sup> Heidegger is still maintaining that a thing is not primarily a material object 'present-at-hand' for our observation. That objective view of a thing is derivative from a much more intimate relation to the thing. The tendency in Western thought has been to think of the world as a collection of things set over against us, and of *Dasein* itself, not indeed as another thing, but as another entity 'present-at-hand'. But *Dasein* is not just another item in the world, not even another rather special item, to be designated by the word "person." *Dasein* is certainly 'Being-in-the-world' and there can be no worldless *Dasein*, but *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-world is quite different from the "innerworldly (*innerweltlich*) being that belongs to things. *Dasein* transcends the world, and gives to the world its unity as world, for *Dasein* is the point from which the world is seen and understood. The multitude of things contain in the world are seen and understood in the context of the world, within which they are connected in a network with each other and with *Dasein* (*BT*, 95ff.).

These things are seen by *Dasein* as not just present-at-hand or lying about, but as ready-to-hand, available for use by *Dasein* in its concerned dealings with the world. For *Dasein*'s Being-in-the-world is not that of an observer, but of one who "dwells" in the world, one who has to carve out a living in the world. Thus the things of the world become *Dasein* equipment (*Zeug*) for living. As Heidegger reminded us,<sup>29</sup> the Greek word for 'thing' is *pragma*, something that we employ in our *praxeis*, "activities." For *Dasein*, the things of the world become increasingly a closely-knit system of instruments that are serviceable to

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<sup>28</sup> Here again we see Heidegger trying to overcome a duality. When we speak of a thing, we think of something 'there', something lying around that can be seen or used. But in Heidegger's view, this "objective" way of looking at things is an abstraction from an originally more concrete practical or pragmatic way. This is a point at which his concentration on *everyday* existence does bring us back to a more basic stance of the *Dasein* in which theory and practice have not yet been separated.

<sup>29</sup> *BT*, 96-97.



*Dasein*. This is true not only of artifacts, but even of natural objects that are incorporated into the instrumental system. Today, even accentuating articulation wilderness area may be designated a “national park” and it becomes, so to speak, equipment for recreation. Thus the world is more and more a human project.

The example of a thing that Heidegger chooses to illustrate his theory is a hammer. If we ask, “What is a hammer?” the question is not answered by an objective description of the hammer as an object in isolation as merely one of the many things within the world. It can, of course, be described in that way – we might be told that the head of the hammer is steel, that the shaft is made of carbon fiber, and so on, but we would not have begun to understand a hammer. We understand it only when we see someone hammering, and then we understand also its relations to nails and to wood and to such human activities as building and furnishing – in other words, we understand it in the context of a world. The world is already implied in the hammer, for the world, like *Dasein*, is not another thing, but an *a priori* conception that enables us to see things in their being, that is, for what they are. We see the hammer as piece of equipment for hammering; we see the automobile as a piece of equipment for transport, and so on.

Now, this whole way of looking at the world may seem very utilitarian and down-to-earth, and indeed it is, for in the division of *Being and Time* in which he discusses the world, Heidegger does say that he is confining his analysis to “everyday” existence and he even speaks of the world as a workshop (*BT*, 100). But the way remains open to a fuller or richer understanding of the world and this does in fact come, though not explicitly until about twenty years later in his writings.

The new understanding comes in an essay titled “The Thing” (“*Das Ding*”)<sup>30</sup> of the year 1950, though we already note a preliminary allusion to it in the little piece about “The Country Lane,” written in 1949. It is an understanding that gets away from the somewhat exploitative attitude to the world expounded in *Being and Time* and accords more with the claim in the *Letter on Humanism* that “man is not the lord of beings, but the shepherd of Being (*Basic Writings*, 221).

The new view is expressed in terms of what of what Heidegger calls the “Foufold” or the “quadrate”<sup>31</sup> (*das Geviert*). A thing is not only more than an object, it is more even than a human product or an item in the human equipment for bringing the earth under control. A thing is now granted the possibility of having a beauty and dignity of its own. What then is this “Foufold” or “quadrate”? It means that everything has a Foufold reference, or has four dimensions of being that together constitute the meaning of that thing. The four dimensions are: earth and sky, mortals and gods. On hearing these words, we may wonder whether Heidegger has not slipped over from philosophy into the realm of myth and poetry. Perhaps he has, but this would not trouble him very much. Even in *Being and Time*, he introduced a classical myth about Care into the middle of his existential analytic, on the ground that this myth shows us a pre-scientific understanding of *Dasein* which anticipates the results of phenomenological analysis; and likewise, from early in his career, he had recognized that poetry is by no means merely an emotive or non-cognitive type of utterance, but a way to truth, even truth at the deepest level, so that the thinker may find that he has more in common with the poet than with the scientist.

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<sup>30</sup> *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954). GA 7.

This takes us back to the question of the “turn” in his writings, and a brief explanation of “The Country Lane,” will serve us well when we later discuss the poetry of Hölderlin. Heidegger himself tended to play down the attempt to contrast his earlier and later thought. He did acknowledge, as we have noted, that the path on which he originally set out had broken off. He would not have denied that there had been a turn (*Kehre*) in the road that he was following. But he was unhappy with suggestions that this amounted to a reversal. His aim from the first had been to rekindle interest in the question about the meaning of Being as such. Those who talked most of a reversal were those who had fallen into the Sartrean error of supposing that *Being and Time* is primarily a work of philosophical anthropology, though Heidegger himself could not be altogether exculpated if people did make this mistake.

Nevertheless, when we look at Heidegger's work as whole, we do notice some quite major shifts. Perhaps the most obvious is that there is a shift of focus from the *Dasein* known in human existence to Being in the most universal sense. A second point is that the scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) character of the phenomenological method used in the analysis of *Dasein* gives way to an appreciation of the language of the poet in interpreting the meaning of Being and *Dasein*'s relation to Being. There is a change, too, in the character of the thinking. In the early work, the thinking of the philosopher is investigative and active. In the later work, thinking becomes meditative, even passive, so that some critics have claimed to see mystical tendencies in Heidegger. Very important, too, is the change in the concept of the world. In the early thinking, the world is an instrumental system, and things lie ready-to-hand for the use of the *Dasein* in everyday concerns. But in the later writings, the world is no

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 170ff.

longer primarily a workshop but has a dignity in its own right, so to speak. Things are not just “equipment,” but are constituted by the “Foufold” of heaven and earth, gods and mortals. This is also a good illustration of how the language of poetry, even a quasi-mythological language, has replaced phenomenological analysis.

These changes in Heidegger, though they do not constitute a “reversal,” are sufficiently substantial to show a definite ‘turn.’ Perhaps it could be summarized under the last of the points that I noted, “from phenomenology to thought,” and this phrase was in fact chosen by William Richardson as the subtitle of his magisterial exposition of Heidegger’s philosophy.

The turn or change began very soon after the writing of *Being and Time*, when Heidegger realized that he would have to look for a different path from the one he was planning to follow. But the turn was not an abrupt one, and we can observe it going on over several years. Perhaps, as John Caputo has suggested, we should think not just of one turn in Heidegger’s thought but of several turns.<sup>32</sup> He mentions as the first the turn away from Catholicism to a kind of independent Protestantism in Heidegger’s early years of teaching at Marburg. Then there was the turn to something close to atheism or even nihilism extending perhaps through the time of his involvement with National Socialism. But already during these years there are hints of a “return” – not indeed to his original Catholicism, but to what Richard Kroner called

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<sup>32</sup> C. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 272.

“Heidegger’s private religion”<sup>33</sup> which was perhaps as much derived from Greek sources as from biblical ones.

In 1949 Heidegger wrote a short piece which is quite different from most of his writings. It was called *Der Feldweg*, or in English *The Country Path*, and describes a path leading through the countryside near to Heidegger’s hometown of Messkirch. This writing, I say, is different from most of Heidegger’s work. It is not overtly philosophical, but one does not need much imagination to see this path as an allegory of Heidegger’s own path of thinking, though whether he intended it to be taken that way, I would not claim to know. The path leaves the town and proceeds through the fields in the direction of some woods. Near the edge of the woods stood a tall oak, with a wooden bench beneath it. Heidegger remembers how in his youth he used to set on that bench studying the great masters of thought and trying to understand what they were saying. At that time in his life, I suppose Aristotle must have been one of the authors on whom he lavished special attention, perhaps also Heraclitus and Parmenides, certainly St. Thomas Aquinas and the scholastics, possibly even Nietzsche and Husserl. The path skirted the woods, where the men of the neighborhood, including Heidegger’s father, had each his own woodpile where he would gather fallen boughs. And here Heidegger thinks of the oak as symbolizing that Founfold nature which is in all things, though he does not explicitly mention it as a philosophical doctrine. What he says is this:

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Kroner, “Heidegger’s Private Religion,” in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, v. II, n. 4 (1956), 17.

The hardness and smell of the oakwood began to speak clearly of the slow and lasting way in which the tree grew. The oak itself proclaimed that all that lasts and bears fruit is founded on such growth alone; that growth means to lie open to the span of the heavens and, at the same time, to have roots in the dark earth; that everything real and true only prospers if mankind fulfills at the same time the two conditions of being ready for the demands of highest heaven and of being safe in the shelter of the fruitful earth. The oak continually repeats this to the country lane, whose tracks runs past it... The kingdom of all living things which grow around the country lane offers a whole world in microcosm. The very ineffability of their language proclaims, as Meister Eckhart, that old master of life, says, God, first God.<sup>34</sup>

These sentences from the essay show us how Heidegger's philosophy, in spite of its complexities and sophistication, has its origins in very simple experience. But we have to be ready to hear such things. Contemporary man, Heidegger believes, does not hear the message. "Man seeks in vain to reduce the world to his plans if he is not attuned to the message of the country lane."<sup>35</sup>

The lane ends in some marshes by the riverside. Turning around, we see it leading back toward the town. We can also see the tower of St. Martin's church, and as we climb towards the town, we hear the bell ringing the hour, that bell which Heidegger's father had tended and which had first made him think of time and temporality. After the bell, there is silence. To quote the essay again,

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<sup>34</sup> Quotations are from the English translation by Michael Heron in *Envoy*, v. 3, n. 11 (1950), 71-75; 71.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

The eternal sameness of things surprises and sets free. The message of the country lane is now quite clear. Is it the soul, or the world, or God who is speaking?<sup>36</sup>

Is it the soul or the world or God who is speaking? Heidegger does not answer his own question. Perhaps he would have said that it is the voice of Being, which we human beings may name as the soul or the world or God, but which is essentially nameless. It is at this point that we can believe Heidegger had come close to mysticism, and his reference to Meister Eckhart strengthens this belief.

But certainly the country path was leading back towards St. Martin's church. I do not wish to appear to conscript Heidegger into either god-belief or the church, and we shall see that even his later writings are not specifically Christian, though they have a strong religious tone, I would assert more along the lines of Buddhism than any other religion. But what can be stated as simply matter of fact is that when Heidegger died in 1976 his remains were interred in St. Martin's church yard and a requiem mass was celebrated in the church at the philosopher's request by his old friend and colleague, Father Bernard Welte.

Most of us live our lives in a linear fashion, but often philosophers, such as Augustine, Whitehead, and Heidegger, tend to live their lives in a vast circle, returning to the place where they started in life. This may have well been the case with Heidegger.

Just as he had used the example with the hammer to illustrate his early understanding of the nature of the thing, Heidegger now chooses the example of a wine-jug or pitcher to elucidate what he means by the Foufold. The jug refers to earth, because the material of which it is made, some kind of clay, has been

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 75.

taken from the earth. It refers to the sky, from which has come both sunshine and rain to swell and ripen the grapes used for making wine. Then there is the human reference – the jug is the work of skilled craftsman or artist, the potter who has given to it the form of a wine-jug. And what about the gods? The wine-jug may be used for pouring a libation. Just as with the hammer, it was the act of hammering that revealed the being of the hammer, so with the jug, it is the act of pouring out the wine that shows us what the jug *is*.

Admittedly, one may feel that Heidegger has to strain matters a little in order to make the Foufold fit the jug, or possibly to make the jug fit the Foufold schema. It is the act of pouring that is said to show us the jug as it is, and presumably, that means in its unity, for we are told that the four aspects of the jug all belong together and each implies the others. But can we achieve greater clarity about this “Foufold”?

Although I wrote that the language of Heidegger about the Foufold seems to be poetic rather than strictly philosophical, his use of the scheme can hardly fail to remind us of Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes.<sup>37</sup> According to Aristotle, every thing has a material cause – his example is the bronze out of which a statue is made, and we can see that this corresponds to the clay of the wine-jug. Then there is the formal cause. The statue is, let us say, a statue of Apollo and the bronze has been cast into the form that the artist visualized as that of the god. It is not easy to see how this could correspond to the sky, in Heidegger's scheme. Third comes the activity that has produced the statue, namely, the work of the artist and his assistants. This third type of cause is often called the “efficient” cause, but Heidegger himself, in a brief discussion of the Aristotelian causes, points out that Aristotle does not use any adjective that

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<sup>37</sup> Aristotle, *Physics* II, 3, in *Basic Works*, 240-42.



might be translated as “efficient.” While it may have been natural for the Greeks to think of a person as the “cause” of a statue, such language would be very odd in English. The Greek word which we translate “cause” (*aitia*) had a different semantic range; being more personal and connected with the notion of responsibility, while the English word is normally used of impersonal causation. We might think it was somewhat degrading to describe a human being as a “cause,” and certainly Heidegger held that it was degrading to God to describe him as “first cause.” We can, however, recognize a broad correspondence between Heidegger’s recognition of the mortal or human aspect of a thing and the kind of agency covered by Aristotle’s third type of cause. The fourth item in Heidegger’s Foufold, the gods, is once more difficult to relate to Aristotle’s final cause – something is done or made “for the sake of” something or someone. If the being of the wine-jug is revealed not just in pouring wine, but specifically in pouring a libation, then perhaps we could say that in Heidegger the end (*telos*; *purpose*) of the artifact is to glorify the gods. We might in turn link this with what Heidegger has said about sacrifice in the Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?”<sup>38</sup>

There are, of course, other questions that may be raised at this point. What, for instance, does Heidegger mean by “the gods”? Probably he uses this expression because of his fascination with the Greeks, and likewise with the poetry of Hölderlin, in which there are many mentions of the gods. It would be wrong to read into the expression “God” in a theistic sense, but the word “gods”

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<sup>38</sup> “Sacrifice is taking farewell of all the beings on the way to the maintenance of the favor of Being.” Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, tr. Werner Brock (South Bend, Indiana: Regnary/Gateway Press, 1979), 359. We have to bear in mind, however, that this Postscript to the Freiburg lecture was not written until fourteen years after the lecture was delivered, and considerable changes had taken place in Heidegger’s thought during that time. If we now go back and examine the Introduction which brings us on to 1949, the changes are even more striking. Now Heidegger comes out clearly in his disillusionment with metaphysics and his desire to achieve the “overcoming” of metaphysics.

does stand for what might be called a “spiritual factor” in all reality, something holy in which every thing participates. The early Heidegger seemed to be depicting a world that is entirely secular and governed by utilitarian considerations. Heidegger has not drawn back from his view that temporality and historicity belong to all reality, not just humanity but also Being and the gods. But in the philosophy that he develops in his middle years, he finds room within time and history for the divine and for the human spirit with its aspirations. As I have remarked before, this is not a Christian philosophy but more of a Zen Buddhist perspective. However, his perspective toward spirituality and the gods is compatible with Christianity, and that no doubt explains its attraction for some of the leading theologians of the twentieth century.

But how does this highly idiosyncratic theory of the thing as Foufold apply in the technological society that in which we live today? One can see that they early Heidegger's way of seeing the world in terms of the ready-to-hand as a kind of vast workshop would be a philosophy almost tailor-made for the technological world, but in broadening his conception of thinghood, he seems to have moved over to some form of romanticism. This might be understandable, when we remember that Heidegger is a man of the countryside. Yet on the other hand it would be hard to square with those important elements in his thought that reflect the spirit of the twentieth century. Is there a split in Heidegger's thinking? Is he trying to come to terms with the actual world that we know and inhabit today, while at the same time clinging to past ideas that are just not able to find a secure place in our current paradigm?

These problems emerge very acutely if we consider what Heidegger says about technology, and I doubt if clear answers are to be had. He has in fact been

very much aware of the dominating role that technology has come to play in the contemporary world, but what he has written on the subject.<sup>39</sup> is both obscure and ambiguous, and the confusion seems to have spread to his commentators. On the one hand, Heidegger obviously cannot be happy with technology, because it seems to commit what for him is the cardinal sin of becoming absorbed in the beings and so becoming oblivious of Being; yet on the other hand, common sense tells him that we are *already* (a fateful word in Heidegger's writings) deluged in technology and there is no way back, so we have to learn to live with it. As with so many other matters in both public and private life, it is too late to ask whether we want to live in a technological society, for such a society is already our factual situation – we have been thrown into it without choice.

Heidegger goes on to tell us that the essence of technology is “enframing” (*Ge-stell*) and this in turn is described as a “gathering together” in which the world is regarded as a kind of fund of goods, or a stock of goods for production and consumption. The motivation behind this vast activity is the will to power. But the trouble, as Heidegger envisages it, is that the said vast activity seems to have no clear goals. This is expressed quite clearly in one of his essays where he writes about the harnessing of the Rhine for the production of electric power.

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<sup>39</sup> “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 283-317.

The hydroelectric plant is set into the current of the Rhine. It sets the Rhine to supplying its hydraulic pressure, when then sets the turbines turning. This turning sets those machines in motion whose thrust sets going the electric current: the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps these sentences help to clarify in a concrete way what is meant by the abstract term *Ge-stell*. Clearly, however, there is a touch of irony or even of caricature in Heidegger's word picture, a hastening on from one phase of activity to the next, without much idea of the final destination. There is also something like nostalgia in Heidegger's final remark: "Even the Rhine itself appears as something at our command" (*Basic Writings*, 298). The great river has been reduced to a piece of equipment. I imagine that the Rhine is to the Germans like the Volga to the Russians or the Nile to the Egyptians, not just a Foufold but a manifold, with innumerable links to the nation, its history, and its mythology.

Ambiguous, too, is the way in which technology has gained its hold upon humanity. We have noted Heidegger's acknowledgement that it is too late for people to wonder whether or not they wish to live in a technological society. They are already in it, and have to make the best of their time. But how did they get into it? Was that the result of some initial decisions in the past? Heidegger seems to suggest that the technological era is a destiny that Being sends on the human race. Wherever humanity has settled, it has been a builder.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 297-98.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 300, 306.

Enframing sends into a way a revealing. Enframing is an ordaining of destiny, as is every revealing.

We have already met this notion of destiny in Heidegger, and we should feel uneasy about it. But after saying that “destining holds complete sway over men,” Heidegger suddenly changes course and tells us:

That destining is never a fate that compels. For man becomes truly free only in so far as he belongs to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens, though not one who simply obeys.<sup>42</sup>

Can we disentangle some reasonably clear teaching about technology from the obscurities, ambiguities, and paradoxes that Heidegger has employed in expounding his ideas on the subject? I shall try, but I do not venture to claim that what I say represents what Heidegger thought, or that other interpreters would agree with my findings.

A point from which we may begin and which is, I think, indisputable, is Heidegger's own contention that whether we like it or not, we have come into a technological age. We need not, of course, accept Heidegger's further claims that this is some kind of destiny (*Geschick*) that Being has sent upon us. We may have got into it by the choices made by our ancestors, but however it may have come about, it is part, even the dominant part, of our factual heritage, so that we have to come to terms with it and live as members of a technological society.

I think we can further agree with Heidegger that there is danger in technology. The danger is that what was originally instrument and equipment

runs out of control and begins to determine the lives of those who were its masters. I suppose we were chiefly conscious of this at the time when the arms race between East and West was at its height, when deadly nuclear weapons were being piled up in that stock or store which is typical of *Ge-stell*, and when we all seemed helpless to prevent a race to destruction. That particular danger has given way to a growing global environmental danger, but the general danger remains that humanity itself becomes part of the stock.

One further point in Heidegger's analysis seems acceptable, namely, his belief that the cure for the dangers of technology cannot come from technology itself. When something goes wrong in some part of the system, the temptation is to believe that an improved technology will right it. But that could be the case only within narrow limits. Technology, as Heidegger indicates in his remarks on the use of the Rhine, is instrumental, or, at least, if it has goals, these are either ill defined or short-term. We need more clarity about goals, but these are not fixed by technology. At this point, however, we might blame Heidegger himself for never having developed an ethical side to his philosophy. Indeed, it could be complained with some justice that from his early thinking onward, he consistently avoided ethical questions.

In the last part of his essay on "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger seems to raise our hopes, but even there the ethical question is passed by. He writes,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 306.

The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has already affected man in his essence. The rule of Enframing (*Ge-stell*) threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. Thus, when Enframing reigns, there is *danger* in the highest sense.<sup>43</sup>

But he quotes Hölderlin:

But where danger is, grows  
The saving power also.

The very danger of technology pushes toward a new revealing. Heidegger reminds us that in ancient Greece *techne* was the word used for both craft and art. Perhaps in the fine arts we may find a way forward, and it is to art that we turn next.

Heidegger's views on art, especially visual art, are to be found chiefly in a lengthy essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," published in 1950. It had originated in a lecture as early as 1935, but this lecture was later revised and expanded to become a series of three lectures. Towards the end of the lecture, he claims that it is "the linguistic work [of art], namely, poetry, that has a privileged place among the arts,"<sup>44</sup> and he wrote quite a few pieces on poetry, especially the poetry of Hölderlin. But we shall leave consideration of poetry until later, and for the present confine ourselves to *Origin*, where his concern is mainly with such arts as architecture and painting.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 316.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 185.

Most people, Heidegger thinks, would find the origin of the work of art in the artist. We think of him or her as the one who creates the work. But his answer is not satisfactory, for we then want to ask, why do we call this person an artist? Is it not the case that the artist becomes an artist and is recognized as an artist with the production of the work of art?

The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other.... In themselves and in their interrelations, artist and work *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely, that which also gives artist and work of art their names – art.<sup>45</sup>

So there is circularity in naming the artist as the origin of the work, and we have to search more deeply.

The work is itself a thing. Indeed, in the modern world where art like sport and virtually everything else have become commercialized, works of art are shipped around from one exhibition to another and from one auction room to another, then mass reproduced in posters “like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest,” as Heidegger expresses it. Works of art are undoubtedly things. But can anything about art be derived from this fact of thingliness?

In the context of this essay, Heidegger raises the question that he has already raised in *Being and Time* and will again in other essays, “What is a thing?” It was just about the time when *Origin* was published that Heidegger was working on his idea of the “Foufold” as constituting the nature of thinghood. The Foufold does not appear explicitly even in the final version of *Origin*, though we shall see that something rather like it was in his mind. But

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 149.



when he first discusses the nature of a thing in this essay, he is criticizing views that he had already criticized in *Being and Time* – views in which a thing is considered primarily in objective terms as something that confronts *Dasein* in an external way as an item encountered in the environment. We need not go into these criticisms in detail in this study, because in principle they add nothing to what he had said earlier. It brings us round to the equipmental view of the thing developed in *Being and Time*, where *Dasein* views the thing pragmatically as belonging with a world projected by *Dasein*.

At this point, Heidegger introduces a new example, and as usual the concrete illustration goes far to clarify some of his more abstract utterances. The example of a thing that he chooses is a pair of peasant shoes. Such a pair of shoes is thingly, but we are reminded that it can also be a theme for art. The famous painting by Van Gogh is skillfully used by Heidegger to link thinghood with art. I suppose that peasant shoes would not usually be considered in themselves a work of art. They are certainly equipment, and like the other equipment we have considered, are understood when we see them in use – when the owner of the shoes is wearing them at work in the fields. But they would seem to be objects of utility rather than of beauty. But how then was Van Gogh able to make them the subject of his painting? Perhaps the answer is that although a ready-to-hand thing is characterized by utility rather than beauty, some element of beauty may be there. Shoes specially made for, let us say, a princess or a ballerina might be a work of art as well as a piece of equipment. Heidegger does suggest that it would be hard to draw a hard line of demarcation between the craftsman and the artist, both of whom are designated in Greek by the same word, *technites*. Perhaps there is no well-formed equipment that does not begin to have the properties of a work of art; while, on the other hand, the good artist who works in stone or metal or pigment will be also a craftsman.

There is a remarkable paragraph in which Heidegger talks about the significance of the peasant shoes in the Van Gogh painting:

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind ... This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death.<sup>46</sup>

I have curtailed the above passage severely, but we see how the work of art draws out into the open, shall we say, the manifold reference of the thing which it portrays – whether a Foufold reference or even something more to a sensitive imagination. Heidegger specifically mentions that the equipment belongs to the *earth* (the first item in the Foufold) and then that it belongs also to the *world* of the peasant woman, and that world encompasses the remaining three items.

But, he adds, perhaps it is only in the painting that we notice all this about the shoes. Perhaps a pair of shoes by themselves would not call forth such reflections. What about the woman who wears them? Does she simply wear them? Heidegger thinks there is more to her experience than that. She presumably does not reflect on the shoes in the manner that Heidegger did on seeing them in Van Gogh's painting, but she believes in the reliability of her equipment and this amounts to being implicitly sure of her world.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 165.

What then happens when we are confronted with Van Gogh's painting? As Heidegger expresses it, the painting *speaks*. "It discloses what the equipment *is* in truth." For the Greeks, as we have heard often enough from Heidegger, truth is the unconcealedness of beings.

If there occurs in the work [of art] a disclosure of a particular being, disclosing what and how it is, then there is here an occurring, a happening of truth at work. In the work of art, the truth of beings has set itself to work ... Some particular being, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its Being. The Being of beings comes into the steadiness of its shining.<sup>47</sup>

Heidegger seems to be suggesting here that the discovery of truth is not just a result of human search, but that Being opens itself in truth. The Greek word *physis*, usually translated as "nature," would, according to Heidegger, be better translated as "emergence or emergent." Furthermore, *physis* is "being" and is cognate with the English word. So we could say "Being is emergence." If one accepts this, then art, which, it was argued, is prior both to the artist and to the work of art, has its origin in Being. "The essence of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work."<sup>48</sup> Heidegger goes so far as to say that in great art, the artist remains inconsequential compared with the work. Could we say of the work of art that it brings into the open, into unconcealedness, what was already there implicitly in the beings represented in the artwork? If everything is Foufold in its nature, then is its character unfolded in the work of art? This might sometimes be the case, and it might be an acceptable interpretation of Van Gogh's painting of the peasant shoes. But art comes in so many guises that the interpretation would also sometimes fail.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 164-65.

Heidegger soon brings forward another illustration, also taken from the visual arts, but this time from architecture, and unlike Van Gogh's painting, the architectural work of art does not represent any thing. The example is a Greek temple. It stands in a valley, and enclosed within it is the figure of the god, concealed yet hallowing the whole precinct. This temple gathers around itself not just a Foufold but a manifold field of meaning in which there is the unity of "those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being."<sup>49</sup>

Heidegger is not normally an elegant writer, but occasionally he does rise to a considerable height of eloquence. He did that when he wrote about the peasant shoes in Van Gogh's painting, and he does it again when he writes about the temple:

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the obscurity of that rock's bulky but spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its own against the storm raging above it and so first makes the storm itself manifest in its violence. The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first beings to radiance the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible spaces of air. The steadfastness of the work contrasts with the surge of the surf, and its own repose brings out the raging of the sea.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 169.

This emerging and rising in itself illustrates what was meant by *physis*, and likewise it illustrates the meaning of stable earth.

Heidegger comes near at this point to a sacramental view of the universe. As long as the figure of the god remains in the temple and offerings are made, the sense of the holy is there. The statue is not just a portrait of the god, to make it easier for us to imagine him. It is a work [of art] that lets the god be present, and thus *is* the god himself.

But the important words in Heidegger's discussion are the contrasted terms, "earth" and "world." The work of art sets up a world and it sets forth the earth. This setting (*stellen*) is obviously very different from the setting we met in *Ge-stell*, the "Enframing" that is typical of technology. Neither is it some imaginary framework that we subjectively add to the multitude of things we encounter in the world. The world, as we have already learned, is not a mere collection of things.

The *world worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home.<sup>51</sup>

World and earth contrast with each other, are even at strife with each other because, in the setting up of a world, things are brought into the light of being and truth, things that have long been concealed in the depth of earth. A simple example that symbolized the whole process is the bringing forth of the marble for the temple from within the earth. For the first time, it can be marble in all the beauty of polished gleaming stone. This illustrates another point that Heidegger makes, and although he was writing long before the environmental

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 170.

question became a modern issue, what he said still has relevance. When the earth's material is used equipmentally, it is at the same time *used up*; art, on the other hand, lets things be what they really *are*.

Yet world and earth are not just to be contrasted, they need each other. As Heidegger says more than once, earth juts into the world. Although he does not himself use the illustration, his words remind me of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, where though the smooth floor of the sanctuary there juts forth the rocky peak of Mount Moriah on which the building has been erected. According to tradition, it was there that Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, many centuries before there was any temple or mosque on the spot.

The concept of "world" which we find in these middle and later writings of Heidegger has developed far from that instrumental world of work that he expounded in *Being and Time*. Whether it incorporates that Foufold conception of the thing that Heidegger uses in some of his writings is a matter for debate. It certainly moves toward a much richer conception than is found in the early writings, but perhaps the Foufold was spelled out too precisely, and certainly there is difficulty in applying it to particular cases. The simpler or seemingly simpler conception of earth and world is also more flexible. But whatever of these two conceptions we prefer, I think both do justice to the richness of human experience, and to the being of *Dasein* who exists simultaneously in truth and untruth.

## Chapter 4

### THINKING, LANGUAGE, POETRY

In this chapter, as in the one that precedes it, we shall direct our attention to the three topics that were important for Heidegger and that are closely related to one another – thinking, language, and poetry. And just like the previous chapter, this will serve too adumbrate a deeper discussion of these same topics later in this study. In seeking to understand the progression of his thought on these topics, we shall pay special attention to those moments in this thinking that touch closely on the questions that are the main concern of this chapter, Heidegger's relation to Christianity and how this is influenced by his understanding of time and temporality.

In his early writings, there is not much explicit discussion about thinking in general. We have, however, already noted that Heidegger had quite a lot to say about phenomenology and that he adopted its methods in order to carry out the existential analytic in *Being and Time*.<sup>52</sup> Phenomenology is a way of thinking, a way which is strict and disciplined, and which was claimed by Husserl and his followers to be “scientific” (*wissenschaftlich*) in the broad sense in which that word is understood among German academics. A major characteristic of phenomenology is the emphasis that it lays upon *description* as distinct from inference and speculation. This was the type of thinking that Heidegger employed in setting forth the ontology of *Dasein*. As William Richardson holds,

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<sup>52</sup> *BT*, 49-63.

If phenomenology is the method chosen for the meditation upon *Dasein* which is to prepare the way to interrogate the sense of Being itself, this means that it is the way that the Heidegger of 1927 goes about the *thinking of Being*.<sup>53</sup>

We ought to note the use of the word “meditation” in Richardson’s remark. “Meditation” suggests a kind of thought in which the mind is docile and receptive to whatever it is thinking about. Such thought may be contrasted with the active investigative thought of the natural sciences as they probe into the properties and behavior of the various domains of nature. It would be going too far to say that Heidegger is against science, but on more than one occasion, he bluntly declares that science does not think.<sup>54</sup> To hear that science does not think is a surprise to those of us who have grown up in an epoch in which there is a virtually superstitious respect for the sciences, and as purveyors of trustworthy knowledge. No doubt Heidegger used the expressing, “Science does not think”, partly with a view to the shock effect of such words. He explains more fully what he has in mind when he says that no matter where and however deeply science investigates beings, it will never find Being.<sup>55</sup> For Heidegger, that which is worthy to be called “thinking” must have a relation to Being. The sciences, as he believes, are concerned only with beings, and dismiss “Being” as nothing at all, or a mere philosophical fiction. Scientific thinking is classed by Heidegger as “calculative” thinking, the kind of thinking that can be done by computers and artificial intelligence machines. One wonders how much of this

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<sup>53</sup> W.J. Richardson, *Heidegger: from Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus-Nijhoff, 1974), 47.

<sup>54</sup> *What is Called Thinking?* tr. F.D. Wieck and J. Glen Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 135; *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), 8. Hereafter abbreviated as *WCT*.

<sup>55</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, ed. W. Brock (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 353.



was a reaction to logical positivism, which was at the height of its popularity during the 1940s.

Of course, one may say that he is grossly unfair to the scientist. No doubt there is much “calculative” thinking in the sciences, but there are also the creative, imaginative moments of discovery, events of unconcealedness, to use Heideggerian language. These are surely major achievements of thought.

Heidegger also excludes the theologian from the ranks of the thinkers. For the true thinker, everything is – and remains – problematical. But in Heidegger's view, the theologian believes that he has attained to secure knowledge through revelation. (This is a curiously delimited understanding of theology.) In denying that the theologian is also a thinker, he is contradicting his own pronouncement that “there is a *thinking* and questioning elaboration of the world of Christian experience, that is, of faith,” that this enterprise is theology, and that it has a “true greatness.”

But we need not engage in arguments over the relative merits of philosophy, science, and theology. Let us rather go on and see what more Heidegger has to tell us about the nature of thinking. The first lecture course that Heidegger gave on being restored to his teaching position at Freiburg after the period of suspension on account of his political activities was on this very subject of thinking. The material of this lecture course is difficult to understand, and even the title that Heidegger gave to it is open to various interpretations. In German, the title is, *Was heisst Denken?*. The English translation is known as *What is Called Thinking?*. Heidegger suggests four different ways of understanding this title. (1) “What is called thinking?” says in the first place, “What is it we call thought and thinking, what these words signify? What is it to which we give the name thinking?” (2) “What is called thinking?” says also,

in the second place, “How does the traditional doctrine conceive and define what we have named thinking? Why does the traditional doctrine of thinking bear the curious title logic?” (3) “What is called thinking?” says further, in the third place, “What are the prerequisites we need so that we may be able to think with essential rightness?” (4) “What is called thinking?” says in the fourth place, “What is it that calls us, as it were, commands us to think? What is it that calls us into thinking?”<sup>56</sup>

Heidegger had begun his course of lectures by saying:

We come to know what it means to think when we ourselves try to think. If the attempt is to be successful, we must be ready to learn thinking. As soon as we allow ourselves to become involved in such learning, we have admitted that we are not yet capable of thinking.<sup>57</sup>

Thinking is certainly a possibility for the human being; this being has been defined as the “rational animal,” the finite being having the capability of thinking. Yet we are still not thinking, Heidegger would claim.

Who are included in the “we” who are not yet thinking? Is it contemporary society in general that constitutes the “we”? Maybe, for this age of science, information, and technology, we have already heard Heidegger’s charge that science does not think. He holds that scientific thinking is calculative thinking, and we have also heard that for him the true thinking has a

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<sup>56</sup> Martin Heidegger, *WCT*, 113-114. It should be explained that the fourth way of formulating the question arises from an ambiguity in the German verb *heissen*. It can mean “to bear a name”, “to be called”, and that is the signification understood in the first three formulations. But it can also signify “to command”. *Was heisst Denken* can mean “What commands thinking”, “What calls forth thinking?”, or “What evokes thinking?” The fourth meaning is for Heidegger the most important one.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

meditative character. As we shall see, it is more likely to be found among poets than among scientists, in Heidegger's view. But meditative thinking is responsive thinking. It is thinking that is called forth by that which is "thought-provoking" (or thought-evoking). So we already begin to see why Heidegger regards as most important the fourth way of interpreting the question "*Was heisst Denken?*" – "What calls forth thinking?" rather than "What is called thinking?" Then again, perhaps the "we" in "we are not yet thinking" has a more restrictive sense. It may refer to Heidegger himself and to those who are listening to his lecture or even to the philosophical community. Around this time, Heidegger was coming to believe that the great philosophical enterprise of Europe was coming to an end, and he wasn't alone in that view. In an essay with the somewhat apocalyptic title, "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking,"<sup>58</sup> he confesses that ever since 1930 he had been seeking to rethink the problematic of *Being and Time* in a more adequate way. In following the development of his thought, we have already seen how his reorientation involved a more direct encounter with Being rather than indirect approach to the question of Being through a preliminary study of the human being. This has led him into a new way of thinking, a thinking that is no longer the phenomenological investigation that he considered appropriate in *Being and Time*, but a meditative type of thought that is responsive to the thought-evoking influence of Being. Of course, this new way is also in some respects a repossessing of the origins of Western thought, the insight of early thinkers, such as Parmenides, whose saying about thinking and being<sup>59</sup> has obviously had a great influence on Heidegger. To come back to the title of the essay, "The End

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<sup>58</sup> *On Time and Being*, 55-73.

<sup>59</sup> "[The world] is like a sphere, single, indivisible and homogenous, timeless, changeless and, since motion is itself one form of change, motionless as well. It has in fact no perceptible qualities whatever." From G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), 279.

of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking”, this title is not simply apocalyptic, for the final words about the task of thinking suggest that there is something that thinking can do even if traditional philosophy runs into the sand. This would be a new beginning, comparable, one may suppose, to the new beginning which may be possible through art when the current obsession with technology has run its course. Heidegger seems to suggest the parallel. He remarks that the carpenter responds to wood, in a similar way as the thinker responds to that which evokes thought; but where in modern industry, he asks, is there anything comparable to the carpenter and his wood?<sup>60</sup>

The transition from the phenomenology of the existential analytic to the meditative thinking on Being is the core of that turn (*Kehre*) that students of Heidegger have noted. It is also, presumably, the reason for his beginning to speak of himself as a thinker, rather than a philosopher. But thinking and Being are so closely related in *Dasein* that if we begin with the one we are led to the other. Yet it would see too that there is no direct way over from one to the other.

Every philosophical – that is, thoughtful – doctrine of man’s essential nature is *in itself alone* a doctrine of the Being of beings. Every doctrine of Being is *in itself alone* a doctrine of man’s essential nature. But neither doctrine can be obtained by merely turning the other one around. No way of thought, not even the way of metaphysical thought, begins with man’s essential nature and goes on from there to Being, nor in reverse from Being and then back to man. Rather, every way of thinking takes its way already within the total relation of Being and man’s nature.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> WCT, 14-17, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

In the further elucidation of what it means to think, Heidegger relies to a large extent on linguistic considerations. When we come to his teaching on language, we shall examine his methods more closely and attempt an evaluation. Meanwhile, we shall attend to what he has to say about thinking and his answers to the four formulations of the question, "What is called thinking?".

One has first to listen to the language, to attend to the actual words. A whole family of German words come to mind: *Denken* (think), *Gedanke* (thought), *Gedächtnis* (memory). With the exception of "memory," which we have borrowed from Latin, the English words in this family are obviously cognate with the German ones and presumably have a similar semantic history. Closely connected with these words are the German *danken* and its English equivalent "thank"; to thank someone is to have that person in one's memory and to think gratefully of him. Heidegger asks: "Is thinking a giving of thanks? What do thanks mean here? Or do thanks consist in thinking? What does thinking mean here?" The memory is not just a container for thoughts, and thoughts are not just ideas and opinions. The relation to thanking shows us an original sense of thinking, which Heidegger explicitly compares with Pascal's famous teaching that the heart has its reasons, something that Pascal tried to retrieve in the face of mathematical thinking, which was coming into the ascendant.

In this part of the discussion, Heidegger resorts to a religious or quasi-religious type of language.

In giving thanks, the heart gives thought to what it has and what it is. The heart, thus giving thought and thus being memory, gives itself in thought to that to which it is held. It thinks of itself as beholden, not in the sense of mere submission, but beholden because its devotion is held in listening. Original thanking is the thanks owed for being.<sup>62</sup>

These remarks on thinking, memory and thanking, help to explain Heidegger's answer to the question, "What is called thinking?" in the first and fourth of the four ways in which that question may be understood.

A true thinking is more than an intellectual operation, it is a disposition infused with thankfulness. This disposition is addressed to that which is above all thought-worthy and thought-evoking. To quote: "How can we give thanks for this gift, the gift of being able to think what is most thought-evoking, more fittingly than by giving thought to the most thought-evoking?" Thinking therefore is for Heidegger close to worship, and the expression, the "piety of thinking" is not misplaced when applied to him.<sup>63</sup>

Now the second way of understanding the question, "What is called thinking?" asked about its meaning interpretation the tradition of Western thought. This tradition, especially in modern times, seems very different from what Heidegger has been talking about. Pascal, it seems, lost his battle to maintain the reasons of the heart as against the omniscient rationalism of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. For the mainstream of philosophical thinking (the one that Heidegger thinks is drying up) took its clue about the essential nature of thinking not from the German words *denken/danken* but

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>63</sup> *The Piety of Thinking* is the title given to a collection of Heidegger's writings on theology from 1929 to 1964, tr. J.G. Hart and J.C. Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

from the Greek Logos, and made “logic” the measure for thinking. This is a different and independent tradition, and it is obviously the one that has been essential for the rise of Western science and technology. It obviously has its own right, and no one can reject it, not even the skeptic or the deconstructionist who, in abolishing truth and logic, thereby abolishes also his own claim to be heard as a serious disputant. How this other tradition of thinking can be reconciled, is a question that remains unanswered. Perhaps that is why Heidegger warned us that we have not yet attained to thinking, that is to say, thinking in its fullness, thinking as a part of our human experience in time, not as what Bradley once called a “ballet of bloodless categories.”

We have then Heidegger's answers to the first, second, and fourth sense of the question, “What is called thinking?”. He does not appear to give any clear answer to the third form of the question, which asked about the prerequisites for correct thinking. Perhaps that is a question that could only be answered after we had learned how to reconcile the two understandings of thinking set out in the answers to the first and second formulations.

Before we can leave the topic of thinking, there is one other writing to which we must attend. This is the short book published in 1959 with the German title, *Gelassenheit*. The book takes up again the theme of thinking, and this is reflected in the title of the English translation, *Discourse on Thinking*.<sup>64</sup>

The word *Gelassenheit* is difficult to translate into English, and whatever translation one uses, it will be unsatisfactory in one way or another. In the published English translation, *Gelassenheit* is rendered by “releasement,” though this is not a recognized English word and will not be found even in good

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<sup>64</sup> *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

dictionaries. “Collectedness”, “calmness”, “serenity” are other possible equivalents, though they miss the sense of separation or even abandonment. Another possibility is “detachment,” something like the *Abgeschiedenheit* of Meister Eckhart, and *Gelassenheit* does have mystical associations. In the following brief treatment of this text, I shall not feel bound exclusively to any one translation of the term *Gelassenheit*.

Once more we are told that in the contemporary world there is a flight from thinking. This is true in spite of all the research that goes on. For (so Heidegger believes) this research takes the form of calculative thinking. He claims:

Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next.  
Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself.  
Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking  
which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything  
that is.<sup>65</sup>

If we are to attain to that collectedness or peace of mind denoted by the term *Gelassenheit*, we must cultivate this other thinking, meditative thinking.

So far the message is much the same as we have heard in *What Is Called Thinking?*. But what seems to be new in the text now being considered is the special stress laid on the idea that thinking is not primarily a human activity but an activity induced in man or even infused into man by a reality beyond the human – what in the earlier treatise on thinking was called “Thought-provoking” or the “Thought-evoking.” In *Discourse on Thinking*, we seem to reach the furthest remove from that bold Promethean moment in *Being and*

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 46.



Time when *Dasein* expresses joy in the freedom of facing death without illusions.<sup>66</sup> Now we are told that joy or peace of mind is not something willed by *Dasein* through resoluteness but a gift that is offered. Let me quote two or three sentences from the conversation of a scholar, a teacher, and a scientist that forms part of the text of *Discourse on Thinking*:

**Scholar:** So far as we can wean ourselves from willing, we contribute to the awakening of releasement.

**Teacher:** Say rather, to keeping awake for releasement.

**Scholar:** Why not, to the awakening?

**Teacher:** Because on our own we do not awaken releasement in ourselves.

**Scientist:** Thus releasement is effected from somewhere else?

**Teacher:** Not effected, but let in.

Are we then simply dependent on something beyond ourselves, so that we can only wait and hope for releasement to be let in? This, it is said, would be a poor consolation. Presumably, we can prepare ourselves and open ourselves. The problem raised here is rather like the theological one of divine grace. Does the human being surrender his or her own will completely, which would seem to imply becoming less than human, a mere puppet? Or must there be some responsive acceptance or appropriation on the human side, some element of synergism, to use the theological term? Something like this seems to be hinted when it is said that the attainment of releasement is neither active nor passive, but somehow beyond that distinction.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Death enables *Dasein* to achieve a meaningful pattern within a limited lifespan, living in anticipatory awareness of death as one's untransferable and uttermost possibility.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, tr. J. M. Anderson and E. H. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) 60-61.

But the apparently anthropocentric emphasis of *Being and Time* is now explicitly abandoned, though Heidegger here as in some other places, gives the impression that he is reinterpreting the earlier passage rather than moving on to a quite new and different view of that matter. What he actually says is:

One needs to understand “resolve” as it is understood in *Being and Time*: as the opening of *Dasein* particularly undertaken by him *for* openness.<sup>68</sup>

We move on from thinking to language, and this can be treated more briefly since some of the questions replicate those already met in the discussion of thinking. Although Heidegger seems to believe that some thinking is possible without being expressed in language, most of our thinking does require language, and the two are intimately connected.

Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger was showing his interest in language, or, to speak more accurately, in discourse (*Rede*). Discourse is placed alongside understanding and disposition as one of the major *existentialia* or basic characteristics of *Dasein*.<sup>69</sup> As time went on, Heidegger attached more and more importance to language. Of course, already in *Being and Time*, apart from his explicit remarks on discourse and its inauthentic manifestation as “idle talk,” Heidegger in his philosophical method was implicitly making use of ideas about language and the importance of words for philosophical understanding. We shall come back to this shortly.

In its general direction, Heidegger's teaching about language follows a path roughly parallel to what he says about thinking, that is to say, the focus

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>69</sup> *BT*, 171.

moves from the human activity to a source beyond man in Being or whatever other expression may be used for the comprehensive reality within which humanity has its place. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger sees language as not a human instrument or a human invention, but as a pervading presence of Being in the finite human being. In discussing a chorus from Sophocles, he writes:

How far man is from being at home in his own essence  
is revealed by his opinion of himself as he who invented and  
could have invented language and understanding, building and  
poetry. How could man ever have invented the power which  
pervades him, which alone enables him to *be* a man?<sup>70</sup>

In language and thinking Heidegger sees the mysterious connection between *Dasein* and Being – a connection that, he believes, was first seen among Western thinkers by Parmenides, whose saying about being and thinking he never tires of repeating.<sup>71</sup>

The dependence of human speech on the gift of Being is repeated in the *Letter on Humanism*.

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<sup>70</sup> Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 156. Hereafter abbreviated *IM*.

<sup>71</sup> G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 279.

Before he speaks, man must first let himself be addressed (or claimed) again by Being, with the risk that when so addressed, he will seldom have much to say. Only thus will the preciousness of its essence be once more bestowed upon the word, and upon man a home for dwelling in the truth of Being.”<sup>72</sup>

It is in this writing too that we first find language itself described as the “house of Being,” an expression that will occupy us later.

Heidegger's fullest treatment of language is the book, *On the Way to Language*. The German edition appeared in 1959, and consists of six essays, written between 1950 and 1958. In this book, language, like thinking, is seen as making an essential connection between *Dasein* and Being. We are told, “The capacity for speech is not just one power of the human being alongside others; it is what distinguishes the human being as human.”<sup>73</sup> In *Being and Time*, the point had been made that the philosophical definition of man as *zoon logon echon* should be translated not as the “rational animal” but more fully as “that living thing whose being is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse.”<sup>74</sup> So speech is made the essential mark of the human being. At the same time, language is given an essential place in the structure of Being as such. “The being of everything that dwells in the word. Hence the validity of the statement, ‘Language is the house of Being’.”<sup>75</sup> Does this mean that Being itself comes to speech in human language?

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<sup>72</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, 2nd edn. Ed. D.F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper-San Francisco, 1993), 199.

<sup>73</sup> *On the Way to Language*, tr. P.D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 241. Hereafter abbreviated *OWL*.

<sup>74</sup> *BT*, 47.

<sup>75</sup> *OWL*, 166.

Obviously there is much in Heidegger that hinges on this deep connection that language is alleged to provide between *Dasein* and Being. Does language provide, as it were, an ancient memory of *Dasein*'s origin from and kinship with Being? (Here we may think what he has said about thinking, memory, and gratitude.) Or does an understanding of Being already lie hidden in the depths of language? (Here we may recall that at the beginning of *Being and Time*, Heidegger suggest that we could not raise the question of Being unless we already had some understanding of the meaning of Being, however vague it might be.)<sup>76</sup>

If there is any possibility of answering these questions affirmatively, then there would seem to be some justification for Heidegger's frequent appeals to language and the supposed original meanings of words and their etymological connections, in the working out of his philosophy. Language would indeed be the "house of Being," a kind of treasure house in which are hidden all the riches of God. And it would justify the claim that there is a thinking that listens and is open for a word of God.

But these are highly controversial matters, and it must be confessed that some of Heidegger's etymologies are speculative, and that he is by no means consistent in his appeals. For instance, if we take the important Greek word *Logos*, literally "word" or "discourse", he tells us in *Being and Time* that *logos* means the same as *deloun*, "to make manifest," and he uses this identification to elucidate the meaning of phenomenology.<sup>77</sup> In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, he takes a different line. Heidegger claims the word *logos* and the related verb *legein*, "to speak," did not originally refer to speech. Their original meaning

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<sup>76</sup> *BT*, 27-28.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-58.

was that of gathering or collecting, as we see also in the cognate German verb *lesen*, “to gather” and also “to read.” A gatherer of wood in the Black Forest is a *Holzleser*.<sup>78</sup> If we move on to *What Is Called Thinking?* we find a third explanation of *logos* and *legen*. Now Heidegger tells us that these words are cognate with the German verb *legen*, “to lay” or “to let lie.” He translates a saying of Parmenides, “*chre to legein...*” as “Useful is the letting-lie-before-us....”<sup>79</sup> I do not say that Heidegger could not if required produce evidence in favor of all three ways of interpreting *logos*, but it is difficult not to be skeptical or even to suspect that his translations are to some extent made to conform to his own philosophical position.

Further doubts arise when one considers linguistic points that he makes concerning the centrality of the problem of Being. It is true that “we” can utter scarcely a couple of sentences without using some part of the verb “to be,” and this would seem to imply that we have some understanding of what it means “to be,” though we might find it difficult to say exactly what it is. But we have to ask, “Who are ‘we’ who claim this understanding?” The answer is that we are speakers of Indo-European languages. When he writes a chapter on “The Grammar and Etymology of the Word ‘Being’” in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, the discussion covers only German and Greek. Admittedly, he does suggest that German and Greek are the only possible languages for any worthwhile philosophy. Still, not everyone would agree. And what about Semitic languages, or even an Indo-European language like Russian, where the word “is” is rarely if ever used? Perhaps “being” is implied or thought in everything we say, as St. Thomas suggested. But to show this would require more than linguistic evidence.

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<sup>78</sup> *IM*, 124-25.

Incidentally, Heidegger's attempts to derive philosophical points from etymological or other linguistic considerations may be compared to the fascination of some Anglo-Saxon philosophers with "ordinary language." However differently Heidegger and these English-speaking philosophers apply the principle, they seem to be agreed that there are hidden stores of wisdom in the way we talk. Yet on both sides there is agreement that language is very fallible and may conceal more of it than it reveals.

The text of *On the Way to Language* contains a number of autobiographical allusions, some of which are relevant to our own special interest in Heidegger's relation to Christianity and theology. One of the pieces records a conversation between Heidegger and a Japanese scholar. In the course of it, Heidegger, recalling his early linguistic and hermeneutical studies in the seminary, frankly admits: "Without my theological origins, I would never have attained to the path of thinking."<sup>80</sup> Later in the same conversation, the Japanese scholar tells him, "For us, the void (*das Leere*) is the highest name for what you call Being."<sup>81</sup> This remark raises the question of Heidegger's relation to mysticism, and also helps to explain why, in Japan, he has never been suspected of nihilism.

It will be remembered that when we considered Heidegger's view of the fine arts and the part that they might play in renewing *Dasein* when threatened by the constrictions of his own technology, we learned that he believed poetry to have first place among the arts. Now that we have attended to what he says

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<sup>79</sup> WCT, 198ff.

<sup>80</sup> OWL, 96.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 109.

about language, we are in a position to turn to poetry as that particular form of language that in a signal way lights up Being.

Some preliminary remarks need to be made. Back in the eighteenth century, the eccentric German man of letters, Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88) put forward the theory (not widely held today) that the most primitive human language was poetry.

Poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race, as the garden is older than the field, painting than writing, song than declamation, parables than inferences, barter than commerce.<sup>82</sup>

Heidegger seems to have accepted this theory, at least during one period of his life. Obviously it fitted well with his belief that the beginning of something like language has a greatness that soon gets lost and that we must try to recapture in a repetition or retrieving of the creative moment. Some such ideas lie behind his claim that “primitive language is poetry, in which being is established.”<sup>83</sup> The emergence of *Dasein* as a temporal and historical being depends on language, especially poetic language.

However, although Heidegger sometimes speaks as if he was referring to poetry in general, he was in fact mainly taken up with the poetry of one man – Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843). This German poet, a contemporary of Hegel, had been stricken in his thirties by schizophrenia, and he was virtually ignored during his lifetime and for the rest of the nineteenth century. But, like Kierkegaard, he was discovered in the twentieth century, especially after the

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<sup>82</sup> J.G. Hamann, “Aesthetica in Nuce,” in R.G. Smith, ed., J.G. Hamann: *A Study in Christian Existence, with Selections From His Writings* (New York: Random, 1971), 196.

<sup>83</sup> Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, 284.



publication of his collected poems in 1913.<sup>84</sup> Heidegger was among those attracted, even fascinated, by Hölderlin. Why was this so? Perhaps the first reason was that Hölderlin had explicitly testified to the same understanding of the poet's role as Heidegger was reaching toward in his studies of thought and language. Heidegger declares that Hölderlin was, "in a pre-eminent sense, the poet of the poet," that is to say, the poet who reflected upon and expounded how he understood his own activity as a poet. He saw secondly the poet as a kind of intermediary between the gods and men. We shall consider shortly what this implies. A third reason was that Hölderlin in his poetry was reading the present phase of history in the West in a way close to Heidegger's own way. Both men were unwilling to go along with Nietzsche's assertion that "God is dead," but were aware of the absence of God in the modern age, attributing this, however, to his withdrawal, rather to his demise. A fourth point is that both Hölderlin and Heidegger had a virtually unlimited admiration for the Greeks, and for the rise among them of the original impulses of Western culture and civilization. It may also be significant that both men were at one time theological students. Towards the end of his life, Hölderlin's poems were moving away from Hellenic toward Christian values. Whether something similar would be true of Heidegger is a point that this study will not consider. But for now, let us examine these points more fully by illustrating them from some passages in Hölderlin's poetry, and, where appropriate, from Heidegger's comments on that poetry.

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<sup>84</sup> For the English-speaking reader, Hölderlin's work is most easily accessible in his *Selected Verse*, ed. Michael Hamburger (Vancouver: Anvil Press Poetry, Limited, 1998). This edition gives German texts with English translations. Although I have confined this study of Heidegger's appreciation for poetry to his reactions to Hölderlin, other poets also made a strong impression, notably Stefan George (1868-1933), and Georg Trakl (1887-1914).

On the first point, let me quote two lines from a very late writing of Hölderlin, which had to be edited by an intimate companion when the poet's mind was confused:

Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnet  
Der Mensch auf dieser Erde.

It is not easy to render this into English. Obviously, a contrast is intended between the first two words and the rest of the sentence. I think it would be true to Hölderlin's intentions to translate as follows:

Though he has to earn a living,  
Man dwells poetically on this earth.

What does this mean? It means that for most of his or her time, a human being would be engaged in what Heidegger would call "everyday" existence, that is to say, the routine affairs of work and business. But for a truly human life, something more is needed, what is here called the "poetic" dimension in which things are seen in the light of Being, in their intrinsic truth and beauty. The Buddhist concept is "mindfulness." The difference between the two experiences can be expressed as a difference in the experience of temporality and time. When poetry (or a language approaching to poetry) comes into play, time ceases to be a series of unrelated or only externally related "nows" – the past is preserved and through its return in meditation or memory (*Andenken*) swings over our present and comes to us as future. So we become temporal beings, living in the three "ecstasies" of past, present, and future. This, we are told, is what makes history possible (as the repetition of authentic possibility) and this argument does not seem to depend on Hamann's theory of language.

On the second point, Hölderlin's poem "Homecoming" is particularly enlightening. The poet has been abroad and now comes home. We see him crossing over Lake Constance from Switzerland to his native Germany. This is the pattern of the poet's existence – he must leave his native place, sojourn abroad, and then return to share what he has learned. Hölderlin literally made that kind of journey, but the pattern can be understood allegorically. For both Hölderlin and Heidegger, the poet is a go-between – he converses with the gods and then comes back with his message to the people. This is the same pattern that we see in prophets and founders of religion – a revelation, perhaps in itself ineffable, which the bearers break down into language. In Heidegger and Hölderlin, the function is transferred to poets. They operate in the region *between* gods and men. It is hard existence, to be exposed to the heavenly fire, and then to bring it to one's fellows:

Yet it behooves us, under the storms of God,  
Ye poets! with uncovered head to stand,  
With our own hand to grasp the Father's lightning-flash  
And to pass on, wrapped in song,  
The divine gift to the people.

But what seems to be missing in this poetic account of revelation is any ethical content. The poets name the holy, opens up truth and beauty, but where is the call to righteousness and love that we find in Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, or the Buddha?

On the third point, the signs of the times, especially the absence of God, we go to Hölderlin's poem "Bread and Wine" for a striking statement:

But, friends, we have come too late! The gods are, indeed,  
    alive,  
But above our heads, up there in another world.  
There they are endlessly active, and seem to heed little  
Whether we are alive: that's how much the heavenly ones  
    care.

We recognize here something close to Heidegger's own teaching. God is not dead, but he has withdrawn himself. Combined with the article in *Der Spiegel*, "Only a God Can Save Us," something like an eschatological tone has come into his thought – the readiness for an advent of God. But this word "God" is quite ambiguous in the present context. It seems hardly likely that Heidegger means the God of Christian faith, though this is not impossible. But I say 'hardly likely', because, as we have seen, Heidegger seemed more attracted to classical Greece than to Christianity, at least in his middle years. He speaks often of the "the gods" as of God. Even in the *Der Spiegel*<sup>85</sup> interview, he is not speaking of "God" but of "a God", and that provokes the question, "What God?" It is even less likely he means the Zeus or even all the gods of Greece. He might simply mean a divine revelation or showing of some sort, a new event (*Ereignis*) of Being. Heidegger's idea of the retrieval of the past and his attraction to Nietzsche's eternal recurrence theory may well mean that the coming God is a new advent of a God who has already come but been forgotten, even the God of Christianity.

The fourth and last point concerned the strongly Hellenic coloring of thought in both Hölderlin and Heidegger. Who are the "gods" who have departed, and who are the coming "gods"? Presumably not literally Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, and the rest. Of course, beyond the Greek gods was *moira*,

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<sup>85</sup> "Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten: Spiegel-Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger am 23. September, 1966." Published in *Der Spiegel*, no. 26, 31 May 1976, 193-219.

and perhaps beyond what Heidegger calls God or the gods is Being, as a kind of destining. He can also say that the Holy is older than the gods. "The holy is not holy because it is divine, but the divine is divine because it is "holy" in a way proper to itself." This may remind us of the enigmatic question about the meaning of "God" in the *Letter on Humanism*. But does not this strong Hellenism, and the idea of some ultimate beyond God make Heidegger finally incompatible with Christian thought? In reply, I would say that we should not jump to conclusions too quickly. There have been Christian thinkers, not all of them mystics, who have thought that behind what we call by the much-abused name of "God" there is a Godhead beyond our conceptionality. Dionysius the Areopagite talked of a "God beyond God," and so more recently did Paul Tillich. Even the great catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, sometimes refers to God as the Nameless or Ineffable. We can pursue the question only when we have thought about the phrase Heidegger used frequently toward the end of his life: "Only a god can save us."

## *Chapter 5*

### ART AS FUNDAMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

A concern for art and, indeed, the privileging of the place of art in humanity's relation to Being, is often adduced as one of the defining characteristics of the later Heidegger. Is this 'turn to art' a matter of Heidegger, having conquered the heights of phenomenology and ontology, and having made important contributions to the history of philosophy, now expanding his repertoire and applying his methods and insights to the field of aesthetics? Or is it an integral part of his fundamental philosophical program? In this chapter I shall argue that his interest in art is more of this latter kind. Indeed it is questionable whether it belongs to aesthetics in the narrow sense at all, for aesthetics, no less than metaphysics, is regarded by Heidegger as gripped by the spirit of enframing. Is it, nevertheless, a manifestation of Heidegger's fundamental romanticism that, faced with the typical post-Enlightenment choice between art and science, he chooses art? So how does this turn to art connect his politics and the global confrontation with technology, which will be discussed much later in this study?

To attempt to answer these questions, we must go back to 13 November 1935, when Heidegger delivered a lecture "On the Origin of the Work of Art" to the Art-Historical Society of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. This lecture was subsequently repeated in Zürich (in January 1936) and in Frankfurt (in

December 1936), being revised and expanded in the process. It was not published until 1950, when it was included in the collection *Holzwege*.<sup>86</sup>

The timing of the lectures is itself potentially significant for understanding Heidegger's engagement with questions of art. For the origin of the 1950 text goes back to the time when, on Heidegger's own account of things, he had come to realize that National Socialism was not going to fulfill the expectations he had attached to it.<sup>87</sup> Already in 1934 he had resigned from the rectorship. Can this text, then, be read as an early marker on his path of inner immigration? Suggestive here is the early adumbration of the critique of technology, a question that, as we have seen, is intimately connected with Heidegger's initial enthusiasm for and later disenchantment with Nazism. But if this is so, and taking into account the first series of lectures on the poet Hölderlin, dating from 1934-35, does it mean that we are to interpret the turn to art as an archetypal gesture of romantic thought, a retreat from the glare of public life and the rigors of a totally mobilized society into the inner sanctuary of a private aesthetic sphere?

Appearances, however, can be deceptive, and as we look further into the text it soon becomes clear that this is not a work of aesthetics in the narrow sense of a sub-discipline of philosophy, nor is it exclusively about art. Indeed, a closer look at the title might suggest that Heidegger did not himself claim that it was about art but about the *origin* of the work of art. And, just as we have learned that the origin of technology is nothing technological, so we should now

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<sup>86</sup> This may be translated 'Forest Paths.' However, it means more specifically the kind of path that turns out to lead nowhere, petering out or running into thick undergrowth.

<sup>87</sup> It will be clear from what follows that I do not accept the view that Heidegger's turn to art reflects that aestheticism of Nazi politics, interesting as that idea is – partly, because, as will become clear, Heidegger's concern is, at one level, not with 'art' at all.

be prepared to hear that the origin of the work or art is nothing 'artistic.' It is unsurprising, then, that as we follow Heidegger's account of this origin we are led into a domain that, as he understands it, is prior to art in the sense in which the term is generally used (i.e., in relation to what are called the fine arts). Indeed, this domain is prior to the split between art and science that is one of the characteristic features of our civilization.

In light of this comment, it can be claimed that, in terms of Heidegger's own intentions, we should not read *Origin* as a simple expression of romantic withdrawal, a retreat from the world in which technology and politics hold sway as the final outcome of the metaphysical worldview. Rather, in Heidegger's own terms, it is itself a thinking confrontation with the fundamental decision facing humanity in relation to the advent of planetary technology. Even more grandly, it become possible to read *Origin* as a key to the origin not only of art but also of history, and of humanity's historical existence and destiny. Thinking of *Origin* in this way also helps us to see how it can be taken as an early fruit of the 'later Heidegger.' For whereas historicity was conceived in *Being and Time* in terms of the individual subject (although, as the rectorial address showed, this could be interpreted in terms of the nation or *Volk*, regarded as a corporate individual), 'decision' is no longer a matter of will and resolution but involves a much higher level of receptivity to what comes, as it were, from beyond humanity.

How, then, does *Origin* itself arrive at this point?

We can begin with the first work of art mentioned in the text, a painting of a pair of shoes by Van Gogh, and, before we come to the controversial question of the shoes themselves, it is worth considering why Heidegger should pick on a work by this particular artist, by Van Gogh.



Heidegger had been very taken with Van Gogh's *Letters*, which he read when they were published during the First World War. Why? On the basis of Heidegger's own letters and comments made in the lectures on ontology, one element would seem to have been the way in which Van Gogh's decision to give up training for Christian ministry and devote himself to poverty and painting reflected just the kind of *existentiell* confrontation with existence that preoccupied Heidegger in the years leading up to *Being and Time*. When Heidegger cites Van Gogh's assertion that he would prefer to die in a natural way rather than learning to understand death academically, we can see how the painter could serve the philosopher as an *existentiell* paradigm of authenticity, grounded as his concept of authenticity was in the individual's resolute confrontation with death.<sup>88</sup> However, the kind of use to which Heidegger puts his comments on the painting of the shoes in *Origin* points away from this idea of the artist as lonely existentialist hero.

In fact, as the text proceeds it becomes ever clearer that one of Heidegger's aims in it is to break the spell of an understanding of art that focuses exclusively on the creative figure of the artist. This view that, in Heidegger's own words, "the work arises out and by means of the activity of the artist", is, he says, the 'usual view', and this 'usual view', he declares in the opening paragraph of the lecture, is what he is setting out to overthrow, or minimally, to supplement, by focusing – as the title suggests – on the work rather than on the artist. For, as he asks, "by what and whence is the artist what he is?" Answer: "By the work..." And, Heidegger adds, both artist and work

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<sup>88</sup> See Otto Pöggeler, "Heidegger on Art," in Harries and Jamme, eds., 1994.

are what they are only in relation to something else, to 'art' itself, which is "prior to both."<sup>89</sup>

It is extremely important that the 'usual view' that Heidegger here confronts is also the focus of discussion in the lectures on Nietzsche from the winter semester of 1936-37, lectures collectively entitled 'The Will to Power as Art.' Here Heidegger identifies the conviction that "Art must be grasped in terms of the artist"<sup>90</sup> as one of the defining statements of Nietzsche's whole approach to art. This is further complemented by Nietzsche's other basic principles of art, as expounded by Heidegger: that "art is the most perspicuous and familiar configuration of will to power;" that "art is the basic occurrence of all beings; to the extent that they are, beings are self-creating, created;" that "art is the distinctive countermovement to nihilism;" and that "art is worth more than 'the truth'."<sup>91</sup>

Set against the horizon sketched by these principles, and even without going into any further explanation of them, we can see how Heidegger's determination to challenge the 'usual view' of art will involve him in far-reaching decisions on a variety of issues. For if Nietzsche, far from being an 'untimely' or eccentric thinker (as he so often pictured himself), is in fact representative of the basic metaphysical outlook of modernity, then reconceptualizing the relationship between artist and artwork will require giving consideration to the nature of will to power, how beings are, nihilism and truth.

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<sup>89</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 17.

<sup>90</sup> *Nietzsche: Volumes one and two*, tr. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1991), 71.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

To put this in terms without argot, the most usual view of art in our culture, we might guess, is that art is primarily a way of representing things, an attempt to depict the world, and to show the world what it is like. The person on the pavement doesn't like Picasso, because Picasso's paintings aren't lifelike. Simple realism, it could plausibly be claimed, is the most commonly held aesthetic of our time. However, even everyday talk about art does not stop there. Let us consider a different medium: cinema. Three people come out of a movie, perhaps a new film by Scorsese. "I didn't like it," says one, "there was too much swearing and violence. I like to be entertained when I go out." "But that's how the characters would behave in real life," says the second (a simple realist), "You wouldn't expect small-time New York gangsters to be otherwise. That's what I like about the film: it really shows you what that kind of life must be like." "Maybe," says the third, "But this is no documentary, this is about the themes of all great art down the ages: passion, betrayal, redemption. *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *Mean Streets* – these are the archetypal Scorsese themes!" "But that's just my point," retorts the first speaker, "What is he so obsessed with violence, why can't he show us something more cheerful, something more edifying?"

None of our characters are great aesthetic theorists, but the terms of their discussion reflect some of the most difficult debates in aesthetics. The second character has been portrayed as a simple realist: the success or failure of a work of art is in terms of its faithfulness to life. The third character more obviously embraces what Heidegger regards as the 'usual view,' i.e., that art is primarily an expression of the vision of the artist and that, consequently, the meaning of art lies in the subjectivity of the artist. At this point, however, the first speaker reminds us that there are widely differing and often conflicting ways of evaluating such a vision, over and above the debate as to whether the work

effectively communicates what the artist wants to show to the recipient. The artist's vision is itself an expression of values that the recipient may or may not find acceptable. The judgment on the work of art, then, become a judgment about values, in this case about whether Scorsese's view of the world is one that we should be ready to embrace. But this judgment itself hinges on how we judge the world to be: is Scorsese's vision itself complicit in the violence it portrays, and do we too become complicit by enjoying it voyeuristically, or does he show us a truth we need to confront if we are to know the whole meaning of human life? Now this last question is no longer the question as to the simple representational accuracy of the film. It is about what matters most in human life.

This imaginary conversation has brought into focus three of Heidegger's five points: that the meaning of art is grounded in the activity of the artist; that art manifests will-to-power in the sense that it embodies the artist's will to communicate his vision to the audience; and that art represents the basic occurrence of beings, in that the kind of evaluative appraisal of the work of art hinges on fundamental decisions concerning what the world is like. But it also throws light on the remaining points (that art is the counter-movement to nihilism and that art is more important than truth). For it is precisely the outcome of the debate between the first and third interlocutors that decides what meaning the phenomenon itself – in this case the life of the gangsters portrayed in the film – is to have. Art provokes the question as to the meaning of what, in itself, is a bare concatenation of events: this is the life these people lead, no better, no worse, no different ontologically from any other kind of life, but what are we to make of it? Whatever we do make of it, we will need to make a judgment that involves an imaginative and evaluative envisioning of life that is essentially of the same kind of the judgment involved in appraising a work of

art. So, finally, art is more important than truth, in the sense that art exemplifies the kind of evaluative vision that determines how we see and how we judge the values embodied in the world and it is this vision that decides what, for us, is to count as truth in human affairs.

For the purposes of this study, it is not necessary to suppose that what Heidegger calls 'the usual view' is the universal view. Even in our imaginary conversation we have allowed another voice, that of the exponent of art-as-imitation, to be heard. All that matters, for now, is that Heidegger's point – and thus his subsequent argument – really does take its departure from how art is experienced and (if only by implication) understood in the everyday encounter with art – although it may be added that, in his own cultural context, where Nietzsche was such a massive influence both on artists and aestheticians, Heidegger's assumptions that this is the usual view is perhaps more plausible than in some other contexts.

All of this, however, leaves open the question as to whether this 'usual' way of talking and thinking about art is adequate or justifiable. If not, what are we to do? Might we, for example, reconfigure the order of precedence between artist, work, and object such as that object takes first place and the tyranny of the creator-artist is overthrown?

It might be supposed that this last move was the one Heidegger was about to make, but in fact he argued for something much more far-reaching. For the production and reception of works of art was, as he saw it, not merely a matter of individual vision and could not be improved merely by talking up the objective aspect of art. *For his examination of the work of art will call into question what it means to represent or to perceive anything at all, or, more precisely, to represent or to perceive anything as anything.* In other words, it

leads to the question as to why we do not just see the world but, instead, see the world (and all the particular things within the world) in a certain way, as a world of such and such a kind, comfortless or welcoming as the case may be. In this way, then, Heidegger invites us to ponder how we mean by 'representation', 'reality', and 'world'.

But if Heidegger's aim is to unsettle the 'usual view' and its one-sided privileging of the creator-artist, why does he begin with Van Gogh, a painter who, more than most, stood for the modernist ideal of the anguished creator-artist, the solitary genius compelled to overthrow all the prevailing rules of artistic representation so as to give shape to his own unique vision and who, in so doing, become incomprehensible to his contemporaries in order to bequeath to us a whole new way of looking at the world? Later on in the text Heidegger looks at works of art – works like a Greek temple – that are more obviously suited to his own purposes. Why begin with an artist who would seem to exemplify the view he wants to overturn?

The question itself suggests one possible answer: that, if Heidegger is to succeed, he must do so against the strongest of counter-examples. If his new approach provides a better way of looking at this (supposedly) supreme example of the individual creator-artist, then it will have little to fear from whatever other counter-examples are brought against him. In other words, he is not saying that works produced by creator-artists are dangerously subjective and should be brushed aside in favor of other, perhaps more contemplative, works. The aim is not to introduce a way of deciding between good and bad or between acceptable and unacceptable works of art, but to find a better way of understanding art as such. And that, again, is why he must take the question back to the most basic questions of representation.

Other explanations have, however, been offered in the secondary literature. One that has a certain currency is that Heidegger is not really concerned with Van Gogh's painting at all, except insofar as it provides a convenient, though specious, jumping-off point for his idyllic evocation of the world of the peasant woman whose shoes the painting supposedly represents. This is in turn seen as part of Heidegger's Nazistic and uncritically sentimental valorization of Germanic peasant life. Worse still, as the art critic Meyer Schapiro famously pointed out, there is no reason to suppose that these shoes belonged to a peasant woman at all. More probably they were the painter's own shoes! Heidegger, then, is doubly reprehensible. First, he is simply mistaken, and, second, his mistake reveals all too clearly the role of Nazi ideology in his whole intellectual project.<sup>92</sup>

Schapiro's point invites two initial comments. First, as we have seen, one of Heidegger's aims is to undermine the 'usual view' of art. Primarily this means toppling the creator-artist from the pedestal onto which late Romanticism had elevated him. But it does not stop there, since it also involves challenging the equally conventional form of the art-as-imitation view. Precisely with references to the shoes, Heidegger asks rhetorically 'Is it our opinion that the painting draws a likeness from something actual and transposes it into a product of artistic – production? By no means. The work, therefore, is not to be some reproduction of some particular entity that happens to be present at any given time' (*PLT*: 37). This suggests that the historical identity of the actual shoes used as a 'model' by Van Gogh is not in itself important for understanding the world of art *qua* work of art. In this respect it is perhaps regrettable if Heidegger has made a factual error, but that does not of itself destroy his whole argument.

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<sup>92</sup> See Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago, IL: University Press, 1987).

However, a careful reading of the text does not justify the assertion that Heidegger ever actually claims that Van Gogh's painting is a painting of a pair of peasant woman's shoes. To be sure he does use the painting to accompany his evocation of the world of the peasant woman, but nowhere does he say they are her shoes that Van Gogh painted. Indeed, he does not directly address the question of the 'ownership' of the shoes at all.

These comments may seem to have left the more serious charge unaffected: that, whoever's shoes these may have been, Heidegger uses Van Gogh's painting as an excuse for a piece of Nazi cultural propaganda.

Although I will not argue it here, I do not believe that we can conflate Heidegger's penchant for a pre-industrial agrarian way of life with the Nazi ideology of 'Blood and Soil'. A similar caution is called for with regard to the interpretation of the 'peasant' shoes, but the situation is, I believe, still more complicated. To see this, however, it is necessary to look again at the context of the *Origin*.

One of the most notorious cultural events of the whole Nazi era was the 1937 exhibition of degenerate art. The category of degenerate art was fairly ill-defined and perhaps, even, incoherent, but it included contemporary movements such as Expressionism – of which Van Gogh was generally taken to be a precursor. Andreas Hüneke has described as 'crucial' in determining whether a work of art was degenerate in the Nazi's sense of the term such factors as "Distortion" of natural form, particularly of the human figure, and "unnatural" colors.<sup>93</sup> In the light of such 'criteria' it is not at all surprising that a number of

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<sup>93</sup> Hüneke, A., 'On the Trail of Missing Masterpieces' in Barron, Stephanie (ed.) *'Degenerate Art': The fate of the avant-garde in Nazi Germany* (New York: Harry Abrams and Los Angeles CA: Country Museum of Art, 1991), 124.



paintings by Van Gogh were taken into the haul of 17,000 works impounded from museums and galleries, and five of them appeared in the 1937 exhibition in Munich. Although the exhibition of degenerate art was not held till 1937, and therefore post-dated the lectures on which *Origin* is based, the ideological line on Van Gogh had been made public long before that.

A further aspect of this is that the very concept of degenerate art was, of course, linked to Nazi racial theory and the biological interpretation of Nietzsche's will-to-power, an interpretation which understood will-to-power as a kind of quasi-Darwinian life-force. In this connection it is not merely Van Gogh's works but his personality and madness that also 'prove' the degeneracy of his art. For Heidegger, however, it was axiomatic that will-to-power was not a biological concept, and that even in Nietzsche's own terms the concept of a biologically degenerate art made no sense.

What does this tell us about Heidegger's procedure in *Origin*? The mere fact that Heidegger is taking as his point of reference a painter held in ill repute by Nazi ideologists does not seem to throw much light on his philosophical intentions. Are we to draw the conclusion that this is some kind of intra-party squabble and that Heidegger is trying to persuade those who first heard his lectures that it is all right for Nazis to like Van Gogh, since the painter shares their own affinity with traditional peasant ways of life? However, we should remember that the period when Heidegger was giving these lectures was precisely the period in which he seems to have been beginning what might be called his inner immigration, a period of disillusionment that had especially to do with the Party's failure to break loose from the grip of technological thinking. The world of the peasant woman, in this context, is not so much a Nazi icon as a reminder of what Heidegger regards Nazism as turning away

from. At the same time, and this is perhaps a crucial point in mapping Heidegger's complex stance towards modernity, Van Gogh was undoubtedly known as a modernist, avant-garde painter, and it is striking that the other painters to whom Heidegger was particularly attentive, Cézanne and Klee, were also distinctly modernist. The world of the peasant woman, as disclosed by Van Gogh's painting, then, is not simply a piece of the rural past, but, insofar as we only gain access to it through the work of art (and quite particularly, this work of modernist art), it is a world to which we can relate only and exclusively on the basis of our own modern experience.<sup>94</sup>

There are, then, a number of elements in Heidegger's account of the shoes as a means of controverting the 'usual view' of art that, at least implicitly, undermine some of the bedrock principles of Nazi aesthetics. This is, as we shall see later, vitally important in assessing the way in which Heidegger construes the relationship between poet and nation (especially as exemplified in Hölderlin). If there is a 'true' or 'spiritual' Germany, it is not to be found along the path of racial purity but in the lived world of a way of life, and furthermore, it is most easily accessed by means of an artistic vision that, itself grounded in the experience of modernity, overreaches the accidental genius and anguish of the individual artist.

Heidegger showed little interest in art until the mid-1930s, and then it appears in the company of several related interests: the presocratic philosophers, whose works are often in poetic form and are more closely related to Greek poetry than, say, Kant is to German poetry; philosophers such as Schelling and

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<sup>94</sup> This point shall be more fully adumbrated in the next chapter, in discussing Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin.

Nietzsche, for whom art has a central position in philosophy; and language, which, for Heidegger, originates with poets.

In *Origin* Heidegger rejects two widely held doctrines. First, that art is concerned only with beauty and pleasure: “art is rather the disclosure of the being of beings” (*IM*, 111). Second, that a work of art is primarily a thing, and that aesthetic value is superimposed on it by our subjective view of it: for Heidegger it is art that shows us what a thing is. There are nevertheless two ways that an artwork is a thing. First, a work, such as a painting, can be moved and stored like other things. (He later rejects this way of viewing artworks. It treats them as objects present at hand, in the way that an art dealer or a mover does [*PLT*, 13]). Second, it has a thingly aspect: “There is something stony in a work of architecture, wooden in carving, colored in a painting, spoken in a linguistic work, sonorous in a musical composition” (*Origin*, 19).

What then is a thing? There are three traditional accounts: a thing is (1) a bearer of properties; (2) the unity of perceptual sensations; or (3) a composite of form and matter. Heidegger rejects (1) and (2), the latter for the reason that “we never really first perceive the throng of sensations.... We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds” (*Origin*, 26). He prefers (3), the form-matter account. This was originally derived from, and is best suited to, intrinsically useful equipment such as a jug or shoes. But equipment is only one of three types of a thing: a “mere thing” such as a rock, equipment, and an artwork. An artwork differs from equipment and has something in common with a mere thing. Like a natural rock and unlike shoes, an artwork is not produced for a specific use or purpose, though unlike the rock and shoes it is not “self-contained” (*Origin*, 29): it calls for an observer or

interpreter. Still, since the tradition gives priority to equipment, Heidegger decides to look at that first.

Heidegger does this by introducing his first exhibit: Van Gogh's painting of a solitary pair of worn peasant shoes. We cannot just look at the shoes we are wearing, because attention distorts our view of them: shoes are essentially inconspicuous to their wearer. From the painting, Heidegger argues, we see that the shoes are involved both with the world – the world of human products and activities – and with the earth – the natural foundation on which the world rests. This is overlooked *both* by the ordinary user *and* by the form-matter theory. Owing to their excessive familiarity, the user regards his shoes as simply things for walking. Or, to take a different example, someone familiar with a baseball bat regards it as an instrument for hitting balls. The form-matter theory refines this account. Focusing on the *manufacture* of shoes and bats, it says that shoes and bats are pieces of matter (leather, nails, wood) with a form (their utility) imposed on them. The user and the theory neglect much else that would need to be explained to an uninformed alien: the involvement of the shoes with the world of the peasant, and the wear and tear they undergo from earth; the involvement of the bat with the world of baseball (bases, foul lines, et cetera) and the earth on which it is played. But what they neglect becomes apparent in the painting: “the equipmentality of equipment first genuinely arrives at its appearance through the work... The nature of art would then be this: the truth of beings setting itself to work (*Origin*, 36). The work is not a thing with artistic qualities added: the work reveals the nature of things.

Heidegger then presents his second exhibit: a Greek temple. He does so partly to distinguish his own view from the view that art is imitation: the temple is not representational. But partly also because he wants to argue that a work of

art not only *opens* up a world; it also *sets* up a world, a world to which it belongs. The Van Gogh opens up the world of the peasant. But it does not set it up, nor does it belong there. The temple, by contrast, unifies and articulates the world of a people: it

...first fits together and at the same time gather around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being (*Origin*, 42).

The world of a people is the familiar structured realm that they know their way about and make their decisions.

The temple not only sets *up* world. It sets *forth* world's counterpart, earth. It is surrounded by "earthy" nature, buffeted by storms and resting on rock, and it also consists of earthy natural materials. It thus reveals earth *as* earth, and grounds the world on earth. All artworks set forth earth in their way. In equipment, earthy raw materials are "used up," that is, fused into the artifact so that they are no longer noticeable: it does not matter, and we do not notice, whether shoes are made of leather or of some functionally equivalent material. In artworks, materials are only "used," not "used up": they remain conspicuous within the work (*Origin*, 47f.). The earthy materials of poetry, the poet's words, are, unlike the words of common discourse, conspicuous and resistant to paraphrase. It matters whether the Parthenon is made of marble or plastic. In one way or another, all artworks set forth earth.

World is the human environment in which we lead our lives: the tools we use, the houses we dwell in, the values we invoke. Earth is the natural setting of this world, the ground on which it rests and the source of raw materials for our

artifacts. World and earth are opposites in conflict. World strives for clarity and openness, while earth shelters and conceals, tending to draw world into itself. Each needs and sustains the other. The artwork straddles both contestants. The temple's static repose is the product of the conflict between earth and world. It is a happening, an event – the event of truth as unconcealment. Only if beings are unconcealed can we make particular conjectures and decisions. But since we finite creatures never wholly master beings cognitively or practically, there is also concealment. With concealment there would be no objectivity, no decisions, and no history: everything, the past, the present, and the future, would be wholly transparent to us, leaving no hidden depths to things, and no scope for choices with uncertain outcomes. (The two pairs of opposites, earth-world and concealment-unconcealment, do not exactly coincide. Earth is partly unconcealed, and the world is partly concealed.) Truth happens in the work:

Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is the fighting of the battle in which the unconcealedness of beings as a whole, or truth, is won (*Origin*, 55).

Heidegger plays down the role of the artist and tends to regard the work as the product of an impersonal force, such as truth or art itself, that uses the artist to actualize itself. In “great art” the artist effaces himself: he is like a “passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge” (*Origin*, 40). But an artwork is essentially “created” (*Origin*, 56f.). Creation is quite distinct from the manufacture of a tool: art is not craftsmanship plus something extra, any more than a work is a tool plus something extra.

Why must truth happen in a work? The conflict between concealment and unconcealment is a conflict between an old paradigm and a new paradigm, between, say, an old religion and a new religion. An artwork is like a fortress or

standard marking the ground newly won for truth: "Clearing (*Lichtung*) of openness and establishment in the Open belong together (*Origin*, 61). There are, Heidegger concedes (*Origin*, 62) other ways of staking our claim to truth: an "act that founds a political state" (e.g., the U.S. Constitution); the "nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all" (the conversion of St. Paul); the essential sacrifice (e.g., the Crucifixion); or the thinker's questioning. (Science is not an "original happening of truth." It fills in the details of a "domain of truth already opened... Insofar as a science passes beyond correctness and goes on to a truth,... it is philosophy.") But art is the main way that truth happens. Not only the temple but also Greek tragedy lay down the paradigm, the values and categories, in terms of which a people view the world and make their choices.

Why must the artwork be created? A work involves a "rift" between earth and world, and, unlike equipment, composes conspicuous earthy materials into a reposeful form. The notion of rift, *Riss*, links with that of a blueprint (ground-plan) or paradigm, a *Grundriss* (*Origin*, 64). But it also means that work is conspicuous, owing to the tension it embodies. A broom fades into the background of other equipment, its constituent materials "used up," smoothed down into its usefulness. A work is solitary, tensed, and striking. It is especially suitable as a marker of truth. But the very existence of the work cries out for explanation. A work, unlike a tool, bears the scars of its production. The rift needs a creator to contain it.

A work needs an audience or "preservers" as well as a creator. The work draws its preservers "out of the realm of the ordinary" into the new world it opens up, and suspends their "usual doing and valuing, knowing and looking" (*Origin*, 66). The appropriate response to a work is neither knowing now

willing, but a “knowing that remains a willing, and willing that remains a knowing” (*Origin*, 67). It is not carrying out some plan one has already formed, but “resoluteness,” the ecstatic entry into a new into a new realm of openness in which all one’s old beliefs and desires are suspended. It is somewhat like St. Paul’s conversion; opening up a new field for knowing and willing that is disconnected from one’s previous notions and plans. Great art, like the voice of God, is not consumer-led: it changes one’s whole way of viewing the world and of finding one’s way about in it. But the work is not like a drug, and the experience is not private: the work is communal and grounds our relations to one another.

A work, Heidegger has said, is not a thing or a tool with something added; things, stuffs, are inconspicuous in equipment and revealed only in works. But what about the artist? Must not he know about nature, about the things and tools he portrays, before he creates art? No. It is the work that draws out the rift (*Riss*) and draws the sketch (*Riss*) (*Origin*, 70). The artist does not *first* have a clear view of things and *then* embody it in a work: nature is opened up for him, as well as for us, only in the work. The work needs creators, who “put truth into the work,” and also preservers, who “put it to work,” actualize it, that is, in their communal knowing-willing (*Origin*, 71). But the work also makes creators, as well as preservers, *possible*. Creators are agents of a force larger than themselves: art.

Truth comes, in a way, from nothing. We cannot account for Van Gogh’s painting by supposing that he came across some old shoes, and painted what he saw. For, first, the shoes alone could not account for the way in which Van Gogh saw them. And secondly, he did not see them in a new way *before* his painting emerged: “the opening up of the Open, and the clearing of beings,



happens only as the openness is projected" (*Origin*, 71). Art, like Paul's conversion, comes as a bolt from the blue.

All art, then, is essentially *Dichtung* (*Origin*, 72). *Dichtung* here has a wide sense and means something like "invention" or "projection." What the artist puts into the work is not derived from the things around him, but invented and projected. All great art involves a "change... of the unconcealment of beings" (*Origin*, 72): it illuminates the ordinary, it rips us for a time out of the ordinary into another world, or it changes our whole view of the world. In a narrow sense, however, *Dichtung* means "poetry" (*Poesie*), and poetry is Heidegger's third exhibit. He does not believe that all other arts are, or stem from, poetry. What he believes is this. Language is not just a medium for communicating what we know. Language used for this purpose is "actual language at any given moment." Language also brings beings out of "dim confusion" into the open by naming them for the first time, and thus gives us something to communicate about. This is innovative language or "projective saying" (*Origin*, 74). It lays down what can and cannot be said in the language of communication. Since poetry is in language, and since it is a form of art, that is, of the lighting projection of truth, poetry must be projective saying, an original, innovative use of language to name things and thus open up a realm in which we can communicate.

Poetry is not, however, only one among several arts. The other arts – architecture, sculpture, painting, music – operate within a realm already opened up by language. The disclosure effected by language, that is, by poetry, preceded disclosure by the other arts. So poetry is prior to the other arts, just as linguistic disclosure is prior to other forms of disclosure.

All art is *dichterisch*, inventive or projective. So too is the preservation of a work, since the preserver has to enter the realm disclosed by the work. But the essence of *Dichtung*, Heidegger continues, is the founding of truth. "Founding," *Stiftung*, has three senses, and art involves founding in all three senses. First, "bestowing." The setting into the work of truth involves a paradigm-shift: it thrusts up the extraordinary and thrusts down the ordinary. So truth cannot derive from what went before. It comes as a *gift*. Founding is an "overflow," the bestowal of a gift (*Origin*, 75).

Second, founding is "grounding." Truth is cast not into a void, but to preservers, historical persons. It comes from nothing, but is addressed to a people. Three factors involved in a people. The first is the people's "endowment," their "earth": the land on which they live and which they cultivate, but also relatively permanent features of their world such as the German language that they speak. The second is the ordinary and traditional, the old "world," their pagan customs and beliefs, for example. The third is the new "world," their "withheld vocation," the beginnings, say, of Christianity among them (*Origin*, 75f.). The creation of, say, a Christian work of art cannot be explained by these factors, especially not by the old world. But they guide it. It is composed in German, adapted to their endowment, and it presents a Christian message. It makes the people's destiny explicit, and grounds it on their native soil.

Thirdly, founding is "beginning." A beginning is in a way direct or immediate, but it may also require long preparation – like a leap (*Sprung*) for which we need to prepare ourselves. A genuine beginning is not simple or primitive; it contains the end latent within itself; it is a leap forward (*Vorsprung*), that leaps over everything to come (*Origin*, 76). Homer's epics,

for example, are not primitive and simple; they also implicitly contain the tragedies that later opened up the world of the Greek city-states. The history of art is not a steady cumulative process, but is punctuated by massive explosions of creative energy that leave future generations to do what they can with the pieces.

“When beings as a whole require grounding in openness, art always attains to its historical essence as founding” (*Origin*, 75). Such art alters our whole view of being. This has happened three times in the West. First, and most radically, it occurred in Greece, with its conception of being as “presence” (*Anwesenheit*). Then in medieval times, when the beings disclosed by the Greeks were transformed into things created by God. And finally it occurs in modern times, when beings become “objects,” to be enumerated and manipulated. (This is what lies at the root of “technology.”) Each time a new world arises; unconcealment of beings happens; and it sets itself into work, a setting accomplished by art. When art happens, a thrust enters history and history begins again. Art grounds history, not history, not history in the sense of important events, but history as the entry of a people into its native endowments, and its movement towards its appointed destiny. Now we understand the word “origin” in the title of the essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art.” “Origin,” *Ursprung*, means a “leap forth” (*Origin*, 77f). Art lets truth leap forth. Art is the origin or leaping forth of the work of art. Thus it is the origin of the creators and preservers of the work, and that means of the existence of a historical people.

Like *Being and Time*, this work ends with a discussion of Hegel (*Origin*, 79-81). Is art, Heidegger asks, still an essential and necessary way in which

truth happens that is decisive for our historical existence? Hegel answered that it is not. But Hegel's answer was given in the framework of a truth of beings that has already happened, the truth that has informed Western thought since the Greeks. If ever Hegel's claim comes up for decision, the decision will involve a quite different conception of truth. At present we are too entangled in the old conception to assess Hegel's claim. All we can do is continue to reflect on art. This cannot force art into existence, but it prepares for it: "Only such knowledge prepares a space for art, a way for creators, a location for preservers" (*Origin*, 78). Heidegger conceives himself as a sort of John the Baptist for the new art and the new world that is to come.

Heidegger used the word "turn" (*Kehre*) to refer to two things: the shift of perspective involved in the transition from Divisions I and II of *Being and Time*, the analytic of *Dasein*, to Division III, on being and time; and the change from forgetfulness of being to the remembrance of it that he hoped would come. Often "the turn" is used to refer to a change in Heidegger's own thought that supposedly occurred in about 1930. Can we detect signs of a turn in this third sense? Has Heidegger changed his mind between *Being and Time* and *Origin*?

There is plainly much continuity between the two works. Heidegger is still concerned with *Dasein* and its world. But the focus of interest has changes. *Being and Time* was concerned with the nature of *Dasein* in an already established world. *Origin* asks a different question: How is the world set up in the first place? Heidegger approaches this question through a series of increasingly fundamental works of art. First, a Van Gogh, which reveals to us a world that is already in place. Second, a temple reveals a world, which is often the dominant, structuring center of a city-state. Here he also refers to tragedies,

which originated in a particular city-state, though they were often performed in other cities. And finally, though implicitly, the Panhellenic poetry of Homer and Hesiod, poetry regarded as the common possession of the Greek world.

Heidegger no doubt exaggerates. Is art always so crucial for world-building as it perhaps was for the Greeks? Was the Christian world set *up* by art or only celebrated (or set *forth*) by art? Might not equipment – the first automobile or the latest space ship – set up a world as effectively as an artwork? Is every dominant, world-structuring monument (such as Trafalgar Square) a great work of art? But these queries are by the way. The main point is that *Dasein* cannot play the pivotal part in the founding of a world. It cannot, as it does in the first two divisions of *Being and Time*, occupy the center of the stage.

*Dasein* then, is essentially in the world. Ordinary human discoveries, communications, decisions, and activities presuppose a familiar background or values and categories, customs, and routines. How does this world get established? How for that matter can it be radically changed? Not by ordinary *Dasein*, for *Dasein* is always already in the world. By extraordinary *Dasein*, then? The artist, the poet, or even the thinker? Heidegger, in the wake of Hölderlin, sometimes describes the poet as a sort of demigod, standing in a no man's land between the gods and the people, and transmitting the hints of the gods to the people. It is in this no man's land that it is decided who man is and where he established his existence.

The artist or the poet cannot do his work in any normal human way, in any way that already presupposes the world that he is to set up. He must be something like the vehicle of an impersonal force – art or truth or being itself.

The artist must be “resolute,” *entschlossen*, ecstatically “opened up” to this force. The resoluteness that originally seemed to be a way of conducting oneself authentically in *this* world has found a new role: resoluteness enables the creator, and the preservers, to found a new world.

Language, too, has found a new role. In *Being and Time* language grows out of the significant involvements of the already established world. In *Origin* it plays a more fundamental part. Projective language, the naming of things for the first time, helps to found a world. Human beings, too, cannot devise language, in the normal human way, which already presupposes our possession of language. So language, too, at least projective language, is an impersonal force that constitutes *Dasein* and its world, not simply an instrument for communication. This is why Heidegger writes: “Language speaks, not man. Man only speaks when he fatefully answers to language.”<sup>95</sup>

Has Heidegger's thought changed? Or is it only his questions that have changed? Or have new questions simply developed out of his earlier questions? Perhaps we should attend to what he says about the “beginning.” A genuine beginning, he said, is not simple or primitive; it leaps over what is to come. Might this be true of his early work? *Origin*, for example, speaks of earth as the counterpart to world. *Being and Time*, by contrast, makes no reference to “earth.” Yet already in lectures of 1925 Heidegger spoke of “earth” as that on which the world of our work and activity rests.<sup>96</sup> Earth is not yet, as in *Origin*, in conflict with world. It is a familiar outlying part of our world, the semi-

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<sup>95</sup> *The Principle of Reason*, tr. R. Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 96. (Lectures given in 1956, first publication 1957.)

<sup>96</sup> *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, tr. T. Kisiel. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

domesticated nature on which we graze our livestock. It is not, as in *Origin*, the threatening, hostile, if indispensable, earth from which a world has to be wrested. But this is because the questions asked in the two works are different. The concept of earth remains inconspicuous in Heidegger's early works, but ready for a more significant role later. The early Heidegger is perhaps the Homeric epic from which develop the tragedies and temples of the later Heidegger.

#### A. What Is a Thing?

In declaring his intention to move beyond 'the usual view' of art, Heidegger seeks to shift the emphasis from the artist to the work. As he does so, he is struck by the contrast between the spiritual or rapturous state of mind typically ascribed to the creator-artist and the fact that the work of art is a thing. The Van Gogh painting gets its first mention as an example of this 'thingly' aspect of art, as an object that can be carted around like any other thingly object, such as coal, logs, or a sack of potatoes. This thingly element, he says, is something that all works have, and the examples he chooses – the painting or, later, the Greek Temple – seem well-chosen to illustrate this. But even an artwork of an apparently more spiritual or ethereal kind – Beethoven's string quartets, to use another of Heidegger's own examples – cannot escape the dimension of thingliness, for when not being realized as music scores 'lie in the storerooms of the publishing house like potatoes in the cellar' (*PLT*, 19). Even the work in performance is inseparable from the thingly element of sound itself as vibrations in air. The same is *a fortiori* true of architecture, sculpture, painting, and the other arts.

Naturally, Heidegger is very well aware that this is precisely the opposite of what much academic and popular talk about art has chosen to think about. Such talk usually emphasizes the ways in which the artwork is not a 'mere' thing but a bearer of meaning, functioning as allegory or symbol to manifest 'something other' (*PLT*, 20). This 'other' dimension of meaningfulness is generally regarded as the authentic element in art, what makes it art, but once again Heidegger refuses to let this usual view pass unexamined. On the contrary, he suggests that we cannot have an adequate understanding of the work unless or until we have taken its thingliness into account.<sup>97</sup>

Heidegger therefore goes on to list the three conceptions of the thing that have dominated thinking about the subject in the West, and that have done so to such an extent that they are regarded as self-evident and enter into everyday use without being seen as problematic.

The first view is that of the thing as the bearer of properties. The block of granite is the bearer of such properties as hardness, heaviness, extension, bulk, lack of shape, roughness, color, dullness, et cetera.<sup>98</sup> This everyday understanding of the thing is expressed in the Latin philosophical vocabulary of the West in terms of the relationship between the substance of a thing and its accidents. This conceptual schema has been widely assumed to be all encompassing and has been applied to everything from God and His attributes to the block of granite. It is also reflected in (or is it, perhaps a reflection of?)

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<sup>97</sup> Heidegger does not pause to discuss this, but he will have been very well aware that, even when the material substratum of art is acknowledged and given its place in aesthetic theory, it was usual for the different forms of art to be hierarchically graded according to the extent to which this materiality was sublimated and subordinated to the 'meaning' element. Hegel's aesthetics is an outstanding example of this.

<sup>98</sup> It is characteristic that Heidegger mixes such philosophical-sounding properties as 'extension' and 'heaviness' with 'lack of shape' and 'dullness'.



the basic sentence structure of our language, in which meaning is constructed by means of the relationship between subject and predicate.

But this conception of the thing, Heidegger tells us, 'does not build upon the thingly element of the thing, its independent and self-contained character' (*PLT*, 25). We sense, he says, that this construal of the thing is an inappropriate rationalization that does violence to its object. Thus, to take an example Heidegger hints at and discusses elsewhere, religious believers spontaneously feel repelled by the God of the philosophers, the Absolute Being accompanied by such imposing attributes as being-his-own-cause, omniscience, omnipresence, infinity, et cetera. Such a God, they say, is not the God known in worship and prayer. At the other end of the scale, an understanding of the block of granite framed in terms of the relationship between substance and accidents will never let us see what a stonecarver sees in it.

In *What is Called Thinking?* Heidegger invites his audience to abandon for a moment the standpoints of scientific inquiry and, even, of philosophy, to step outside the lecture hall and just look at a tree in bloom. 'The tree faces us. The tree and we meet one another, as the tree stands there and we stand face to face with it. As we are in this relation of one to the other and before the other, the tree and we *Are*' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 41). This encounter, Heidegger insists, is no mere idea. It does not involve any conceptualization of the tree as a being of such and such a kind, nor any thematic observation of its distinguishing properties. To say that it is an oak tree of a particular species, at a particular stage of its reproductive cycle (in bloom), swaying in the spring breeze – none of these technical or poetic observations is necessarily incorrect but they are not what strike us in our encounter with what Heidegger calls 'the undisguised presence of the thing' (*PLT*, 25). If we imagine that the standpoint

of science and philosophy is 'normal', then this encounter will seem like a leap, Heidegger suggests – and indeed it is, for there is no chain of reasoning that links the scientific view with that of the immediate encounter. Yet this leap is not some kind of mystical experience; it is simply a leap 'onto the soil on which we really stand' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 41). Indeed, it is a leap onto the soil on which we really were standing all along.

However, to return to *Origin*, Heidegger recognizes that this challenge to the normal view could itself be misconstrued as an example of a different but not less misleading concept of the thing. This is the concept of the thing as, in the strict sense, an *aesthetic* object, that which is given to us in and through the sense, as if our encounter with the tree were to be understood as a kind of surrender to the sheer sensory impact of the color that dazzles the eye, the scent that tickles the nostril and the caressing wind.

Once again, however, Heidegger brushes this aside. It is not the case that we first receive a mass of sensation and then transform them into an experienced object, but we see the object simply as what it is: 'We hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagon' (*PLT*, 26), he remarks. That is to say, we never just hear a bare sound or see a bare color. These are not the primary data of perception but abstraction from what is given concretely in actual existence.

Although Heidegger spends less time in the text of *Origin* on this way of misconceiving the thing, his brief comments here are the merest tip of the iceberg and touch on some of the fundamental philosophical commitments of his approach to phenomenology. The clearest statement of what Heidegger understood by phenomenology method is, perhaps, to be found in lectures that formed the basis of *Being and Time*, although the introductory methodological

section did not appear in the published version.<sup>99</sup> These are available in English as *History of the Concept of Time*.

Of immediate relevance to the discussion of the thing in *Origin* is the exposition given in these lectures of the principle of intentionality. Now,, although the critique of technology is scarcely developed in such relatively early writings, part of the attraction of phenomenology to Heidegger was to find a way of breaking the grip of the scientific positivism that seemed tailor-made as an ideological underpinning for a technological society. Whatever the justification of such an approach in the natural sciences, it was, Heidegger believed, fundamentally injurious to the human sciences and, above all, to philosophy. Positivism systematically ignored the question of intentionality, a concept that lay at the heart of phenomenological method.

What does Heidegger understand by intentionality?

At its simplest, intentionality is ‘a structure of lived experience as such’ (*History of the Concept of Time* 25). It is, of course, a structure of a particular kind, one that enables us to bridge the gap between subject and object that has long puzzled philosophers.

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<sup>99</sup> The justification for turning back to the early Heidegger at this point presupposes a positive position on the question of continuity between early and later works. The text we are about to consider itself shows how we can relate the sometimes startling procedures of the later Heidegger back to his methodological principles that he embraces very early in his career.

*Intentio* literally means directing-itself-toward. Every lived experience, every psychic comportment, directs itself toward something. Representing is a representing of something, recalling is a recalling of something, judging is a judging about something, presuming, expecting, hoping, loving, hating – of something.<sup>100</sup>

Consciousness, in other words, is never self-contained but, even in its simplest forms and functions, reaches out beyond itself ‘toward something’, as Heidegger puts it. However, to escape solipsism it is not of itself sufficient merely to observe that when I think I think ‘of’ something, since this gives no guarantee that what I think of really exists outside consciousness. How, then, can the doctrine of intentionality, thus defined, do more than articulate the aspiration to transcend a subjectivistic or solipsistic view of consciousness?

The first step in Heidegger’s response to this implied charge is that the customary way of posing the question already involves a misrepresentation of the fundamental issue. We should not begin with the classical scenario of an inner psychic event on one side and a physical object out there on the other. No matter how hallowed by convention this picture may be, the question it suggests is only a derivative, or secondary, issue. More basic than the question of perception, couched in such terms, is that of what Heidegger calls comportment (*Verhalten*). What does this mean? Let us take Heidegger’s own example. I come into a room and see a chair. Now, the chair that I thus see is not in the first instance the object of detached empirical perception. It is simply the chair I have to push out of the way, or walk around, or sit on, or on which the cat is already resting. In such ways I live out an intentional comportment toward the chair long before I ever isolate it as a distinct object of perception. Clearly, the

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<sup>100</sup> Heidegger, M. *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 29.

comportment in which I encounter the chair doesn't just involve what I subsequently isolate as 'the chair', but embraces the whole complex of lived experience in which I encounter the chair itself: everything that has to do with my going into this particular room.

Intentional comportment is not, however, introduced by Heidegger as a step in an argument that would culminate in my being able to say with confidence that the chair 'actually' exists as a physical object in three-dimensional space. The concern that is revealed in intentional comportment is not the perceived entity, but the perception of the entity, the entity 'as it is perceived, as it shows itself in concrete perception' (*History of the Concept of Time* 40), 'the way and manner of its being-perceived' (*History of the Concept of Time* 40), 'the how of its being-perceived... the how of its being-intended' (*History of the Concept of Time* 45).

This may still fall short of providing an adequate response to the charge of subjectivism. Nevertheless it does show us what Heidegger things is being aimed at in phenomenological investigation, namely, the uncovering of this 'as', 'way and manner', or 'how' of the perception of the object. To go back to the example, the chair is disclosed to me in the first instance 'as' the chair I want to sit on, or from which I have to shoo away the cat.

However, there are two further refinements to the theory of intentionality we must take into account if we are to understand the philosophical significance that Heidegger ascribes to it.

The first concerns the distinction between intentional presuming and intentional fulfillment. Presuming, in this context, means simply alluding to what is perceived in a general, empty, merely formal way, as when I report to a

friend in the hall outside the room 'There is a chair in that room'. The friend will perfectly understand what I say, but this will say nothing to him of how he will encounter the chair for himself when he goes in, whether he sees it as a tasteful antique chair, a shabby old thing, an obstruction or a convenience. The intention has become detached from its object, and the object itself, the chair, is correctly identified but not thought in its concrete specificity. Intentionality is said to be fulfilled in concrete intuition such that I have 'the entity present in its intuitive content so that what is at first only emptily presumed in it demonstrates itself as grounded in the matter' (*History of the Concept of Time* 49).

However, no more than in *Origin* does Heidegger understand intuition here in terms of the immediacy of sense experience. My grasp of the chair as that from which I have to shoo away my cat is in some sense prior to its impact on me as a congeries of sense data. In this connection Heidegger claims that there is a categorical structure given in intuition. Now, clearly, in the light of his comments about substance and accidents (and of what he will go on to say about matter and form) Heidegger is not wanting to endorse either a Kantian or an Aristotelian theory of categories, and certainly against Kant, if not Aristotle, he is not suggesting that we have at our disposal a table of categories that we simply 'apply' in intuition. Instead, the 'how' of our intuition always involves a certain structuring of experience that is embedded in the most fundamental dimension of experience itself. I see a row of trees, a flock of wild ducks, Heidegger says, and that I see them *as* a row or a flock 'is not based upon a prior act of counting. It is an intuitive unity which gives the whole simply. It is figural' (*History of the Concept of Time* 66).<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> As it is not immediately relevant, I shall not pursue here the further question which Heidegger discusses as to whether it is also possible to have what he calls ideational

Against this background, we can see that Heidegger's apparently buccaneer brushing-aside of the second view of the thing, the thing as what is given to us as the object of sense-experience – a view which 'makes it press too hard upon us' (*PLT*, 26) – presupposes an extensive philosophical preparation, the outcome of which is that, for Heidegger, sense experience is never 'raw' but always already interpreted, experienced 'as' this or that object of intentional comportment.

This discussion will provide a reference point for further elements in Heidegger's treatment of both things and works of art, but what of the third view of the thing that he regards as characteristic of the popular view?

This is the view that the thing is to be understood in terms of the distinction between matter and form, such that 'the thing is formed matter' (*PLT*, 26). More precisely, the thingly element in, for example, the work of art is 'the matter of which it consists' (*PLT*, 27). Perhaps this is the most common sense way of understanding the thing. Certainly, Heidegger comments, it is '*the conceptual schema which is used in the greatest variety of ways, quite generally for all art and aesthetics*' (*PLT*, 27). And not only in art and aesthetics: 'Form and content are the most hackneyed concepts under which anything and everything may be subsumed' (*PLT*, 27). Add to this the refinement that form is correlated with rationality, logic and subjectivity, while matter is linked to the irrational, the illogical and the object, then, Heidegger says, 'representation has at its command a conceptual machinery that nothing is capable of withstanding' (*PLT*, 27).

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intuition: i.e., intuition in which I intuit one-ness, unity itself, as such and apart from its manifestation in, e.g., the row of trees or flock of ducks.

Heidegger is particularly interested in the fact that the matter-form distinction makes clear that whatever is analyzed in such terms is being looked at, more or less explicitly, in terms of its usefulness, as 'equipment' to be used for a given function. Form is not regarded as something, as it were, grows out of the matter or co-originates with it. Form is what is imposed or impressed upon matter for a specific purpose. When we are confronted with a thing (Heidegger's examples are a jug, an ax, and a shoe) the material element is subordinated to the form, which, in turn, is subordinated to the use to which the thing is put, so that what we want to know about the jug is whether it is capacious enough or whether it leaks, about the ax whether it is sharp enough or balanced enough, and about the shoe whether it fits and is waterproof (or, it may be, fashionable). 'Usefulness is the basic feature from which this entity regards us' (*PLT*, 28), Heidegger comments.

These remarks suggest to Heidegger a further, interesting observation: that what exists in this manner – i.e., what exists as 'useful' – is, or appears to us as, 'the product of a process of making. It is made as a piece of equipment for something' (*PLT*, 28).

Turning from jugs and shoes to the big picture, Heidegger then adds that the dominion exercised by the matter-form distinction was, historically, significantly enhanced by the way in which it was taken over from Aristotle by medieval Christian theology and applied to the total relation between God and the world, such that the world becomes what God has made for the fulfillment of His purposes, however these are conceived. But this effectively reduces the world to the status of mere instrumentality, a useful means to an end, rather than something of intrinsic value.



Inevitably we hear in such comments anticipations of Heidegger's later critique of technology, and this is born out by further developments in the text. For a subsequent historical transformation of the conceptualization of the thing, a transformation that was to prove decisive for the modern understanding of the world and of the things within it, occurred in the early scientific revolution and the incorporation of that revolution into the presuppositions of modern philosophy. In lectures given in the winter semester of 1935-36 (and therefore concurrent with his reworking of the first version of *Origin*) Heidegger discusses this with particular reference to Newton and Kant. Stating that Newton is the founding figure of modern science, Heidegger draws attention to the title of Newton's magnum opus: the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. In this title we can immediately see that science, for Newton, is regarded as fundamentally mathematical. Now mathematics, as Heidegger understands it, is a way of knowing that draws upon or that brings to expressing what we know, or presume we know, of thing 'in advance' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 73).

Think again of the example of the row of trees or the flock of ducks. Here we seem to be in the situation that our grasp of oneness precedes our perception of any particular instance of a unitary phenomenon, such as 'a' row or 'a' flock. 'The mathematical,' Heidegger says, 'is this fundamental position we take toward things by which we take up things as already given to us, and as they should be given' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 75). Mathematics is projective, in that it runs on ahead of actual experience, determining in advance and entirely in terms of its own self-determining laws what can cannot count as knowable.

However, Newton's significance is not just that he made mathematics foundational for natural philosophy. It is also to do with the way in which this

foundational role is further shaped by his first law of motion, the law of inertia: that, 'Every body continues in its state of rest, or uniform motion in a straight line, unless it is compelled to change that state by force impressed upon it' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 78). Already in Newton's own time this was spoken of as 'a law of nature universally received by all philosophers' and today (that is, in Heidegger's day) it seems entirely uncontroversial. Heidegger, however, draws attention to the scale of the revolution in thought that the formulation of this law involved. Previously the dominant view of motion had been that of Aristotle. This differed from the Newtonian view the basic form of motion was linear, and objects only divert from linear motion under external pressure (e.g., gravity), Aristotle had given the highest dignity to circular motion, such that it was the circular motion of the heavenly bodies that held the universe together in a coherent whole. Thus, whereas on Newton's theory the moon would fly off into space if it were not constrained by the gravitational pull of the earth, for Aristotle the circular motion of the moon belongs to the moon's nature. Secondly, Newton's law applied to all bodies without exception, while Aristotle had held to the view that each body had a different kind of motion according to its specific nature.

When Newton's law of motion is developed on the basis of mathematical method a significantly novel view of nature and of the thing emerges. Nature 'is now the realm of the uniform space-time context of motion' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 92), 'Bodies [now] have no concealed qualities, (*What is Called Thinking?*, 93) and are thus available without remainder as objects of observation and experimentation. The uniformity of bodies requires uniformity of measure, and this is precisely numerical measurement (*What is Called Thinking?*, 93-94). But, given the understanding of mathematics as projective, i.e., as determining what can or cannot be known of things in advance of actual

experience, 'the basic blueprint of the structure of everything and its relation to every other thing is sketched in advance' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 92). Nor is it simply the case that mathematics predetermines what can be known of each individual entity or of any particular local ensemble of entities that become the object of scientific scrutiny – i.e., it is not just a 'method'. Because of the interconnectedness of all bodies, the mathematical projection 'first opens a domain where things – i.e., facts – show themselves' (*What is Called Thinking?*, 92). Mathematics, in other words, does not merely give us a method, a means by which to know better things with which we are already familiar in a rough-and-ready way, it determines the whole field of possible experience, the kind of world in which it is possible for anything that is knowable to be. Its laws provide the model for laws of nature.

This, Heidegger continues, is fundamental to Kant's concept of *pure* reason. For Kant's pure reason is something very different from the rationality of man 'the rational animal' of previous centuries. Pure reason bespeaks the mathematical predetermination of the realm of knowable beings. A doctrine of pure reason is a doctrine that

What is a thing must be decided in advance from the highest principle of all principles and propositions, i.e., from pure reason, before one can reasonably deal with the divine, worldly, and human (*What is Called Thinking?*, 110-111).

On this basis, Heidegger concludes that Kant is not concerned with

The question of the thingness of the things that surround us but with the thing as an object of mathematical-physical science (*What is Called Thinking?*, 128).

This, then, is where we are led by the view of the thing that bases itself upon the form-matter distinction: mathematics, pure reason, is the form that, determined in advance, projects itself upon and impresses itself upon the matter of the world. And what follows from that? What follows, according to Heidegger, is not only that the world is laid open without remainder, without any hidden corner, to the omniscient eye of modern science; it also means that the world in its entirety is made available to us as a resource for technological manipulation. Indeed, as we have seen, it is virtually axiomatic for Heidegger that technology does not follow upon science as a chance outcome or fortuitous application of scientific 'results', but that the determining of the world as what is mathematically knowable is, from the very outset, geared to the purposes of technological manipulation and management. What Newton and Kant provide is thus the blueprint for transforming the world into sheer resource, mere equipmentality.

Having expose the 'boundless presumption'<sup>102</sup> and 'semblance of self-evidence' of these customary ways of regarding the thing, Heidegger has to consider whether there is in fact any alternative. Does the way of science exhaust the possible ways of looking at things?

### B. Looking at Things

The prospects would not seem hopeful. However, the lectures on the history of the concept of time are once more instructive. Having expounded the phenomenological concept of intentionality in terms of its fulfillment in

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<sup>102</sup> A comment that, in the light of Heidegger's notion of presumptive intentionality should not be heard as simple moral condemnation.

categorical intuition (the seeing-how or the seeing-as that, Heidegger claims, is already present in the simplest and most primitive acts of consciousness and is not merely something added on), he then goes on to explore how phenomenology tries to get at and show this seeing-as.

Phenomenological method is, he says, fundamentally descriptive, but not 'merely' descriptive. It does not simply reproduce the object in the medium of a prose commentary. It is rather an 'accentuating articulation' of what is given in the intuition and, as such, is analytical. In describing an object phenomenologically, I do not just record my first impressions but aim at laying bare the categorical structure that is given in and with experience, even though I may not immediately notice it in the moment of experience itself. Thus, I do not usually notice that in saying 'Look at that flock of ducks' I am presupposing the categorical intuition of the oneness of the flock as a concrete phenomenon. But this oneness is not an a priori structure that I lay upon the phenomenon. The flock really exists as a flock, the row of trees really is a row of trees. In this way, Heidegger says, phenomenological description is also ontological. For the focus of phenomenological inquiry is indicated by the word itself, as Heidegger famously interprets it. For the *phianomenon* is that which shines forth from itself. It is no 'mere appearance'. The phenomeno-logist, therefore, is one who allows the theoretic gaze to rest upon the phenomenon and makes manifest in discourse, *legen*, the categorical structure of the phenomenon.

What is needed, then, is not to come up with an alternative definition of concept of the thing that could be put into play against the prevailing view, but to return to the thing itself, to redescribe it in the manner of an 'accentuating articulation' so as to allow what is given in the phenomenon, the categorical intuition, the seeing-as, to come to expression in its own terms.

And this is just what Heidegger proceeds to do in *Origin* with the shoes – but which shoes?

We have seen Heidegger's treatment of Van Gogh's painting of the shoes as controversial because he supposed identification of these shoes with the shoes of a peasant woman – who, in turn, is made to exemplify the peasant virtues of blood-and-soil ideology – brings his discussion into the orbit of his Nazism. It has also been claimed that this is an example of Heidegger's own ideological commitments running on in advance of the phenomena, because he has quite simply misidentified the painting, relying on nothing more than a fading memory of a painting seen in an exhibition in Amsterdam, and the shoes are in fact Van Gogh's own. On this reading the whole thing is nothing but an embarrassing mistake that does no more than illustrate Heidegger's contempt for facts, his art-historical amateurism and his political prejudices.

However, as we have seen, Heidegger nowhere claims that the shoes Van Gogh painted were 'actually' those of a peasant woman. All he says is that they are *like* those of a peasant, and then, later, he contrasts what the painting enables us to see with what such shoes would mean to a peasant woman. If the artist shows us the world of the shoes, the woman just wears them as a piece of equipment, without regard to their 'meaning'.

Yet, even if we clear Heidegger of crassly confusing the real identity and ownership of the shoes depicted in Van Gogh's painting, it can scarcely be denied that the section of the lecture where he leads up to an phenomenological description of the peasant woman's shoes is extremely confusing. As he switches back and forth between the shoes in the painting and the 'actual' shoes worn by an imaginary peasant woman, it is easy for the reader to become disoriented. Nevertheless, the production of this disorientation may itself be

deliberate on Heidegger's part, and his procedure of oscillating between the painted and the actual shoes may be rhetorically intended to break his grip of the usual view in which we know in advance what is required for the thing to be accepted into the realm of knowable objects. It is, in other words, a deliberate exercise in defamiliarization. But Heidegger's longer-term aims are not simply negative, since he breaks the spell of the usual view in order to make possible a different approach, one that would not determine in advance what it is for a thing to be a thing but would allow the thing itself to present itself to us as it is in its intuited figure.

If we were to concern ourselves exclusively with the painting, then we would find ourselves trapped within the prevailing canons of art criticism and aesthetics. If we were to concern ourselves solely with the shoes of the peasant woman we would never break out of a purely instrumental understanding of them as useful objects. Simply of itself the painting does not instruct us in how to regard the actual shoes, any more than Homer instructs us in the art of war or *Moby Dick* in the art of whale hunting. If we "simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of the equipment in truth is" (*PLT*, 33).

"And yet –" Heidegger concludes baldly, offering no immediate explanation as to what this "And yet –" might mean. Indeed, to be consistent, he cannot. As with the confrontation with the tree in blossom, we can only proceed by means of a leap, albeit a leap into what is most familiar, most everyday. And where does this leap take us? Into one of Heidegger's most celebrated pieces of phenomenological description.

Since Heidegger claims that phenomenological description answers in every detail to what is disclosed by the phenomenon, it follows that, like poetry,

it cannot easily be précised. However, a couple of sentences illustrate both how Heidegger uses the method and what he saw in the shoes.

On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the shoes slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field... This equipment belongs to the *earth*, and it is protected in the *world* of the peasant woman (*PLT*, 33).

Previously we heard Heidegger arguing that phenomenological description, understood as ‘accentuating articulation’, arises out of the categorical structure that is given in intuition itself. At first glance there is nothing here that recalls anything like what we find in either Aristotle’s or Kant’s list of categories. However, given Heidegger’s positioning of his own task in relation to that of the history of philosophy, this should not surprise us. For what we see here are in fact the beginnings of a whole new schema of fundamental ontological categories, the first of which are *earth* and *world*.

In wearing the shoes, in living her life, the peasant woman is sure of and inhabits her world without anything being missing from it. She does not need either artists or philosophers to put her right about any aspect of her world, to make it fuller or more spiritual. It is complete in itself. But what the artwork does is to ‘let us know what shoes are in truth’ (*PLT*, 35), i.e., it reveals them in their world. The painting, then, is not to be evaluated in terms of its faithful imitation of any particular pair of actual shoes, but rather by allowing us to see the ‘equipmentality of equipment’, the world of work figured in the particular instance of the shoes.

What does Heidegger mean by this opaque formulation?



This does not become entirely clear in the first section of *Origin*, where the discussion of the shoes takes place. It is, however, clarified retrospectively, in the light of what Heidegger goes on to say about the second work of art to which he devotes an extended discussion: the Greek temple.

Again the thick, analytically accentuating articulation cannot be easily paraphrased, and again what comes into view in terms of categorical structures are those already encountered in the case of the shoes: earth and world.

The temple, Heidegger says, “first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves. This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has not fled from it” (*PLT*, 43). In giving things their ‘look’ and men their ‘outlook on themselves’ the work ‘sets up’ a world (*PLT*, 44) or ‘makes space for’ a world (*PLT*, 45) by bringing into the Open, revealing, laying bare, disclosing its structure.

Although it remains hard and perhaps even futile, to attempt any binding definition of what Heidegger means by ‘world’, several things are clear. The first, which follows from everything that has been said so far, is that the artwork does not predetermine the world in the way that, according to Heidegger, mathematics does. In ‘setting-up’ a world, the artwork is not imposing a projective enframing. Rather, it allows the world to come to appearance – not, of course, as ‘mere’ appearance but as the shining-forth, the phenomenalization of what, in truth, it is. The second is that the cumulative metaphors (or more than metaphors?) of light, vision, shining-forth, and openness suggest that Heidegger does not want us to be thinking of a private, imaginary world, a fantasy world that might serve as a retreat for dreamers and romantics. It is, on the contrary, open and public, the world of a people, the Hellenes, or the Germans. Third, and in close relation to the preceding two points, although

'world' in Heidegger's sense is something different from the world that science takes as its object it is not a world that is separable from materiality. On the contrary, materiality is even more necessary, even more present, than when we approach the world with regard to its equipmentality. I shall shortly return to this point, but before that one further comment about the relationship between work and world is in place.

The work does not bring the world into being. Van Gogh's painting did not create the life of peasants. But by showing us the *truth* of peasant shoes, Van Gogh enables us to see the world of the peasant, to have a sense for the meaning of peasant life, which is not revealed in the daily grind of living a peasant-like life. In this regard it could be said that there is both an analogy and a dis-analogy between the function of the work of art and the process of psychoanalysis. Both are concerned with bringing hidden truths out in the open. However, the truth revealed in analysis, even if – perhaps especially when – it is indeed the truth, is likely to be experienced by the patient as challenging or contradicting his own everyday understanding of himself and his world. If psychoanalysis is to save, it must first destroy. So too, perhaps, philosophy. But the way in which the work of art works is, according to Heidegger, very different: it is not hostile to that which it discloses, nor does it set itself up as offering an alternative explanation or interpretation to that which already prevails. It simply (but Heidegger is, of course, always insistent that the simple is always the most difficult) lets the world appear as it is, in its being.

But, perhaps once more in contrast to psychoanalysis and certainly in contrast to Newtonian science, the revelation of the world in the work of art does not and does not intend to bring *everything* out into the open. Integral to its revelation of the world is its acceptance that the life-world of the human subject

is what it is only in relation to what is not luminous, what does not appear, what is preserved in darkness and is not available as a resource for use or as an object of knowledge. But, precisely because what is thus concealed is integral to the world and to the revelation of the world as world, this, too, is involved in the artwork. What we are talking about here is, in fact, nothing other than what Heidegger calls 'earth', the dark, ever unilluminated ground on which the open space of world is set.

Thus, for example, earth is present in the stone out of which the temple is built.

A stone presses downward and manifests its heaviness. But while this heaviness exerts an opposing pressure upon us it denies us any penetration into it. If we attempt such a penetration by breaking open the rock, it still does not display in its fragments anything inward that has not been disclosed. The stone has instantly withdrawn again into the same dull pressure and bulk of its fragments. If we try to lay hold of the stone's heaviness in another way, by placing the stone on a balance, we merely bring the heaviness into the form of a calculated weight. This perhaps very precise determination of the stone remains a number, but the weight's burden has escaped us ... The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable ... The earth is essentially self-secluding.<sup>103</sup>

The relationship between world and earth is, in human experience at least (and perhaps none of this makes any sense purely 'objectively', i.e., apart from the existential interest of human beings – no matter what Heidegger's reservations about humanism), both reciprocal but also conflictual. World struggles to free itself from earth, light from darkness – but earth absorbs world,

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<sup>103</sup> *PLT*, 46-47.

drawing it back into the pre-conscious darkness from which it emerged. The precise state of balance between these conflicting forces determines the exact form of the world in any particular epoch. Perhaps in the 24-hour-a-day illumination of the contemporary city 'earth' may seem to have been finally vanquished. Perhaps – or perhaps we are simply unable to recognize the form that earth is taking for us today, excluded as it is from what is framed by the enframing gaze of technological rationality.

Earth and world, then, emerge as two of the fundamental terms of Heidegger's new categorial schema. As his thought develops they will be added to and further clarified, until he arrives at what he will call 'the Foufold' of earth, sky, gods, and mortals. This Foufold offers Heidegger a way of envisaging beings that, he believes, is radically distinct from, though not absolutely unrelated to, the 'nature' of natural science whose laws are conformable to those of mathematics in such a way as to be altogether and entirely available for technological manipulation.

Strikingly, both art and the thing remain crucial to Heidegger's attempts to articulate the Foufold. Thus, in the 1950 lecture on 'the thing' he takes an everyday earthenware jug and embarks upon a phenomenological description that aims precisely to bring into view what 'never comes to light ... never gets a hearing' (*PLT*, 170) in the scientific view: the thing in its thingness. Again, the following extracts aim to do no more than give a flavor of Heidegger's way of carrying out such a description. The jug, he says, is a hollow vessel, that takes what is poured into it and preserves it. However, the truth of the jug is only fully revealed when it is used for pouring.

The twofold holding of the void rests on the outpouring. In the outpouring, the holding is authentically how it is. To pour from the jug is to give... The jug's jug-character consists in the poured gift of the pouring out... The giving of the outpouring can be a drink. The outpouring gives water, it gives wine to drink. The spring stays on in the water of the gift. In the spring the rock dwells, and in the rock dwells the dark slumber of the earth, which receives the rain and dew of the sky. In the water of the spring dwells the marriage of sky and earth. It stays in the wine given by the fruit of the vine, the fruit in which the earth's nourishment and the sky's sun are betrothed to one another... In the jugness of the jug, sky and earth dwell. The gift of the pouring out is drink for mortals. It quenches their thirst. It refreshes their leisure. It enlivens their conviviality. But the jug's gift is also at times for consecration... The outpouring is the libation poured out for the immortal gods. The gift of the outpouring as libation is the authentic gift. In giving the consecrated libation, the pouring jug occurs as the giving gift... In the gift of the outpouring that is drink, mortals stay in their own way. In the gift of the outpouring that is a libation, the divinities stay in their own way... In the gift of the outpouring earth and sky, divinities and mortals dwell *together all at once*. These four, at one because of what they themselves are, belong together. Preceding everything that is present, they are enfolded into a single Founfold.<sup>104</sup>

Are such passages, for all their extraordinary originality and force, testimony to the fact that Heidegger's concern with art and with the thingliness of things (and his desire to find a way of thinking that escapes the net of mathematical calculation) is, despite his protestations, mere poetic embellishment, a retreat into a private fantasy world after the failure of 1933? Or dare we assert that Heidegger is tentatively and provisionally adumbrating

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 172-73.

the first outlines of what might yet open a new path of thinking along which we might, collectively and not just singly, escape the wastelands of modernity and technology?

We are not yet in a position to answer such questions, since the work of art and thing are not the only bases on which Heidegger attempts to think his way forward. For Heidegger's strategy is not simply the well-worn Romantic tactic of opposing art to science and tellurian values to the technological exploitation of the earth. Crucial here is the expansion of the initial insight into the thing that occurs when this insight is transposed into the medium of language that makes possible a history of thinking, and it is only in relation to this history and its present crisis that the full meaning of the thing comes into view.

We shall, as we must, return to the question of the status of the kind of invocations of the Foulfold we hear in the meditation on the jugness of the jug. But we shall do so with the additional buttressing provided by a larger understanding of Heidegger's critical reading of the philosophical tradition, and, coming out of that, of the way in which he judges the most fundamental question facing humanity to be the question of Being: that is, the question as to what beings-as-a-whole, in their Being, i.e., the whole life-world of humanity, can mean for us today.

## Chapter 6

### UNCOVERING THE GREATNESS OF THE WORK OF ART

To delve deeper into Heidegger's writings in the 1930s would be appropriate to the prolegomena of the previous chapter. In the mid-1930s Heidegger indulged in a certain rhetoric of greatness. The most notorious of this rhetoric is the sentence from *An Introduction to Metaphysics* where Heidegger distinguishes "what is today being put about as the philosophy of National Socialism" from "the inner truth and greatness of this movement" (*IM*, 199)<sup>105</sup> More revealing – and more disturbing still – are the comments in the Rectoral Address of 1933, where Heidegger declares that there is a "will to greatness" and that the decision between it and the decline which occurs whenever things are just allowed to happen determines the fate of "the march that our people has begun into its future history".<sup>106</sup> Other instances of the rhetoric of greatness

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<sup>105</sup> Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). If we follow not the published text of 1953, but Pöggeler's reconstruction it would seem that manuscript referred to "the inner truth and greatness of N.S." and that in the lecture he actually said "the inner truth and greatness of the movement." There is also reason to believe that the explanatory phrase "namely, the encounter between global technology and modern man" was not in the manuscript, as he claimed later, although it is clear that the confrontation with technology was a, perhaps *the*, crucial political question at this time (*IM*, 37-38). On the difference between Heidegger's account of these event and the historian's reconstruction of them, see, for example, Otto Pöggeler, "Nachwort zur zweiten Auflage," *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1983), 340-42; tr. D. Magurshak and S. Barner, *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking* (Atlantic Highlands; Humanities Press, 1987), 275-77. Also Pöggeler "Heideggers politisches Selbstverständnis," in *Heidegger und die praktische Philosophie*, ed. Annemarie Gethmann-Seifert and Otto Pöggeler (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), 59, n.11.

<sup>106</sup> *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*. Eds. Gunther Neske and Emil Kettering. New York: Paragon House, 1990.

could be multiplied,<sup>107</sup> but I will focus on somewhat more discreet use of it in *Origin* (known fully as, “The Origin of the Work of Art”). The phrase in question is so familiar to everyone that it is readily overlooked. Only as one reads and rereads the text do the puzzles and enigmas to which *Origin* gives rise come to settle on the phrase “great art.”

At the beginning of the second of the three lectures that constitute the essay, Heidegger observes that, compared with the work, the artist remains inconsequential in great art. Only in passing does he indicate that great art alone is what is under consideration here: “Gerade in der grossen Kunst, understanding von ihr allein is hier die Rede, bleibt der Künstler gegenüber dem Werk etwas Gleichgültiges,...” (*PLT*, 40). The extent and significance of this restriction is far from clear. How far does this “here” extend? Does the restriction refer to the essay as a whole? Or is it confined to the immediate context of the phrase? From where does Heidegger borrow the concept of “great art” and to what extent does he underwrite it? On the surface, the concept of “great art” belongs to aesthetics, and yet *Origin* is allegedly engaged in overcoming the aesthetic tradition. The question of whether Heidegger succeeds in twisting the concept of art free of its metaphysical heritage will prove to be all the more acute when raised with reference to the concept of great art.

Throughout Heidegger's writings the self-evidence that accompanies inherited concepts, simply by virtue of their familiarity, is put in question. It was in those terms that Heidegger introduced the task of the destruction of the

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<sup>107</sup> As an example of Heidegger's fascination for this theme, see his inscription in the copy of Burckhardt's *Grösee, Glück and Unglück in der Weltgeschichte* that he gave to art historian Kurt Bauch at Christmas 1937. Karin Schoeller-von Haslingen, “Was ist Grösse?,” *Heidegger Studies* 3/4, 1987/88, pp.15-23. In particular Burckhardt's comments on great poets in the essay “Das Individuum und das Allgemeine (Die historische Grösse)” should be compared with certain aspects of Heidegger's discussion.



history of ontology in *Being and Time* (43). That is why one must be cautious when Heidegger appeals to our familiarity with artworks in an attempt to resolve the problem that threatens to stop the inquiry from ever getting started. At the outset of *Origin* Heidegger observes that the question of the origin of the work of art cannot be answered with reference to the artist, because the artist is an artist only virtue of the work. And yet the work needs the artist. Each needs the other. Furthermore, one cannot turn directly to art, as this in turn exists only in works. Heidegger suggests that we must start from actual works, because that is where art prevails, but he is well aware of the difficulty: "How are we to be certain that we are indeed basing such an examination on artworks, if we do not know beforehand what art is?" (*PLT*, 18). Heidegger breaks the circle, or rather he is able to embrace it, because "works of art are familiar to everyone" (*Kunstwerke sind jedermann bekannt.*) (*PLT*, 18). That is why, in order to discover what art is, he begins by posing the question of the work.

The question of the work sets the first part of the essay on a circuitous route. In outline, the question of the work becomes a question of the thingly aspect of the work. Hence, Heidegger attempts to distinguish the prevalent concepts of the thing. Because the thing is often confused with equipment, Heidegger is led to investigate what equipment is. It is only at that point, with Heidegger pursuing a trajectory that threatens to be always postponing the question of art, that, by what is presented somewhat disingenuously as sheer good fortune, something is discovered about the work: "unwittingly, in passing so to speak" (*PLT*, 35). This is because, contrary to the design of the inquiry, which was to proceed via the thingly aspect of the thing to the thingly aspect of the work, the apparent diversion into equipmentality proved to be a shortcut insofar as it was a work that instructed us about equipmentality. Everyone is familiar with equipment, such as a pair of shoes (*PLT*, 32-33). It was simply out

of convenience that recourse was made to a painting of a pair of shoes. The reader is told that a pictorial representation would help with the description. Only subsequently does it emerge that the painting proved to be more than simply a convenience. The painting allows us to notice the shoe's reliability, something which the wearer of the shoes, the peasant woman in Heidegger's example, knows without being specifically aware of it. Certainly there was no mention of reliability in *Being and Time*. There the Being of equipment was understood to be usefulness or utility, on the basis of an analysis that relied on the obtrusiveness that arises when, for example, the shoes are worn out (*PLT*, 34-35; *Being and Time*, 103). The reliability or dependability of the shoes would never have been discovered without the help of the painting (*PLT*, 35). Such is the curious itinerary of the first of the three lectures, rendered all the more circuitous when in the third lecture it is discovered that the thingly aspect of the work was rather its earthy character, so that the premise on which the inquiry set out was false (*PLT*, 69). One suspects that Heidegger's itinerary in the first part of *Origin* is governed in large measure by a need to redress the discussion of the readiness to hand in *Being and Time*, in preparation for the revision of the concept of the world, now that it is to be juxtaposed with that of the earth.

The elaborate trajectory I have just rehearsed was not part of the original outline of the essay. The discussions of Van Gogh's painting and of the different concepts of the thing in the first part of *Origin* were added to the text only when the original lecture was expanded into three lectures during 1936. The three lectures were delivered in Frankfurt in November and December 1936, and they form the basis of the edition published in 1950 in *Holzwege* with

the addition of an epilogue.<sup>108</sup> Two earlier versions of the lecture were published in France.<sup>109</sup> This is the version Heidegger delivered in Freiburg on 13 November 1935, a full year before the Frankfurt version. Heidegger repeated it in Zurich in January 1936. The publication of this text as “the first version” seems to have provoked the editors of the Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe* into releasing an undated, but clearly earlier, version under the title “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung”.<sup>110</sup>

A comparison of the three versions – which I will refer to as the first draft, the Freiburg lecture, and the Frankfurt lectures respectively – helps to reveal the dynamic of Heidegger’s questioning and allows certain neglected features of the text to be highlighted. Furthermore, the differences between the three versions show Heidegger negotiating – or perhaps rather evading – the political realities of his time. However, even if I succeed in showing that there is an unsavory political dimension to the essay, this does not mean that the essay can simply be dismissed. It is not difficult to show that a language is contaminated, especially when that serves to restrict a text to a monotonous or monological reading, one that deprives the text of any truth it might convey. However, before judging

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<sup>108</sup> Heidegger’s claim that parts of the epilogue were written at the same time as the lecture has been confirmed by the publication of earlier versions of the lecture. The 1950 text was revised – although most of the modifications were relatively minor – when it was published separately in 1960 in the Reclam series. At the same time Heidegger included an Addendum that was written in 1956. The addendum tries in a certain way to rewrite the essay from the standpoint that Heidegger had attained in the 1950s. It was this text that formed the basis for the Hofstadter translation in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. The Reclam text, and not the 1950 version, served as the basis for the edition of Heidegger’s *Holzwege* that appeared as Volume 5 of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*. Some notes were added drawn from Heidegger’s copies of the third edition of *Holzwege* (1957) and the Reclam edition. The most recent version of *Holzwege* published independently of the *Gesamtausgabe* follows this text.

<sup>109</sup> *De l’origine de l’oeuvre d’art*. Première version (1935). Ed. E. Martineau (Paris: Authentica, 1987).

<sup>110</sup> “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung,” *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 5-22.

Heidegger's political stance on the basis of such an analysis, one would need to compare Heidegger's language not just with the Nazi discourses on art of the same period, but also with other discourses on art.

To take just one example, it is not enough to show that Heidegger shares the Nazis' enthusiasm for the word *Volk*, not least because it was already a common term in German discussions of art prior to the twentieth century. It is instructive in this context to recall Gadamer's observations in an essay written in 1966 on "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem." At one point in the essay Gadamer focuses on the experience of the alienation of aesthetic consciousness that arises when one judges works of art on the basis of their aesthetic quality. He observes that the problem had already been recognized in a particularly distorted form when National Socialist politics of art, "as a means to its own ends, tried to criticize formalism by arguing that art is bound to a people."<sup>111</sup> Gadamer did not mention Heidegger by name, nor is there any indication there or elsewhere that he would subsume Heidegger's essay under this label, but what he went on to say would apply perfectly well to *Origin*.

Despite its misuse by the National Socialists, we cannot deny that the idea of art being bound to a people involves a real insight. A genuine artistic creation stands within a particular community, and such a community is always distinguishable from the cultured society that is informed and terrorized by art criticism.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Kleine Schriften I* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1967), 102-103; tr. David E. Linge, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 5.

<sup>112</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, "Zur Einführung," in M. Heidegger, *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1967), 101.

The notion of the *Volk* has tended to play only a minor role in the interpretation of *Origin*. Gadamer fails to mention it in his introduction to the Reclam edition of Heidegger's essay.<sup>113</sup> It is possible that the word has been ignored, wittingly or not, out of a certain sensitivity, an attempt to safeguard Heidegger's text from being reduced to an address to the German people, which in certain respects is exactly what it was – even when delivered to the student body at Zurich University. Far from it being the case that Heidegger retreated into a discussion of art in consequence of his political disillusionment, as used to be said on occasion, the texts on art and poetry have a strong political component.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, to neglect the political dimension of Heidegger's text is to risk restricting *Origin* to the realm of aesthetic alienation, instead of recognizing it as a response to aesthetic alienation.

The published work, *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, confirms that Heidegger's essay belongs to the overcoming of aesthetics. In a section entitled “‘Metaphysics’ and the Origin of the Work of Art” Heidegger writes that,

The question [of the origin of the work of art] stands in innermost connection with the task of the overcoming of aesthetics and that means at the same time of a specific account of beings as objectively representable.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 102-125.

<sup>114</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe reminded his readers that in 1933 Heidegger never said that “the beginnings of ‘a *Verwindung*’ of nihilism are to be in poetic thinking.” *La fiction du politique* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1987), 86; tr. Chris Turner, *Heidegger, Art and Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 55. Whereas the turn to Hölderlin is dramatic in 1934 with the lecture course on the poems *Germanien* and *Der Rhein*, Heidegger's ambiguity are chartered by recent biographical studies of Heidegger.

<sup>115</sup> *Beiträge zur Philosophie*. GA 65 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), 503. Also in English as *Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning)*, tr. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

It is clear that Heidegger means *Origin* to put aesthetics radically into question, but this introduces a difficulty. Is it not possible that the concept of art is irretrievably marked by aesthetics? That Heidegger is engaged in a radical questioning of the concept of art is confirmed by *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. In the context of his statement that for us moderns the beautiful is what reposes and relaxes, such that art is a matter for pastry cooks, he says, “We must procure for the word ‘art’ and that which it names a new content on the basis of an original and recaptured basic position to Being” (*IM*, 132): “Wir müssen dem Wort ‘Kunst’ und dem, was es nennen will, aus einer ursprünglich wiedergewonnen Grundstellung zum Sein einen neuem Gehalt verschaffen.” The question is how far *Origin* accomplishes this task. When Heidegger answers the question of the origin of the work of art by designating art to be an origin, has he given the concept of art a new content? Does reliance on the familiarity of art, and specifically of great art, not imply a certain reliance on aesthetics?

Heidegger specifically explores the relation between great art and aesthetics in his account of the “Six Basic Developments of the History of Aesthetics” in the first of the lecture courses on Nietzsche. Heidegger offers this history in preparation for a reading of Nietzsche, but it is an indispensable accompaniment to *Origin*, especially as it belongs to the same period as the Frankfurt version of the lectures. The text explores the relation between the history of the essence of aesthetics and the history of the essence of art.<sup>116</sup> The correlation Heidegger establishes across the six stages is an extraordinary one. Prior to metaphysics, there is great art, but there is as yet no aesthetics. Only when great art comes to an end, at the time of Plato and Aristotle, does

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<sup>116</sup> Nietzsche, *Vol. 1. The Will to Power as Art*. Tr. D.F. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), 79.

aesthetics begin. The third stage, which corresponds to modernity, is characterized by the formation of a dominant aesthetics in terms of *aesthesis*. It is accompanied by the decline of great art. In Hegel, the fourth stage, aesthetics achieves its greatest possible height. Meanwhile, great art comes to an end. Nevertheless, the history has two further stages to run. The fifth stage is referred to Wagner and the collective artwork, which marks the dissolution of sheer feeling and which, in its effects, is the opposite of great art. Aesthetics become psychology in the manner of the natural sciences, and at the same time art history develops. Finally, aesthetics is thought to an end by Nietzsche in the physiology of art. Heidegger himself does not here directly underwrite the idea, which he attributes to Nietzsche, of art as the countermovement of nihilism, although it could be argued that he does so in “The Question Concerning Technology.”

It might seem that in this history art takes an inordinate time to die and suffers many false deaths in the process, like the hero or heroine of a Victorian melodrama. In other respects, however, this story of decline is typically Heideggerian, even mirroring in its stages Heidegger's account of the history of the essence of truth (cf. *PLT*, 81). But in this case Heidegger seems to have been more determined than ever to have history convey a moral. Art and aesthetics are not compatible. Aesthetics prospers as art declines. Aesthetics is great when it tells what great art used to be.

Heidegger constructs this history from a framework borrowed largely from Hegel, while using the inclusion of Nietzsche to subvert the Hegelian starting point.<sup>117</sup> Although Hegel is presented as the *Vollendung* or completion

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<sup>117</sup> For another discussion of the relation of Heidegger's “The Origin of the Work of Art” to Hegel based on Heidegger's brief sketch of the history of aesthetics and of art, see J. Taminiiaux, “Le dépassement Heideggérien de l'esthétique et l'héritage de Hegel,”

of aesthetics, Heidegger will later in the lecture course acknowledge that Nietzsche is its extreme form (*Nietzsche*, Bands 1 & 2. Pfullingen: Neske, 1961, 129 {hereafter referenced as *Nietzsche*}). Great art is defined not on the basis of aesthetic judgments concerning the relative merits of different artistic styles but, in Hegel's phrase, as an "absolute need" (*Nietzsche*, 84-85). Its task, in Heidegger's paraphrase of Hegel, is to be "the definite fashioner and preserver of the absolute" (*Nietzsche*, 90). In Heidegger's own language, great art is "the definitive formulation and preservation of beings as a whole" (*Nietzsche*, 89). But Hegel is clear that in these terms, the work performed by great art passed to religion and finally to philosophy. That is the meaning of the famous sentence, "Art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past."<sup>118</sup>

Heidegger's sketch of the history of art and aesthetics does nothing to ease the suspicion that surrounds the quest for a non-metaphysical concept of art. This is because Heidegger is hampered by the lack of a Greek concept of art. The Greek word *techne* is associated with the second stage of the history of art and aesthetics, not its first stage, which is where Heidegger located great art. When in *Origin* Heidegger appeals to *techne*, it is in the context of his observation that it is difficult to distinguish the essential features which separate the creation of works from the making of equipment, an observation which looks as if it might threaten his attempt to separate the two. To compound the

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*Recoupements* (Brussels: Ousia, 1982), 175-208. Andreas Grossmann insists that Heidegger's approach is opposed to that of Hegel, but he does not take into account Heidegger's sketch of the history of aesthetics that helps establish the complexity of the relation as detailed in the present chapter. See "Hegel, Heidegger, and the Question of Art Today," *Research in Phenomenology* 20, 1990, 112-135.

<sup>118</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* I, Werke in zwanzig Bänden 13 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 25; tr. T.M. Knox, *Aesthetics* V.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 11.



difficulty he recalls the fact that the Greeks not only used the same word for both art and craft, they did not distinguish between craftsmen and artists. Indeed, both translations of *techne*, “art” and “craft,” are misleading: *techne* is a form of knowing. Heidegger’s redetermination of *techne* as *Wissen*, a “knowing which supports and conducts every irruption into the midst of beings” (*Nietzsche*, 81), is something on which he insists in a number of different contexts. But Heidegger fails to address the question of why the Greeks, who belonged to the time of great art and who allegedly “understood something about works of art” (*PLT*, 59), did not leave in their language any mark of the distinction between the artwork and equipment.

Nevertheless, Heidegger does give an account of how within metaphysics the same conceptuality of production – the notion of *eidos* in Plato, the notions of form and matter in Aristotle – are applied indiscriminately to works of art and to equipment. “All reflection on art and the artwork, all art theory and aesthetics since the Greeks stands until now under a remarkable fatality. With the Greeks (Plato and Aristotle) reflection on art employed the characterization of the artwork as a thing that was made, that is, a work of equipment [*Zeugwerk*]. Thereby the artwork is at first, and that means here in its actual Being, formed matter” (*Origin*, 52). Elsewhere Heidegger explains that the distinction between matter and form arose in the realm of manufacture and was subsequently transferred to that of art (*Nietzsche*, 82). That metaphysics blocks our access to the work as work is an idea easily accommodated within a Heideggerian framework. What is hard to reconcile with it is the apparent lack of any recognition among the Greeks of the kind of distinction between work and equipment Heidegger seeks. In contrast to the broad conception of *techne* employed by the Greeks, he wants a highly restricted conception of great art. This does nothing to ease the suspicion that Heidegger’s conception of art is

trading off the very aesthetics that it is supposed to question. It seems that at various junctures Heidegger's discussion relies precisely on the kind of self-evidence that a thoroughgoing destruction is supposed to put in question (cf. *GA* 5, 12; *PLT*, 22).

How else is one to understand the absence from *Origin* of any sentence that would say for art what Heidegger said for religion in his lectures on Heraclitus in the summer of 1943: "There is no Greek religion at all" (*Heraclitus*, 13)? This is of particular importance given Heidegger's tendency to equate what is Greek with what is fundamental and to relegate what the Greeks lacked to the realm of the derivative and deficient. For Heidegger, religion, both as a word a thing, is Roman. Why does Heidegger not say, "There is no Greek art at all?" This would not commit him to saying that there is no Greek tragedy, no Greek music, no Greek dance, and so on. It would simply acknowledge that the Greeks did not share the fairly recent sense that these activities have something in common that can be designated art. In fact, he seems to assume the collectivity of the fine arts, as when he refers to the way the Greeks accorded a primacy to poetry among the arts (*Nietzsche*, 164-165).<sup>119</sup> The evidence is rather that they lacked that conception of the arts that would lead one to juxtapose poetry and, for example, architecture or music. In other words, Heidegger appears to take the modern system of *les belles artes* for granted and incorporates it into his conception of art.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> At one point it looks as if Heidegger might have attempted to displace the concept of art by narrowing his focus and adopting the concept of poetry (*GA* 5, 59; *PLT*, 72), but there is no evidence of him sustaining the attempt beyond *Origin*.

<sup>120</sup> See W. Tatarkiewicz, "Classification of Arts in Antiquity," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24, 1963, 231-240, and P.O. Kristeller, "The Modern System of the Arts," *Renaissance Thought and the Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 163-227.

Although Heidegger can be faulted for the way he approaches the concept of art, he is more circumspect in his approach to the artwork itself. Because metaphysics serves to obstruct access to the work as work, the question of the accessibility of the work is central to Heidegger's attempt to overcome aesthetics. It is the problem with which Heidegger begins the draft version of *Origin*; just as it introduces "The Work and Truth," which is the second of the three lectures constituting the Frankfurt version. Heidegger repeats in this context the observation that the usual or inherited concepts of the thing have blocked our access to the work-being of the work. He suggests that to gain access to the work it is necessary to remove it from all relation to everything else. This presumably means that the work should not be referred to anything other than itself. For example, the work is not to be referred to the artist. This proposal is made to sound the most natural way to proceed. Perhaps it would have been prior to the publication of *Being and Time*, where the analysis in sections 15 to 18 showed that only when things are approached in their interconnection can one discover the relational structure that exhibits the readiness to hand of equipment. This suggests that Heidegger is being disingenuous when he of all people poses the question of the self-subsistence of the work in precisely these terms. Nevertheless, it proves to be a highly convenient way of focusing on the context in which art appears, and, importantly, given Heidegger's remarkable neglect of this aspect elsewhere in this essay, quite explicitly with reference to equipment (GA 5, 21; *PLT*, 32), it introduces an historico-cultural perspective. Artworks have been torn out of their own space to be exhibited in museums. Indeed, it often seems that the museum, as the place where art is exhibited, determines for the public what is and what is not art. A short essay on Raphael's *Sixtina*, written in 1955, develops the point at greater length:

“Wherever this picture may yet be ‘exhibited’ in future, it has lost its place [*Ort*]. That it might unfold its own essence incipiently, that is to say, that is might itself determine its place, remains denied to it. Transformed in its essence as artwork, the picture wanders into the alien. Presentation in a museum levels everything into the indifference of ‘exhibition.’ In an exhibition there are only sites, but no places” (GA 13, 120).

The exhibition, the museum, corresponds in respect of location to the time of aesthetics.

Even if a work remains in its original location, as usually happens with architectural works, once the world of the work has perished, nothing can be done to restore it. As a result of the withdrawal and decay of its world, the works are no longer works. They are past (GA 5, 30; *Origin*, 22; *PLT*, 41). Although Heidegger does not say *vergangenes* but *Gewesenen*, the reference to Hegel’s claim about the past character of art is clear. The self-subsistence of the work has fled. It is not simply that the art industry combines with the ordinary inherited concept of the thing to obstruct our access to the work as work, which might suggest that the work-being of the work remained concealed but intact. No amount of textual emendation, no extensive critical apparatus, can restore Sophocles’ text to its own world and so let it be a work once more.

The work does not belong to the museum world, the world documented by historians, or the world of the art industry. It belongs to the world it opens up by itself. Heidegger illustrates the working of art with the following example: “The temple, in its standing there, first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves.” He immediately adds, “This view remains open as long as the work is a work, as long as the god has now fled from it.” With the flight of the god from the temple, the self-subsistence of the work has fled with

it (GA 5, 30; *PLT*, 41). If Heidegger had indeed visited “the remains of a Greek temple,” for example that at Paestum, he would have found not a place but a site, or in the words of *Being and Time* simply “a bit of the past... still in the present” (*BT*, 430).

This raises the question of Heidegger's own access to the work. How did he arrive at his description of the temple? Can he account for his text at this point? He does at one point suggest that a recollection (*Erinnerung*) of the work can bring back what is past even to the point where such a recollection might offer the work a place from which to shape history. Nevertheless, this is to be distinguished from the case “where the work is preserved in the truth that happens by the work itself” (GA 5, 56; *PLT*, 68). The draft version makes clear what is at issue in this distinction. Historical recollection may enable us to experience the temple as Paestum or the cathedral at Bamberg as an “expression” of their respective ages. They testify to the previous splendor and power of a people, but that does not mean that they are still works in Heidegger's sense. “Our ‘glorious German cathedrals’ can be an ‘inspiration’ to us. And yet – world decline and world withdrawal have broken their workbeing.”<sup>121</sup> In other words, because of world withdrawal, the Germans of the 1930s should not look to German cathedrals to *do* the work of art. Being in flight, being away (*Wegsein*) remains at hand (*vorhanden*) in the work in such a way that world decline could be said to belong to the work.<sup>122</sup> There are no immortal works of art (GA 5, 66; *PLT*, 79). On this view great art is from its outset always dying.

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<sup>121</sup> Heidegger, M., “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung,” *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 7.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

The world of the temple, like the world of Raphael's *Sixtina*, has withdrawn. This shifts attention to Heidegger's other examples, most notably the poems of Hölderlin and Van Gogh's painting of the shoes. Heidegger at one point in *Origin* establishes a clear parallel between the temple and the Van Gogh painting. "Truth happens" in both. One cannot distinguish the two cases by suggesting that Van Gogh's painting works only within the limited sphere of disclosing the equipmentality of equipment, "what the equipment... is in truth" (GA 5, 25; *PLT*, 36), whereas in the case of the temple "beings as a whole are brought into unconcealment" (GA 5, 44; *PLT*, 56). Heidegger in the second Frankfurt lecture is quite explicit that the truth of the Van Gogh painting cannot be so restricted. Truth happens in Van Gogh's painting in such a way that "that which is as a whole – world and earth in their counterplay – attains to unconcealedness" (GA 5, 44; *PLT*, 56): the earth to which the shoes as equipment belong and the world of the peasant woman that protects it (GA 5, 23; *PLT*, 34). It would seem, therefore, that if the temple was great art in its time, the Van Gogh painting must also qualify as great art. Similarly, the role Heidegger gives to Hölderlin, particularly in the first two versions of *Origin* and in the 1934-35 lecture course, would seem to warrant a similar status for his poetry. But how could this be reconciled with the sketch of the history of art and aesthetics given in the Nietzsche lectures, where Heidegger seems to accept Hegel's claim that "art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past"? And, above all, if Hölderlin's poems and Van Gogh's painting were so clearly great art, what sense could one make of the questioning in which *Origin* culminates, particularly its final version? One would have to suppose that these questions were simply rhetorical, even false.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The question of the status of the example of the Van Gogh painting has also been raised, though with a somewhat different resolution, by Jay Bernstein. See "Aesthetic Alienation:

All three versions of the lecture pose the question of how far and why art still exists. Contrasting the different versions, it seems that Heidegger does not proceed toward an answer so much as he succeeds in placing his initial answer in question. When in the draft Heidegger asks if truth as “the openness of the there” must happen in the way that it arises in the origin as art, he gives a relatively unambiguous response. Because “truth is essentially earthy,” then “the work, that is art, is necessary for the happening of truth”.<sup>124</sup> It hardly needs to be emphasized that this focus on the unique status of art contrasts with the recognition in both the Freiburg and Frankfurt versions that there are other ways in which truth might happen: the founding of the political state, the questions and saying of the thinker, and so on (GA 5, 50; *PLT*, 61).<sup>125</sup> This establishes a clear difference between the draft and the subsequent versions that is not simply a matter of omissions.

Even so, it is tempting to refer this difference to an omission. What intervenes between the draft and the lectures Heidegger delivered at Freiburg and at Frankfurt is, at least on the surface, Hegel. The Freiburg version culminates in a discussion of Hegel’s statements about the past character of art, and while the *Holzwege* text relegates the explicit discussion of Hegel to an epilogue, which presumably means that it was not included in the lectures as delivered, it can be shown that Hegel’s discussion of art permeates the

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Heidegger, Adorno and Truth at the End of Art,” *Life After Postmodernism*, ed. John Fekete (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 86-119.

<sup>124</sup> Heidegger, M., “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung,” *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 21.

<sup>125</sup> The triumvirate of the poet, the thinker, and the founder of the state can already be found in the Hölderlin lectures at the end of 1934, and so presumably predates all three versions of “The Origin of the Work of Art,” thereby raising the question as to why art was singled out in the draft. As a provisional response it can be noted that the conflict may be more apparent than real. In the relevant passage in the Hölderlin lectures, Heidegger was addressing not truth specifically, but the people, and already in this respect the poet was given a certain priority (GA 39, 51).

conclusion of the main body of the text. Nothing better marks the intervention of Hegel than the definition of great art to be found in the different versions. In *Origin*, however, great art is characterized quite differently. According to the draft, art is made great not only by its power of unfolding, its being an origin, but also by its related power to destroy (*Zerstörung*). Specifically, great art destroys the public.<sup>126</sup> This constitutes the political agenda of Heidegger's discussion of art, which in the *Holzwege* version is sufficiently discreet to have allowed most readers of this essay, including myself, to have downplayed it until recently. For Heidegger, art destroys the public to form a people. In Germany in the 1930s, nothing could have been more politically charged.

The crucial discussion is found in the final paragraphs of each of the three different versions. Although they use the same terms and so look remarkably similar, they point in different directions. What they share is the distinction between, on the one hand, an art that is an origin (*Ursprung*) and as such a *Vorsprung*, and, on the other hand, an art that remains a mere supplement (*Nachtrag*), a routine cultural phenomenon. What has to be decided, according to Heidegger, is whether art is to remain something secondary, as happens when it is conceived in terms of expression and elucidated further in terms of such concepts of embellishment, entertainment, recreation, and edification; or whether art is to be an instigator of our history (*ein Vorsprung in unsere Geschichte*).<sup>127</sup> This distinction serves as a reinscription of the distinction between great art and subsidiary forms of art, although it remains to be seen how radical a reinscription it is.

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<sup>126</sup> Heidegger, M., "Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung," *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 8.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.



All three versions also use the language of decision, but in the draft the connection is much closer to the kind of decision to which Heidegger called the German people in the Rectoral Address, just as the idea of art as an instigator of our history echoes what he calls in the same place “the march that our people has begun into its future history.” When Heidegger asks whether or not we are in the neighborhood of the essence of art as origin, it seems clear, even if he does not spell it out, that “we” means the German people. And when he says that clarity about who we are and who are not already constitutes the decisive leap into the neighborhood of the origin, one can at least provisionally understand this as a question about whether the Germans are to be a *Publikum* or a *Volk*. The stridency of the draft means that Heidegger left relatively undeveloped any doubts he might have had about whether the German people would take the path he was laying out for them. Instead, there was a polemical tone about the draft, found also in the Hölderlin lectures from the same period, and in both cases it was directed against the expression theory of art that he associated with Erwin G. Kolbenheyer, Oswald Spengler, and the racist ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, and that was widely prevalent at the time.<sup>128</sup> Although nothing is spelled out, the implication is that by combating the philosophy of art as expression, Heidegger is preparing for the time when the Germans would be ready to choose their destiny. So long as art was restricted to being a form of expression, a German cathedral might inspire the public, for example, but a people would never come to be founded.

The brief discussion of Hölderlin in the draft exhibits the same degree of conviction that can be found in the 1934-35 lecture course on Hölderlin. Hölderlin institutes German Being (*Seyn*) by projecting it into the most distant

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

future.<sup>129</sup> Heidegger is quite explicit about the political significance of this conviction. To side with Hölderlin is “politics” in the highest and most authentic sense, to the point that one no longer has any need to talk about the “political.”<sup>130</sup> That Hölderlin is not yet a force in the history of the German people simply means that he must become one. Similarly, in the draft of *Origin* Hölderlin’s poetry is introduced as “the untrodden center” of the world and earth of the German people, where their great decisions are held in reserve.<sup>131</sup> The poems may scarcely be attended to, but they are more actual in the language of the German people than all the theater, cinema, and verse in circulation. The draft ends with a brief quotation from Hölderlin’s “Die Wanderung,” which although its meaning is not explicated is said to provide the key to what precedes it.

Schwer verlässt,  
Was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort.

Hard it is,  
For what dwells near the origin, to leave its place.

How Heidegger meant these lines to be understood is not easily decided. The context suggests that the focus falls on knowing whether or not we dwell near the origin and, if we do, the manner in which we stay in proximity to the work as the only place where truth happens.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Hölderlin’s Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein.” GA 39 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), 220.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>131</sup> Heidegger, M., “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung,” *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 15.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 21.

The Freiburg lecture puts in question what the draft had presupposed by asking whether there must always be art and a work for truth to happen (*Origin*, 44). Heidegger himself acknowledges this question to be a turning point in the essay. Whereas the draft insisted that there must be a work for there to be truth, the Freiburg version says only that if there is to be a happening of truth of the kind that one finds in art, there must be a work (*Origin*, 42). In other words, as already noted, art as a setting into work is now presented as only one of the way that truth happens. The result is that when in the Freiburg lecture Heidegger returns to the themes found at the end of the draft, the focus of the investigation has undergone a decisive shift. The question has now become whether there is great art any longer and, indeed, whether there could still be great art. That is to say, it is no longer a question of whether art is an origin, but whether it can be an origin again, and not just the accompaniment or supplement it has become. In this context Heidegger again emphasizes the transitory character of art. Great art is never timely. An art is great if it sets into a work *the* truth that is to become the standard for a period (*Origin*, 48). That is to say, an artwork is great for a specific time, but only for a time.

The question of whether art itself is destined to remain only a supplementary announcement is posed in terms of Hegel's pronouncements of the past character of art. Heidegger agrees with Hegel that we no longer have any absolute need to present content in the form of art, but Heidegger during the course of the lecture disputed Hegel's conviction that art is presentation (*Origin*, 52). So Heidegger says that a final decision about Hegel's judgment is still awaited. This decision, however, is not to be confused with the judgments of a critic or an art historian who might inform us about the quality or

originality of certain works.<sup>133</sup> It is a “spiritual decision” in which a people determine who they are. Or, rather, as Heidegger is addressing the Germans, the question is that of “who *we* are.” As in the draft, the role of the thinker is not clearly elaborated, but in Heidegger’s growing clarity that a people’s knowledge of what that artwork could and must be in their historical existence contributes to that decision. Presumably the thinker contributes to the people’s knowledge of what the work can do, through delivering lectures like “The Origin of the Work of Art.”

The Frankfurt lectures can be read as taking a stage further the transformation in the questioning that occurred between the draft and the Freiburg lecture. At the end of the Frankfurt lectures Heidegger is quite explicit that the question of the essence of art, the question of the origin of the work of art, is to be displaced by a more genuine questioning (GA 5, 65; *PLT*, 78). The rhetoric of these closing pages is striking. Heidegger’s questions follow after a series of assertions lasting several pages. Never had Heidegger been more assertive in his discussions on art and never was he to be so questioning. The question of what art is, such that it could properly be called an origin (GA 5, 58; *PLT*, 71), has changed to become the question of whether art is or is not an origin in our historical existence, the question of whether and under what conditions it can and must be an origin (GA 5, 65; *PLT*, 78). That is to say, even though the references to Hegel were relegated to the Epilogue, the question of the past character of great art govern the inquiry.

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<sup>133</sup> At one point in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, written in the years immediately following “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger introduces the notion of artlessness (*Kunstlosigkeit*) to address precisely this issue (GA 65, 506). Artlessness has nothing to do with art as understood by the culture industry: “An *art-less* moment of history can be more historical and creative than times with an extensive art industry.” It is only by traversing artlessness that art happens, when it does, which is seldom enough.

The question of the past character of art or, as one might say, the question of the coming poets, dominates the inquiry as it becomes more enigmatic for Heidegger. As Heidegger insists in the Epilogue, he does not claim to solve the riddle of art (GA 5, 66; *PLT*, 79). And as he says in the Addendum, written in 1956 and first included in the Reclam edition of 1960, “What art may be is one of the questions to which no answers are given in this essay.”<sup>134</sup> Given the political agenda of the draft, in keeping with the explicitly acknowledged politics of the Hölderlin lectures, it is not surprise to find that this change in tone reflects a change in the relation between the thinker and the people. In the draft version the thinker is not named. What matters is clarity about “who we are and who we are not,” because such clarity is “already the decisive leap into the neighborhood of the origin.”<sup>135</sup> The question “Who are we?” as a question addressed to the people had been developed in the first Hölderlin course.<sup>136</sup> Heidegger acknowledges the time of this question as the time of the poet, the thinker, and the founder of the state insofar as they found the historical existence of a people.<sup>137</sup> But the draft version of *Origin* focuses only on the relation of the poet to the decision of the people. When, in the Freiburg version, Heidegger emphasizes that this decision “can only be *prepared for by long work*,” it is possible to recognize this preparation as the contribution of the thinker, even though the thinker is still not named in this context. What is made clear in this version is how meditation on art since Plato and Aristotle, particularly in its form as “art theory,” has proved to be an obstacle to a proper posing of the question of who we are. But only in the Frankfurt lectures, where

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<sup>134</sup> *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1960), 99.

<sup>135</sup> Heidegger, M., “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung,” *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 22.

<sup>136</sup> Hölderlin's Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein.” GA 39 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), 48-59.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

the question of whether we are is not explicitly posed, does the “we” become problematic. It becomes problematic to the extent that Heidegger seems unable to control it.

Alongside the “we” of the German people is the “we” of the thinker, the one who meditates on art:

We ask about the essence of art. Why do we ask in this way?  
We ask in this way in order to be able to ask more genuinely  
whether art is or is not an origin in our historical existence,  
whether and under what conditions it must be an origin (GA 5,  
65; *PLT*, 78).

In the last of these sentences a transition is made from the “we” of Heidegger, the “we” of the thinker, to the “we” of the people is confirmed three sentences later when Heidegger asks,

Are we in our existence historically at the origin? Do we  
know, which means do we give heed to, the essence of the  
origin? Or, in our relation to art, do we still merely make  
appeal to a cultivated acquaintance with the past? (GA 5, 65;  
*PLT*, 79)

The identity of the people is made explicit when Heidegger, returning to the quotation from Hölderlin with which the draft version had also ended, acknowledges that the poet’s work “still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood.”

The lines from Hölderlin themselves no longer convey the same sense that they had in the draft. The context is no longer that of the question of why truth

has to happen as art and the emphasis is no longer on dwelling near the origin. By the time that one reads in the Frankfurt version

Schwer verlässt,  
Was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort.

the emphasis has shifted to the oppressiveness of this departure from art as the place of origin. The earlier stridency with which Heidegger had challenged the theory that German art is an “expression” of the people<sup>138</sup> has been replaced by a certain *Schwermut*, or melancholy, which matches the isolation that the thinker now experiences in his meditation on art. Is it a mistake to hear in this change of mood Heidegger’s growing awareness of his political isolation? Does not a space open up between the thinker and the people precisely as Heidegger’s recognizes that he was not to be given the role in determining the direction of the Nazi Party that he had projected for himself?

In all three versions importance had been attached to a knowing which was not theoretical but the site of the decision about art. Only in the third version was this knowing specifically associated with meditation on art and thus with the thinker. The thinker’s role was specified again in 1943 when Heidegger wrote, “For now there must be thinkers in advance, so that the word of the poets may be taken up.”<sup>139</sup> The thinker prepares a space for the work, a path for the creators, and quarters for the preservers (GA 5, 65; *PLT*, 78). The coming preservers are an historical people (GA 5, 62; *PLT*, 75), whose knowing allows the work be a work and maintains its self-subsistence (GA 5, 55; *PLT*, 68). Although Heidegger fails to acknowledge it fully in his text, the “we”

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<sup>138</sup> Heidegger, M., “Vom Ursprung des Kunstwerks. Erste Ausarbeitung,” *Heidegger Studies* 5 (1989), 18.

<sup>139</sup> *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1971), 30.

becomes as enigmatic as the work of art. Heidegger for the most part writes of the Germans as this thrown people, but the Germans in this sense are no more than a public who fail to recognize their poet. The German people that Hölderlin's poetry addresses are yet to be constituted. However marked the different versions of *Origin* might be with a certain political rhetoric, which betrays Heidegger's still shocking involvement with the Nazi Party, he himself experiences the untimeliness of this thinking, a non-synchronicity between his audience as he addressed them and as they heard him – as in the famous “Become who you are.” Insofar as Heidegger forced the issue and assumed the existence of the audience only the artwork could open up, he in a sense became part of the art industry, perhaps even the Nazi machine. At other times he was more sensitive:

We do not want to make Hölderlin relevant to our time but, on the contrary, we want to bring ourselves and those who are coming under the measure of the poet.<sup>140</sup>

Perhaps the enigma of whether Van Gogh's painting of the shoes is great art or not shares in the uncertainty created by the political context. It would seem that the Van Gogh painting is supplementary art, rather than great art. That is to say, it is a work, but not an origin. It expresses a world rather than instituting one. In keeping with this one might note that, although there was a time when the people in Greece who lived in the shadow of the temple relied upon the temple, the peasant woman depends on her shoes, not the painting. However, simply to see the issue in these terms is to ignore the political component of Heidegger's discussion that the present reading of *Origin* has brought to the surface. For Heidegger, the political meaning of the Van Gogh



painting can be seen in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, where it is clear that he is doing more than evoking a world already in place or threatening to disappear. Heidegger described the painting in this pastoral passage:

As to what is in the picture, you are immediately alone with it as though you yourself were making your way wearily home with your hoe on an evening in late fall after the last potato fires have died down (*IM*, 199).

One is tempted to ask further about this way of “reading” paintings whereby one projects oneself into the world it represents, but more urgent is the question of whether the picture is not being evoked by Heidegger – according to the notorious phrase Heidegger apparently added to the lecture course later – as part of the encounter between global technology and modern man (*IM*, 199). It seems that Heidegger would have liked the painting to be not just an expression of a culture that had had its time. He wanted it to be a still untimely work of great art, one whose preservers were awaited. In that case the question of whether the Van Gogh painting warranted the title great art, in the all-important sense of helping a people determine who they are, was still undecided in 1936, so far as Heidegger was concerned. It was undecidable by the thinker at the time because the answer would come only when and if the public made their decision to become a *Volk* in the requisite sense, a *Volk* living from the earth. It was, for Heidegger at that time, no doubt also a question about the future direction of National Socialism. Hence, the introduction has a melancholic mood. By the same token, it was not so much for Heidegger himself but for the people to decide. It is a question of whether or not art would again become “an

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<sup>140</sup> Hölderlin's Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein.” GA 39 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), 4.

essential and necessary way in which truth happens in a decisive way for our historical Dasein" (*PLT*, 80).

This third version is not the last version of the closing pages of *Origin*, even if one takes into account the Epilogue and the Addendum. Once one recognizes the importance of the issue of the dominance of technology and "the spiritual decline of the earth" (*IM*, 37-38) operative in *Origin*, it quickly becomes apparent that the last two pages of "The Question Concerning Technology," a text known in a version dating from 1953,<sup>141</sup> represent what was at least Heidegger's fourth attempt to write a conclusion to *Origin*. Heidegger's discussion moves through at least five stages, which recapitulate, supplement, and revise the essay of almost 20 years before. The discussion starts with the ambiguity of the word *techne*. In *Origin* its breadth seemed to constitute an obstacle to Heidegger's attempt to mark the difference between the artwork and equipment. In "The Question Concerning Technology" this very problem seems to provide the basis for addressing the challenge of technology. Hence, Heidegger's second step is to recall that when the arts were at their highest level, they not only bore the more modest name *techne*, but were understood in terms of *poiesis* as poetical. Specific reference to *poiesis* was absent from *Origin*, but the privilege given to poetry within the arts can be found in all three versions of the essay.<sup>142</sup> In "The Question Concerning Technology" Heidegger relates art and *poiesis* by looking to the fine arts in their poetic revealing to awaken anew and found our vision of and trust in that which grants (The Question Concerning Technology, 35). Heidegger turns to

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<sup>141</sup> *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Tr. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 48-49. Hereafter abbreviated *QCT*.

<sup>142</sup> In the margin of his copy of the Reclam edition of the essay Heidegger did include a reference to *poiesis*. See *Holzwege*, GA 5 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1977), 70n. Contrast Heidegger's attempt to rule out the reference from *Dichtung* to *poiesis* in 1934 (*Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein."* GA 39. [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980], 29.)

art not because of its power to destroy, or because of its radical difference from the technological sphere. It is the proximity between art and technology, between work and equipment, which opens the possibility that art might offer an essential meditation upon and a decisive confrontation with technology. The lack among the Greeks of a concept of art clearly marked from other forms of *poiesis* is now used to advantage, although it has to be said that the reference to “the fine arts” suggests that the concept of art has still not been submitted to an adequate historical destruction.

The question of the people, the question of who we are, is no longer the issue. In a fourth step, Heidegger passes directly to the question of whether there may or may not be some rescue from the entrenchment of technology. And the decisive thought guiding the question is again Hölderlin's.

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst  
Das Rettende auch.

Where the danger is, that which rescues  
burgeons too.

So far as the essay's response to technology is concerned, the impact of this quotation cannot be overemphasized, particularly when placed in the context of the history of metaphysics that Heidegger had developed earlier in the essay and elsewhere.<sup>143</sup> Strikingly, the context is that of the end of philosophy, thought not as Hegel thought the consummation of philosophy, but more as Hegel thought the past character of art. Heidegger looks not to

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<sup>143</sup> I shall not discuss the role of the quotation in any more detail here. However, see R. Bernasconi's treatment in *The Question of Language in Heidegger's History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1985), 69-75.

philosophy as such, which has in a sense exhausted its possibilities, but to the dialogue of thinking with poetizing, as shown by the appeal to Hölderlin.

The future of art remains a question in *Origin*, just as in “The Question Concerning Technology” the future of technology is left open. But what of art in the later essay? In the closing pages of “The Question Concerning Technology” Heidegger continued the task of withdrawing the politically charged vocabulary that had marked the draft of *Origin* and which he had already begun to sanitize in the Freiburg and Frankfurt versions.<sup>144</sup> He omitted all reference to the *Volk*, to decision, and to “great art” as such. Heidegger found a way of continuing his confrontation with technology away from the nightmare of National Socialist politics. But meanwhile the question that *Origin* left open, the question of whether there may yet be art (*PLT*, 86), appears no longer to be in question.<sup>145</sup> The fate of technology may not have been decided, but Hölderlin’s authority as “the poet” is submitted neither to the people nor apparently to any other kind of future for decision. In other words, Heidegger came to terms with his disastrous political involvement only by allowing himself to turn his back not just on politics but “on the people,” a phrase that was admittedly almost always dangerous on his lips, as it usually meant for him *the people*, the Germans. In consequence, the successive rewriting of *Origin* in 1935 and 1936 – through even to 1953 – leaves a question as to whether the

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<sup>144</sup> Compare Habermas’s description of Heidegger’s tendency in the 1940s and 1950s to efface the traces of nationalism from his philosophy of the 1930s by a process of “abstraction via essentialization.” Jürgen Habermas, “Heidegger – *Heidegger und der Nationalsozialismus* (Lagrane: Verdier, 1987), 28; tr. John McCumber, “Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective,” *Critical Inquiry* **15**, 1989, 449.

<sup>145</sup> The question of whether in the contemporary world dominated by an electronic and interconnected internet society the work can still remain a work was posed in a 1967 lecture, but not with the same urgency earlier. “Die Herkunft der Kunst und die Bestimmung des Denkens,” *Distanz und Nähe*, ed. Petra Jaeger and Rudolf Lütke (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1983), 19.

mutual isolation of the poet and the thinker in the 1950s did not mark a return to a form of aestheticism. Perhaps Heidegger should have persisted with the question “Who are we?” – even, perhaps especially, in the *absence* of an answer – whereas he appears to have simply displaced the question of the German people into that of the German language. A discussion of art addressed to *the* people justifiably provokes suspicion. But to reject *Origin* for a philosophy of art that excludes reference to the communities that not only spawn art, but also are established by art, would seem, as Gadamer already warned, to amount to a restoration rather than an overcoming of aesthetics.

*C h a p t e r 7*

HÖLDERLIN: THE APPROACH

In addition to his many expositions of the ‘great thinkers’ of the philosophical tradition, Heidegger was also a keen reader and interpreter of literature, especially of poetry. Some of his literary interests found little obvious expression in his published works (thus, despite anecdotal evidence as to the large influence on him of Dostoevsky there is little mention of the Russian novelist in any of Heidegger’s own lectures or writings). Others, however, became the focus of important philosophical reflections. This is especially true of German poets such as Georg Trakl, Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George, Gottfried Benn, the dialect poet Johann Peter Hebel and, most importantly, Friedrich Hölderlin – to whose work Heidegger devoted several series of lectures, as well as occasional addresses, and many passing references and discussions, totaling four volumes in the collected works (even recording a reading Hölderlin’s poems). Indeed, after Nietzsche, Heidegger devotes more space to Hölderlin than to any other writer or thinker.

We have already seen how Heidegger experienced the work of art as offering a way to break the grip of technologically oriented thinking, a way to a more originary encounter with things, and, in that encounter, to a disclosure of the world constituted as and by the Fourfold of earth, sky, mortals, and the gods. A painting, a temple, and a jug are variously adduced as occasioning such disclosures. These works, whether they are “high” or “low” art, are each of

them dumb things, and while this may make them effective in countering the mentality of Enframing by helping us to break free from habits of thought dominated by the technisized language of science, the media, and everyday idle talk, it also limits them. Such works, Heidegger says, indeed, “All art, as letting happen of the advent of what is, is as such essentially poetry” (*PLT*, 72). Does this then mean that all the arts – architecture, painting, sculpture, and music – must somehow be hierarchically subordinated to poetry in the narrow sense? This had, famously, been the strategy pursued by Hegel in his *Aesthetics*. There the hierarchy of the arts was ordered along a scale that marked the progressive diminishment of the role of spatiality and externality in favor of temporality, interiority, and spiritual truth. In this scheme painting comes to rank “higher” than sculpture, because it is only two-dimensional and therefore less external and also because it is more expressive of feeling by virtue of color, music is “higher” than painting, because it is essentially temporal and expresses inner feelings more directly than does painting, while poetry is “higher than all, because it is both temporal and inward. Such a classification of the arts, typical of idealist aesthetics, was, however, alien to Heidegger’s intentions. For undergirding Hegel’s entire schematization of the arts was the privileging of reason and logic over the whole realm of art. Putting it as its simplest, art was but a moment in the unfolding of Spirit that was most truthfully and appropriately to be grasped by dialectical reason.

For Heidegger, by way of contrast, the peculiar importance of art is precisely connected to its power to break the stranglehold of a philosophy of consciousness. Poetry in the narrow sense is, in this light, “only one mode of the lighting projection of truth” (*PLT*, 73) that occurs in all art. “Nevertheless,” Heidegger continues – and this “nevertheless” (perhaps, after all, predictable) is a crucial moment in the whole structure of Heidegger’s thinking – “the

linguistic work, the poem in the narrow sense, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts" (*PLT*, 73). This step is crucial, because, having used his meditation on the thingly character of the work of art to undermine the domination of Enframing (and thereby, apparently, dislodged language, logos, from its role as the defining characteristic of humanity), Heidegger is not about to reinstate language – but language experienced and understood quite otherwise than when prepositional assertion is seen as the most proper form of language use. This becomes clear in Heidegger's subsequent comments, as he continues by saying that,

To see this only the right concept of language is needed...  
[Language] not only puts forth in words and statements what is overtly or covertly intended to be communicated; language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time. Where is no language, as in the Being of a stone, plant and animal, there is also no openness of what is...  
Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates beings *to* their Being *from out* of their Being. Such saying is a projecting of the clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the Open *as*. *PLT*, 73)

Language, and poetry as the art of language, is then privileged by Heidegger after all – but not, as for Hegel, because it subordinates the thingly element of its object, its mater, or because it expresses a higher (in the sense of more interior, more rational) mode of consciousness. Poetry, no less than the temple or the jug, is what it is by virtue of its power to let rock become hard, metals to shine, and colors to glow: i.e., to let the world be made present in its worldly character. Poetry is not a means of transcending or spiritualizing experience, but a mode of unconcealment, of letting beings appear in their Being, *as* what they *are*. It is, very precisely, “the saying of the world and earth,



the saying of the arena of their conflict and thus of the place of nearness and remoteness of the gods" (*PLT*, 74). As such it is inherently and intimately connected with truth: not so much the pinnacle of the hierarchy of the arts as the deepest revelation of what is. As such – and this will become particularly important in connection with Hölderlin – it is also inherently and intimately connected with the life of the people, the *Volk*.

Because of the connection of poetry to truth, it is inevitable that philosophy will be guided into a certain proximity to poetry. But this is not in order to subject poetry to "the cold presumption of the concept" (GA 39, 5) or to penetrate behind poetry's pictorial language to "what" is being expressed in it. Rather, the philosopher is concerned with the word of the poet in order the better to learn thinking itself. "Thinking is almost co-poetizing (*Mitdichten*) (GA 52, 55).

The philosopher is no literary critic; he approaches poetry as a cadaver on a dissecting table, subordinating it to his narrowly philosophical interests. He is not concerned with poetry as a work of literature but with the *essence* of poetry: namely, that which makes it possible for poetry to be relevatory of truth. If the poet produces a poetic word, the thinker thinks Being, although equally, poetry is not naïve, since the poet no less than the thinker is engaged in a questioning of existence (GA 52, 134).

Rather than attempting to spell out the relationship between philosopher and poet in general terms, however, it will be more fruitful to follow Heidegger in his exposition of that poet in whom the essence of poetry is most clearly revealed: Friedrich Hölderlin.

Poetry is notoriously untranslatable, and even well-translated poetry does not always travel. In the early twentieth century Hölderlin achieve considerable posthumous popularity in German itself and, as Heidegger himself comments, Hölderlin's poetry vied with the writings of Nietzsche and Goethe for the honor of being the most popular reading of German soldiers in the First World War. Yet he remains little read in English, a fact that has to do both with the intrinsic difficulty of his work, its Classical formality, and its strongly national concerns. Before coming to Heidegger's own Hölderlin interpretation, then, it may be useful to sketch a brief outline of Hölderlin's life and work. In doing so I am not aiming at anything like an adequate portrait in this study of either the man or his work, but simply to adumbrate some basic points for orientation.<sup>146</sup>

Friedrich Hölderlin lived from 1770 to 1843, spending most of his life in his native Swabia in Southern Germany. At Tübingen University he was a close friend of both Hegel and Schelling. Like them, he was a student in the famous college known as the Stift, where, officially at least, he studied theology, despite not having any distinct vocation to the priesthood. Following a well-established pattern, and with the benefit of patronage from Schiller, he spent some years as a private tutor, in the course of which (again following a well-established pattern) he fell in love with the woman whose children he had been employed to teach. This was Susette Gontard, who was to the great love of Hölderlin's life. After a brief period in Bordeaux, and following Susette's early death, he experienced an intense schizophrenic episode in 1802. Despite the care of friends and the prospect of secure appointment as Court Librarian in Homburg, the illness recurred four years later, and from 1807 until his death in

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<sup>146</sup> For a good introduction to Hölderlin, see D. Constantine, *Hölderlin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

1843 Hölderlin lived in the charge of a carpenter in Tübingen, in a tower (still known as Hölderlin's tower) overlooking the river Neckar.

The Germany of Hölderlin's formative years was, like the rest of Europe at that time, caught up in the ferment of the French Revolution and the series of wars set in train by that event. It was a period when the whole question of German identity was highlighted, as the French invasion exposed the fragmentation of Germany into a multiplicity of principalities and small states that, separately, were unable to defend themselves effectively. At the same time, the authoritarian and often reactionary nature of the small states, as in Hölderlin's home state of Baden-Württemberg, pushed many of Hölderlin's generation into taking up a critical stance toward their rulers – as students, Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin had all been disciplined for planting a “liberty tree” and singing revolutionary songs. Culturally and intellectually there was sequence of criss-crossing battle lines to engage the attention and define the agenda of young intellectuals. So, for example, there were the conflicts between established Christianity, thoroughly integrated into the structure of the State (as in the Lutheranism of Hölderlin's background and university education) and the un- or even anti-dogmatic pursuit of intellectual and moral autonomy inspired, most recently, by Kant and Fichte; or between a Classicism that looked to Greece as the model of enlightened, rational order in art and society alike (as in Schiller) and a Romanticism that valorized the world of the Middle Ages, its chivalry and its mysticism, and that was inspired by the beauty and sublimity of Germany's rivers, mountains, and forests. Such tensions could easily be interpreted in terms of the empty formality of reason on the one hand and deep, substantial passion on the other. Whether these could somehow be united – as Schiller envisaged in his *Letters on Aesthetic Education* – or whether they set the scene for the agonies and despairs of Romantic nihilism was a question that

received various answers in the lives and works of many writers, artists, and philosophers in the early nineteenth century. Indeed, as has been seen, they lived on to influence the cultural and political horizons of Heidegger's own time.

These polarities are, not surprisingly, echoed in Hölderlin's poetry – although they appear there in a startlingly original form. Whereas Hegel resolved the threatened bifurcation of consciousness by means of a dialectically phased sequence of syntheses between the conflicting elements, Hölderlin never achieved any settled outcome of his poetic pursuit of a harmony that he envisaged as a return to the luminous presence of the Greek gods on German soil, a union of Christ and Dionysus, or the synthesis of a romantic view of nature with the striving for political freedom. Hölderlin's work thus becomes shot through with a lost past that is, nevertheless, recognized as irretrievable in its own terms, fating the poet to seek a destiny commensurate with his modern European reality. This pervasive sense of loss, though not without parallel in Schiller's own work, separates Hölderlin from the optimism of his patron, while his commitment to the redemption of the national *polis* marks him out from the more individualistic, anarchic Romanticism of a Friedrich Schlegel, and his passionate Hellenizing also distinguishes him from the more gothic world of, e.g., Tieck, Wackenroder, Hoffman, and Novalis.

Heidegger's treatment of Hölderlin bears comparison with his Nietzsche-interpretation. As previously indicated, Hölderlin receives almost as much attention in quantitative terms as does Nietzsche himself. Heidegger held three series of university lectures on Hölderlin's poems "The Rhine" and "Germania," "Remembrance," and "The Ister" in the academic sessions of 1934-35, 1941-42, and 1942 respectively, together with a number of other

addresses spanning the years 1936-38. in addition there are many important references to the poet scattered throughout Heidegger's later work, as is the case with the texts that are main reference points of this study, "On the Origin of the Work of Art (referred to hereafter as *Origin*) and *What is Called Thinking?*, but although this alone should alert us to the importance of Hölderlin for the later Heidegger, bulk is not the only factor inviting a comparison with the Nietzsche-interpretation. It is significant that Heidegger himself bracketed his lectures on Hölderlin with those on Nietzsche as evidence of his intellectual resistance to Nazism, a comment that suggests that, here too, we may also expect to find material relating to the confrontation between contemporary humanity and planetary technology.

However, although there are undoubtedly many affinities between the lectures on Nietzsche and those on Hölderlin, there are some extremely important differences. Whereas Nietzsche is seen by Heidegger as the last great thinker of the West – the one in whom the error and the danger of metaphysics comes to its supreme expression – Hölderlin serves a more positive role, for in him we are invited to see the harbinger of a new beginning. In this regard Hölderlin's own constant dialogue with the Greeks is very significant and is seen by Heidegger as anticipating, mirroring, and clarifying his own attempt to "hear" the matter of early Greek thought. The contrast with Nietzsche is explicitly drawn in the 1941-42 lectures on "Remembrance." Heidegger remarks on what he sees as a fashionable tendency to assimilate the two, but states that, in his view, they are divided by an "abyss," even though both of them are seen as determinative for both the immediate and the distant future of Germany and the West (GA 52, 78). Nietzsche is the voice of modern metaphysics, while Hölderlin presages the overcoming of metaphysics (GA 52, 143). Another contrast – not unconnected with this – is that, whereas Nietzsche

conceived of Dionysus as a kind of trans-historical dimension of life, the Dionysian element in life, as it were, the absence of the old Greek gods is a decisive moment in Hölderlin's vision (GA 52, 143). In this respect Hölderlin is both more genuinely Greek and more open to the future. Another contrast emerges in relation to one of the highest compliments that Heidegger pays to Nietzsche, when he describes his thinking as a "feast." Remembering that the interpreter's aim is always to think what is unthought in the thought of the great thinker, we might infer that the "feast" offered by Nietzsche's thought was not necessarily thought or understood by Nietzsche himself. This, however, contrasts with the role of feast-day in Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry, especially in the lectures on "Remembrance," and invites the reflection that, if Nietzsche the thinker is finally unable to deliver the feast promised by his thought, then we might turn to Hölderlin the poet for more direct access to that which is given to thought to feast upon. The poet speaks what the philosopher is to think.

The place of Heidegger's Hölderlin-interpretation in his later thought is, however, not only determined by the way in which the poet is promoted as a decisive alternative to Nietzsche. It is, as previously suggested, also connected to the interplay between the experience of "we moderns" and the Greeks. Despite the influence of Schiller, Hölderlin's own invocation of the Greeks does not so much emphasize their Classicism, i.e., what Nietzsche would later call the Apollonian aspect of Greek culture, but their openness to the intoxicating, ravishing presence of the gods, their immediate experience of the powers of nature in demi-gods such as Heracles and Dionysus. The bonding of the nation in the ecstatic experience of the festival is no less significant than the discovery and the delight in dialectics. Yet, as stated above, Heidegger does not regard Hölderlin as proposing any kind of "Dionysian-in-itself." The whole tenor of

Hölderlin's relation to the Greeks is determined by the sense, the conviction even, that the gods have fled. Paradoxically, however, their absence is a condition of their being the essential subject of poetry such as that of Hölderlin that adopts the elegiac mood. For the absence of the gods, says Heidegger, is their presence as having-been. This remark carries further implications, in that it is from the past participle of "to be" (*gewesen*), that the German philosophical term for essence (also sometimes translated Being), *Wesen*, is derived. Thus, for Heidegger, essence, *Wesen*, is what has-been, *das Gewesene*. Not everything that is past partakes of this transformation into true essentiality. There is a past that is simply past, that is over and done with, "unalterable, closed" (GA 52, 108), but there is also a past that, precisely by being past, is transformed into true essentiality. Moreover, what abides essentially in this way relates not only to the past but also to the future, since what concerns us essentially cannot but be of significance for our future. The encounter with the Greek world is, of course, an encounter of this essential kind.

We shall return to the question as to what exactly is involved in essential abiding in remembrance when we come to consider Heidegger's view of Hölderlin's poetic language and the significance of that for understanding language as such. At present we note only the role it plays for Heidegger in distinguishing Hölderlin's relation to the Greeks from that of Nietzsche. It also, of course, illuminates Heidegger's own concern to hear Greek thought with Greek ears – not for the sake of Classical revivalism, but in order to gain insight into what is essential in our present situation and in the decisions that face us concerning our future.

Another important element in Heidegger's approach to Hölderlin that once more touches on issues with which we are already familiar is the issue of

German nationhood. Although Heidegger's interest in Hölderlin clearly predated his Nazi period, it is scarcely coincidental that his most intensive engagement with Hölderlin came in the time following the failure of the rectorship. In terms of the reading of Heidegger's disengagement from Nazism offered earlier in this study, this is the time when Heidegger is seeking to redefine the meaning of nationhood (or homeland or fatherland) in such a way as to find in it a counter-movement to planetary technology, something he now saw Nazism as incapable of doing. Each of the poems he selects for comment in the three lecture courses raises the question of national identity and the meaning of the *polis* for human life. Both in the 1934-35 lectures on "Germania" and "The Rhine" and in the 1936 lecture on "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" Heidegger insists on the relation to the people (*Volk*) as integral to the poet's vocation. Because poetry concerns "the basic happening of man's historical *Dasein*" (GA 39, 40), it also by definition concerns humanity's relation to beings-as-a-whole and the primordial temporality in which that relationship is stamped with the characteristics of a particular historical epoch. Such primordial time "is the time of the poets, thinkers, and the founders of states, i.e., of those who essentially found the historical *Dasein* of a people and give them their fundamental character. These are authentic creators" (GA 39, 51). This comment is much discussed in the literature on Heidegger's Nazism, but whether it is read as a grouping of Hölderlin, Heidegger and Hitler as the authentic creators of the new Germany, or whether it serves as a reminder that politics is fundamentally limited in its ability to define the authentic character of a nation, it minimally helps to underline the point that, in concerning himself with Hölderlin, Heidegger is not simply giving up on the issue of German identity, and his turning to Hölderlin is not simply an abandonment of the concerns that led him into the political arena in favor of poetry. Rather, it is an attempt to rethink from another angle the issues that had motivated his political



misadventure. Irrespective of whether this is seen in terms of inner immigration or resistance, the spiritualizing of Nazi ideology or of escapism, it points to the way in which 1933 was not a mere episode in Heidegger's life but connects in manifold ways with the fundamental elements of his later thought.

We might now be beginning to see why Hölderlin could become so important to Heidegger, but it remains to be seen how he understood his philosophical approach to the poet. We therefore turn now to look more closely at Heidegger's hermeneutical strategy, at how he read Hölderlin, at what he found in him and at the light his Hölderlin-interpretation throws on his later thought, especially his understanding of language. An examination of Heidegger's method of reading Hölderlin will take us a long way towards uncovering the yield of that reading.

#### A. Heidegger and the Work of Words

To introduce a deeper look at the poetry of Hölderlin and the critical apparatus that Heidegger erects around it, I wish to raise only a minimal number of issues relevant for the understanding of Hölderlin's poetry in English using Heidegger's *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*.<sup>147</sup>

The present *elucidations* do not claim to be contributions to research in the history of literature or to aesthetics. They spring from a necessity of thought. (*EHP*, 21)

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<sup>147</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, tr. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000). All page references to this text in this section will be parenthesized as *EHP*.

Thus reads Heidegger's Preface to the fourth, enlarged edition of *Elucidations* from 1971. It is surprising for its brevity. But what is even more surprising is that Heidegger should have felt a need for such a disclaimer nearly three decades after the publication of *Elucidations* in English that this disclaimer be reinforced even further, and I would like to take it as a guide for how Heidegger approached Hölderlin's poetry. For Heidegger's brief, two-sentence Preface tells us what his interpretation is not, as well as what it is.

Heidegger's Preface makes clear that the essays contained in *Elucidations* are neither mere commentaries (*Anmerkungen*) nor explanation (*Erklärungen*), as we might normally expect since they deal with the explication of a poet's work; rather, they are *elucidations* (*Erläuterungen*). Heidegger had deliberately italicized the word, and the last paragraph of his Preface to the second edition (1951) further emphasizes its root meaning (*läutern*, to make clear or clarify). The elucidation must make the poem itself "a little clearer." It should "strive to make itself superfluous," that is, transparent. And ultimately, it should allow the poem to elucidate, that is, "throw light on other poems."

In other words, the elucidations are thinking's attempt to make clear and lucid, to throw light upon, what is poetized in the poem. They are thus to be understood in term of the dialogue of Heidegger's thinking (*Denken*) with Hölderlin's poetizing (*Dichten*), and not as either literary criticism or aesthetics.

Since Heidegger was a philosopher by training and profession, it may appear all too obvious why he does not claim to be doing literary criticism. Yet it should be pointed out that Heidegger was quite familiar with Hölderlin scholarship and worked closely with the available critical editions of Hölderlin's works. In addition, Heidegger's Hölderlin "interpretations" were published in leading journals of literary criticism, such as *Trivium* and the

*Hölderlin-Jahrbuch*, and appeared in prestigious collections in honor of Hölderlin's work, right alongside essays by established Hölderlin scholars. Heidegger was also in correspondence with leading critics such as Emil Staiger and Max Kommerell. And his interpretations have been widely cited in the Hölderlin literature.

The reason Heidegger does not claim to be doing literary criticism is that it is not his intention to undertake an ontic, scientific examination of the text or of its "correct" philological status. In the same year (1942) that Heidegger wrote the essay within *Elucidations* on Hölderlin's poem "Remembrance" (*EHP*, 101-174), he was also giving a lecture course at the University of Freiburg devoted to the same work. In the opening remarks, he said:

The lecture course has not desire to enter into competition with the "literary-historical" research on Hölderlin's "Life and Work," in order to put forth the "correct," or even the definitive, Hölderlin, like a specimen of natural scientific work.... The one and only thing that the lecture course attempts is to think what Hölderlin has poetized and to bring this to knowledge.<sup>148</sup>

Thus, standing outside the prevailing standards and current literary interpretations, it is Heidegger's intent to question the text in terms of the one question which, according to the later Heidegger, no science can ever ascertain: the question of Being. About a year before he published the earliest of the essays included in the *Elucidations*, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" (1936), Heidegger gave a lecture course on Hölderlin's hymns "Germania" and

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<sup>148</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne "Andenken"* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982, GA 52) 2, 5. Two other lecture courses given by Heidegger on Hölderlin's poems have also appeared in the *Gesamtausgabe: Hölderlins Hymne "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (39, 1980); and *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"* (53, 1984).

“The Rhine.” There he states unequivocally the one and only purpose of his dialogue with Hölderlin: “The poetic turn toward his poetry is possible only as a *thoughtful* confrontation with the *revelation of Being (Seyn)* which is successfully accomplished in this poetry” (GA 39, 6). Heidegger is therefore not bound by the presuppositions of literary criticism or any discipline that aspires to be scientific and to investigate beings, least of all the one presupposition which has characterized all the sciences since Descartes: the subject-object dichotomy.

It is for this reason that Heidegger also does not claim to be doing “aesthetics,” although aesthetics is the philosophical discipline normally charged with treating questions concerning the nature of the artist and the work of art. For Heidegger, aesthetics as a philosophical discipline arose as a consequence of the original forgottenness of the ontological difference between Being (*Sein*, or *Seyn*) and beings (*Seiendes*), and therefore of the emphasis being placed on the particular being. It is therefore understandable that this discipline should at times aspire to be a science as well, since the sciences likewise arose from this forgottenness, carving out a specific object domain for their investigations of beings. In the “Epilogue” and the “Addendum” to the “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger writes:

Almost from the time when specialized thinking about art and the artist began, this thought was called aesthetic. Aesthetics takes the work of art as an object, the object of *aesthesis*, of sensuous apprehension in the wide sense. Today we call this apprehension experience.... Everything is an experience. Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. (GA 5, 67; *PLT*, 79)

Thus, for Heidegger, “aesthetics” sets the work of art up as an object over against the subject, who has an “experience” of the object. Heidegger therefore sees aesthetics as guided by the subject-object dichotomy as well.

Accordingly, it is necessary for the *thinker* to set aside the usual presuppositions of both literary criticism and aesthetics:

Reflection on what *art* may be is completely and decidedly determined only in regard to the question of *Being*. Art is considered neither an area of cultural achievement nor an appearance of spirit; it belongs to the *primal event* (*Ereignis*) by way of which the “meaning of Being” (cf. *BT*) can alone be defined. (GA 5, 73; *PLT*, 86)

In the Preface to the *Elucidations*, Heidegger writes:

They spring from necessity of thought. (*EHP*, 21)

What is this necessity of thought, and why does it require the turn of thought toward poetry? As is well known, the remaining portions of *Being and Time* that Heidegger had promised were not published as originally planned, and the crucial movement from *Being and Time* to *Time and Being*, which Heidegger had called for in *Being and Time*, did not take place in the manner first proposed. In his “Letter on Humanism,” Heidegger writes: “The section in question was held back because thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning, and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics” (GA 9, 328; *Basic Writings*, 208). Thus, due to the lack of the proper language, the

Heidegger of *Being and Time* publishes very little in the fifteen years following its publication in 1927 and a few related pieces in 1929.<sup>149</sup>

This is, of course, Heidegger's famous turning (*Kehre*), occasioned by the fact that for all the radicality of *Being and Time*, its attempt at saying something nontraditional nevertheless attempted to say it in the traditional, neo-Kantian language of the day. Language itself occupies a relatively minor place (equiprimordial with "state of mind" [*Befindlichkeit*] and "understanding" [*Verstehen*]). Poetry itself is mentioned only twice, and is accorded no special significance. And the early Greeks are mentioned seldom, and half of the references to them occur in the section (44) on truth.

In other words, what Heidegger discovered in the years following the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927 was that, if he is to retrieve (*Wiederholung*) the forgottenness of Being, he will also have to retrieve the language which will enable him to say the truth of Being, and that this language is a fundamentally poetic one. In his letter to William Richardson, in which Heidegger explicitly speaks of his "turning," he points to a 1937-38 lecture course on the essence of truth, particularly *aletheia* and *poiesis* and the relation, and says:

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<sup>149</sup> In 1929, Heidegger published *The Essence of Reasons*, tr. T. Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969); "What is Metaphysics?" tr. D.F. Krell, in *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). Between 1930-44, Heidegger himself published very little; indeed, the only collection of his essays that was issued in book form was the first edition of *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*.

The fact that what we thoughtlessly enough call “truth” the Greeks called *Aletheia* – as well, indeed, in poetical and nonphilosophical language – is not (a result of) their (own) invention and caprice. It is the richest endowment of their language, in which that-which-coming-to-presence as such attained nonconcealment and – concealment.... This manifold thinking demands, to be sure, not a new language, but a transformed relation to the Being (*Wesen*) of the old one.<sup>150</sup>

Therefore, in the 1930s and the early 1940s, Heidegger's thinking undergoes a twofold turn. The first is the turning back to the early Greeks to retrieve their fundamental saying of truth as the unity of *logos* and *physis* at the beginning of Western thinking.<sup>151</sup> The second is the turning in the modern age to the poet Hölderlin to retrieve for us not the fundamental truth of Being. This latter retrieval, along with the first one, point forward to the possibility of another beginning at the end of the modern age. However, this twofold turning, which points backward and forward, is ultimately onefold, i.e., it is in both instances a *poetic* turning, for it is the poetic language of the early Greeks which enabled them to say the truth of Being. In both instances this poetic truth of Being retrieves, in both the early Greeks and in Hölderlin, the truth of Being as *physis*. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, a lecture course given in 1935, Heidegger writes: “it was through a fundamental-poetic-thoughtful experience of Being that they (the early Greeks) discovered what they had to call *physis*” (GA 40, 17; *IM*, 14). In his lecture on the poem “As When on a Holiday,” first given in 1939, he says: “In this poem, Hölderlin's word ‘nature’ poetizes its essence according to the concealed truth of the primordial fundamental word *physis*” (*EHP*, 79).

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<sup>150</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Preface” to William J. Richardson, *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963), xxii.

It is clear that Heidegger's *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* attempts to redefine the relation between philosophy and poetry, thinking and poetizing, in a way that frees them from their centuries-old conflict. It is an attempt to retrieve the relation they had before Plato. This topic will be discussed further below.<sup>152</sup> The issue has been further complicated by the fact that Heidegger has written several collections of what look like poems.<sup>153</sup> Another disclaimer is therefore advisable. Heidegger has no intention of conflating thinking and poetry and obliterating their differences. In a letter to Heidegger of 29 July 1942, which was occasioned by the lecture on "As When on a Holiday," Max Kommerell, the German man of letters, wrote to Heidegger and asked:

Where is the transition point where your own philosophy flows into Hölderlin... is itself equitable at this point with Hölderlin – and ultimately where, in its specific kind of assertion, does your philosophy come close to poetry itself?<sup>154</sup>

Heidegger replied on 4 August 1942, the same month in which he was writing the essay "Remembrance":

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<sup>151</sup> Keith Hoeller, "The Role of the Early Greeks in Heidegger's Turning," *Philosophy Today*, vol. 28 (1984), 44-51.

<sup>152</sup> See also Keith Hoeller, "Is Heidegger Really a Poet?" *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 12 (1981), 121-38.

<sup>153</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet," tr. Albert Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 1-14; "Thoughts," tr. K. Hoeller, *Philosophy Today*, vol. 20 (1976), 286-90. In the essay cited above, "Is Heidegger Really a Poet?" Hoeller argues that, based upon Heidegger's understanding of the relation between thinking and poetizing, he was not a poet and these collections were not poems. Another similar collection, entitled "Hints" (*Winke*), has recently appeared in GA 13 (*Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983). In an appendix to these "Hints," Heidegger writes: "These 'Hints' are not poems. They are words of a thinking which needs a part of this [kind of] assertion, but is not itself [entirely] fulfilled within it" (33).

<sup>154</sup> Max Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen 1919-44* (Freiburg, 1967), 400ff.



Naturally, your letter places me in a unique dilemma. I can only find a way out of it by taking your designation “philosopher” as a sign and attempting to speak on behalf of the “thinker” in contrast to the poet.... I can *not*, and nowhere do I, identify myself with Hölderlin.<sup>155</sup>

And in *Nietzsche I*, Heidegger expresses this relation in its exact character:

All philosophical thinking, and precisely the most rigorous and most prosaic, is in itself poetic, and yet it is never poetic art (*Dichtkunst*). Likewise, a poet's work – like Hölderlin's hymns – can be thoughtful in the highest degree, and yet it is never philosophy.<sup>156</sup>

In other words, although at its source thinking (*Denken*) may be a poetizing (*Dichten*) in the broadest sense of the word, it is never poetry or poesy (*Poesie*), it is never a poem (*Gedicht*).<sup>157</sup> And at the same time, although a poet's poetizing may be thoughtful (*denkerisch*), it is never a philosophical treatise; it is never philosophy (*Philosophie*). For all their identify, thinking and poetizing still retain their difference. Thus, Heidegger can write: “But precisely because thinking does not poetizing, but is an original saying and language, it must remain near to poetry.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 404-05.

<sup>156</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche I* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), 329.

<sup>157</sup> See note 153 above.

<sup>158</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* tr. F.D. Wieck and J. Glen Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 135; *Was heisst Denken?* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954), 155.

## B. Poetry and Language

Heidegger is quite clear that, although he approaches Hölderlin from the viewpoint of a philosopher and thinker, Hölderlin himself is first and foremost a poet. Heidegger draws a sharp distinction, familiar to the Romantic era itself, between poetry in the sense of mere versifying and poetry (*Dichtung*; cf. *Dichter*: poet), in the strong sense. It is always this latter sense that applies to Hölderlin, and so the first aim in reading Hölderlin's poems is to read the poetry in them. For it is one thing to read a poem and become acquainted with it as a piece of literature, but it is something else again "to stand in the domain of poetry" (GA 39, 19). Poetry in this strong sense is not the "expression of experiences (*Erlebnissen*)" (GA 39, 26), nor, against Spenglerian and racist views, is poetry an expression of a certain form of culture or "a biologically necessary function of a people" (GA 39, 27). The aim in reading poetry is not, as in the hermeneutics of the Schleiermacher-Dilthey tradition, to reconstruct the original intuition of the poet, since the word of a true poet transcends his own private opinions and experiences (GA 52, 6-7). Thus, the "I" we encounter in Hölderlin's poetry is not that of the man who is the subject of a historical biography of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) but, precisely and solely, that of Hölderlin the poet, and, therefore, understandable only in the light of the poetic work itself. Hölderlin matters to us only "insofar as the author brings the whole poem as a linguistic production into language," but "the poem as a whole is language and speaks" (GA 39, 42) – i.e., it is language itself and not the arbitrary individuality of the poet that really speaks in the poem. Consequently, the word of the poet "overreaches itself and the poet in its poetic achievement" (GA 52, 12).

We must therefore resist being seduced into merely marveling at the beauty of a poem as a product of culture (GA 52, 21); nor is a poem to be

“explained” by reference to his historical context, nor even by comparison with parallel citations from the author’s own work, since this is in each case to presuppose that we understand what the poem itself is about. However, only the poem itself can teach us what it is about (GA 52, 2f.).

Poetry, as a work of art, is a mode of truth as unconcealment, a naming of beings that calls them into Being the beings that they are. It is this that requires us to recognize its proximity to thinking. Nevertheless, poetry is not philosophy, a point that is particularly important in the case of Hölderlin, who is known to have been so close to Hegel, and who was himself philosophically literate and who produced some prose works that could be categorized as philosophical. There is a deep affinity between Hölderlin and Hegel, says Heidegger, but in order to grasp this it is also necessary to grasp the division and the boundary that separates poet and thinker (GA 39, 129ff.).

Poetic language is not the language of philosophy. Since the time of Plato philosophy has placed itself in the service of univocity, a service standardized in formal logic. This has had the result of instrumentalizing language and reducing it to a tool, a means of self-expression and communication (GA 52, 14ff.). At its most banal, this philosophically driven reduction of language manifests itself in the kind of “Americanism” encountered in the spread of acronyms (GA 52, 10). As with Heidegger’s critique of science and technology, so here the superficially “high” standards of logical rigor are placed on a par with the most trivial, most leveled aspects of everyday modern life.

None of this should be taken as implying that poetry itself is inexact, for it has its own kind of rigor (GA 52, 26). Nor is the imagery of poetic diction a mere form of concealing the “true” content of the poem (GA 52, 29). In reading or listening to a poem, we can only attend to the poem itself, to the word that is

unique to this singular linguistic construct that overreaches the self-understanding of the poet that is irreducible to the personal and communal circumstances of its production and inexplicable in terms of psychology, logic, or philology.

As was the case with the essential thought of any great thinking, we must also remember that the truth of poetry is not only in what is said, but also in what is left in silence (GA 39, 41; 52, 39). Moreover, to understand this truth we must be genuinely concerned about who we are, in our own time. This is not simply a matter of chronological time, and whether we live in 1801 or 1934 is not ultimately important. What matters is that we are concerned about what is to be, to exist, in time (GA 39, 48f.)<sup>159</sup>

In an especially forceful passage that resonates with his many references to the role of the leap in thinking, Heidegger states that,

The poem is now no longer an even text, endowed with an equally flat “meaning,” but this linguistic construct is in itself a vortex that snatches us away. Not gradually, but... suddenly... But to where does this vortex snatch us? Into speech (*das Sprechen*), of which the poem is the linguistic construct. What sort of speech is that? Who speaks to whom with whom about what? We are forcefully drawn into a conversation (*Gespräch*) that language (*Sprache*) brings to speech (*Sprache*), and indeed not just any casual or accidental speech... [but one that concerns] naming and speaking. (GA 39, 45)

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<sup>159</sup> If we are disposed to be generous to Heidegger, we might hear in this remark a critical downplaying of the claims made on behalf of the Nazi revolution to define the future of Germany on the basis of a particular event in chronological time.

The poetic word has often been called “divine,” and Heidegger, too, represents the poet as a mediator between gods and mortals. “Thunder and lightning are the language of the gods and the poet is he whose task is to endure and to gather up this language and to bring it into the *Dasein* of the people” (GA 39, 31). In the case of Hölderlin this mediating role is connected with the poet’s preoccupation with the demi-gods (Dionysus and Heracles of the Greek world and the personified rivers of the German landscape), who are “above” mortals but “beneath” the gods: beings who thus have a certain formal analogy to Nietzsche’s superman. However, they are not simply creators of their own universe of meaning, as the superman is, but bearers of a meaning and a truth that transcends their own understanding.

Referring to Hölderlin’s line that “hints are, from of old, the language of the gods,” Heidegger adds that poetry itself speaks a hinting and allusive language. On the one hand, poetry is public diction, spoken for and before the people, yet it is also veiled, a sign rather than a statement (GA 39, 32). Playing on the double-meaning of the German term “Wink” which means both “hint” and “wave” (as in waving goodbye), Heidegger says that such a hint/wave is “a holding on to closeness in the course of increasing distance, and conversely, the revealing of the distance still to be covered in the joyful proximity of the one arriving. The gods, however, hint just by *being*” (GA 39, 32).

Snatched away, abducted by the ravishing vortex of the poem, the read is translated into the realm of the enigmatic, hinting divine thunder and lightning, experiencing simultaneously the presence and absence, the proximity and distance of the gods. This, of course, parallels the dynamics of thinking itself, lured into Being by what withdraws from it, and, in withdrawing, calling for thinking. Recall that for Heidegger, “What must be thought about, turns away

from man. It withdraws from him.”<sup>160</sup> But, pulled forward into the current generated by this withdrawal, we are not merely led on by hinting, ambiguous signs of what lies out there to be thought. As we ourselves are drawn into the slipstream of what calls for thought, we too become signs, pointers to what is to be thought.

Man is not first of all man, then also occasionally someone who points. No: drawn into what withdraws, drawing toward it and thus pointing into the withdrawal, man first *is* man. His essential nature lies in being such a pointer. Something which in itself, by its essential nature, is pointing, we call a sign. As he draws toward what withdraws, man is a sign. (*What is Called Thinking?*, 9)

However, because that to which the riddle of human existence points and of which it is a sign is necessarily absent (since its absence is the vacuum that generates the current of thinking and is therefore itself constitutive of humanity's sign-character), Heidegger can sum the situation up in words from Hölderlin's poem "Mnemosynes": "We are a sign that is not read / We feel no pain, we almost have / Lost our tongue in foreign lands" (*What is Called Thinking?*, 10). This "we" Heidegger interprets as "We the men of today" (*What is Called Thinking?*, 11). However, Hölderlin is not simply giving expression to the experience of displacement and confusion characteristic of a particular era, modernity for example, since, as we have seen, that would merely be to interpret the poem from an external standpoint. As poet, as the bearer of a poetic word that is in transposition into speech of divine lightning, Hölderlin's sign, Hölderlin as sign, is profoundly unreadable, in the sense that there is no final, univocal meaning, but rather an ever-withdrawing, ever-

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<sup>160</sup> WCT, 8. All references in this section to this text will subsequently take the form parenthesized references.

provocative “food for thought” (*What is Called Thinking?*, 11). In relation to the self-concealment of the poetic word, the interpreter’s task becomes the task of hearing (*hören*) or, more precisely, attending to (*hören*; cf. *gehören*: obey) the poetic word. Such attentiveness is both a waiting and a willingness to risk oneself, since there can never be a guarantee either that there is anything worth attending to or that we have secured the “correct” interpretation: ambiguity, allusion, hinting goes all the way down. Every act of interpretation is and must be a leap into the unknown.

If the meaning of poetic production is in this way compressed into the single category of the enigmatic, hinting sign, and remembering that we ourselves are defined in the representative figure of the poet as a “sign,” the sign is what it is in and as language, as word. So, just as Heidegger identified the essence of the thinker with that single (unthought) thought that determines the whole orbit of his intellectual activity, the poem, despite its many words, is referred to as the “poetic word” in the singular (GA 52, 33) – an assertion that highlights Heidegger’s distinctive strategy of philosophizing by meditating upon the “basic words” that, in his view, define the course of thinking.

What is needed if we are to understand poem and poet, then, is neither historical nor literary nor any other kind of knowledge, but simply readiness to allow the word to speak to us and, in speaking, to reveal the time-space of its assigned domain.

In this regard we once more come close to the primordial doubling of experience in the intuitive experiencing of the world “as” world. But this is not spoken of in this context in terms of a phenomenology of perception, as the irreducible doubling in the experienced encounter of, e.g., the eye and its object. For what is now being stressed is that the object, the thing, is only really *seen*,

only able to stand out into the open space of perception, when and as it is named, when the word is spoken over it.

If the speaking of this word is supremely the task of the poet, we have to remember that poetry in the narrow sense preserves and condenses the essence of language as such. In other words, Heidegger's understanding of the poetic word is not offered as the resolution of a problem in aesthetics, but as an attempt to exemplify the essential nature of language. "Language itself is poetry in the essential sense" (*PLT*, 74). Poetry is a way of speaking that lets the essence of language itself be seen.

These remarks are reminiscent of a way of thinking about poetry that goes back to early Romanticism and to the view that poetry was the original language of ancient peoples that became profaned and degraded into the prose of everyday speech in the course of history. Heidegger revisits this idea a number of times. However, in contrast to some versions of it, he is neither attempting a historical argument nor arguing for the priority of poetry over the other arts. Instead, his emphasis is on what poetry, as original language, tells us about language. Thus "every genuine word is, as word, already poetic" (GA 52, 55). The continuing resonance – albeit for the most part unattended – of the poetic word in everyday usage thus becomes one of the guiding threads of Heidegger's whole hermeneutical strategy, as he rescues the essential meaning of words from their debased usages in idle, objectified talk.

But just as the question of poetry is not merely an issue in aesthetics, so too the question of language is not merely an issue in the philosophy of language, understood in the sense of an autonomous branch of philosophy.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Indeed, it is striking that, even when Heidegger himself gives a lecture entitled, "Language," he expounds language by interpreting a poetic work. In this respect I have



For the question of language is not only tied up with the question of human existence (since we are ourselves, as language speakers, “signs”) but is also inseparable from the ever-decisive question of Being. This is spelled out by Heidegger in the 1934-35 lectures and establishes a position from which he never retreats.

For in language man ventures furthest, putting himself altogether at risk by venturing out into Being. In language there occurs the revelation of beings... In the power of language man becomes the witness of Being (*Seyn*). (GA 39, 61-62)

The poet, as the paradigmatic speaker of language is “the founder of Being (*Seyn*)” (GA 39, 214).

Yet, paradoxically (although entirely in keeping with Heidegger’s consistent view as to the interrelationship of Being and non-Being), language is, in a phrase of Hölderlin, “the most dangerous of goods,” because its potential for uncovering beings in their Being is inseparable from the dehiscence of Being accomplished in language. In other words, because human beings are human only in language and as speakers of language, it is language itself that separates them from the rest of nature, from the unspoken life of the animal kingdom and from biological and other forms of causality. Language itself is an ecstatic transcending of nature in the literal sense of the term ec-stacy, “standing-out,” and, as such, transports us into a dimension of relative non-being. Language is “the most dangerous of goods” “because it first creates and alone holds open the possibility of any kind of threat to Being” (GA 39, 62). A silent world is simply what it is; a world suffused with language, a world

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tried to follow Heidegger’s own example by embedding the account of his understanding of

represented in language, is radically unstable, open to multiple and conflicting interpretations. "Because man *is* in language he creates this danger and bring [upon himself and upon beings] the destruction it threatens" (GA 39, 62). This danger may take one of two forms. In the mythological language of Heidegger's exposition of Hölderlin it may tempt us to blasphemy, to a presumption as to our own god-likeness, and our consequent destruction (as when we assume that our power of naming beings is itself creative and is the reason or ground for beings being as they are: Logos as reason). Or language may slip away from what it names and sink down into the superficiality of idle talk, we slip into a way of life in which all our relationships are drained of any original, authentic relation to Being.

Now it might seem as if the course we have been following has involved a continual narrowing of focus. Beginning with art, we singled out poetry, and went on to isolate poetry in a stronger, more exclusive sense, "the poetic," which was then, in its turn, defined as the unreadable sign that is the single, decisive word bestowed upon the poet by the gods; and in this single, decisive word the whole essence of language, the saying of Being, was, in turn, concentrated. This would not be entirely misleading – but it might lead us to ask what has happened to the promised feast? Has not Heidegger's procedure evacuated language of all its extensive riches and shrunk it down to a singular event? For all his protestations, does not such an approach rob poetry of its poetic expressiveness?

It is clearly not Heidegger's intention to undertake an exercise in reductionism. One element in his strategy is indeed to focus in on the singularity of the true poetic word, a word that is said to be foundational for the

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language in the exposition of his remarks on Hölderlin's poetry.

whole realm of language in all its manifold outworkings. Equally, however, he stresses that the poetic word exists only in the articulated structure of the poem as a whole. Each poem, each poet's poetic universe, may form a unitary whole under the impact of a single, decisive poetic word, but it is what it is and as it is as an internally differentiated composition or sequence of compositions. Furthermore, the word, the hinting sign, is never uttered except as a distinctive figuration of the irreducible fourfoldness of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities.

### C. Poetry and the Fourfold

To see how this is worked out, we now turn to a closely interconnected complex of themes that Heidegger finds in Hölderlin's poetry: the "Between," time, the rivers, wandering and place, the feast, measure, the event of appropriation, enowning, and remembrance. In the light of this we shall then go back to *What is Called Thinking?* in order to see how this illuminates Heidegger's use of Hölderlin in that text in the context of his exposition of Parmenides and the Pre-Socratics. In attempting to see these themes in their interdependence it is, however, necessary to remember three things. Firstly, that Heidegger does not himself present them systematically but only as they arise in the course of interpreting Hölderlin's poetry. Secondly, that the kind of interdependence concerned is that of fugal articulation rather than hierarchical construction, and that it would be misleading to single out any one as "the" key to all the rest or as "the" apex of Heidegger's exposition. Each is what it is and means what it means only by reference to all the others. Thirdly, that the themes chosen here are only a selection, and that the overall achievement of Heidegger's Hölderlin-interpretation is larger and more internally complex than will be examined further in later chapters. Within this chapter, however, I

believe this group of topics does serve to convey something of the style, the tenor, and the conceptual shape of Heidegger's view of Hölderlin and, through Hölderlin, of the nature of poetic language.

We have already seen that the place of the poet is, in one respect, that of mediator between gods and mortals. The site of this mediation, figured in the demi-gods, is named by Heidegger as "the between" (cf. GA 39, 285). This "Between" can be envisaged in various ways. As the place where mortals and gods meet, it also marks the boundary that separates them, the extreme point of human possibility occupied by the poet, a point at which the question concerning the gods, the question of transcendence – i.e., the question as to what or who is to be found "beyond" humanity – becomes pressing (GA 39, 167). As such it is also the "Middle" of Being "from out of which the whole realm of beings, gods, men, earth are to be newly brought out into the open" (GA 39, 183).

The middle of Being might also be spoken of as the "Between" of Being and non-Being, and as such equivalent to possibility, "the possibility that belongs to actuality" (GA 52, 118) in the sense of that which does not exist in the manner of objects but has the potential to be realized in and through the freedom of action. This understanding of existential possibility is figured by Hölderlin in the image of the "golden dream" – "terrible but divine" (GA 52, 121).

The idea of possibility also points to the role of the "Between" as the middle of time, the point of transition between past and future. What is to be shown forth in poetry is historicity in the sense of becoming in the midst of transiency: i.e., the movement of coming-into-Being as the counter-movement to the flux of non-Being and utter impermanence. It is what stays time, in the

sense of restraining it, and thereby enabling a sense of presence to come to pass in the midst of ceaseless change (GA 52, 146). Throughout the realm of the transitional, of what exists as a process of passing from one state into another, the “Between” establishes what is essential in the sense described above: of what abides (GA 52, 98).

When at the start of the poem “The Ister” the poet invokes the divine fire, the lightning-flash of imagination, in the words “Now come, fire,” this is said by Heidegger to be the poet defining his place precisely in the “now,” the moment between past and future, that is also a moment of expectation. This present is metaphorically represented in the river itself, ceaselessly flowing, vanishing away in endless flux yet, in doing so, preserving its identity as just this river that it is.

In the light of Hölderlin’s historical context, in an intellectual situation which, as described above, was shaped by a sequence of conflicting polarities, we might be tempted to see this privileging of the “middle” as a poetic way of expressing what Hegel set out to do by means of dialectical logic and mediation. To do so, Heidegger insists, is not only to miss the point that poetic diction is not merely a sensuous or figurative expression for a non-sensuous idea, it is also to obscure the essential difference between Hegel and Hölderlin: namely, that while Hegel is fundamentally a metaphysical thinker, Hölderlin is not – a comment that throws further light on the relationship between Hölderlin and Nietzsche, “the last metaphysical thinker of the West” (GA 52, 99).

Consideration of the “Between” has led us to the river, the image of becoming-in-the-midst-of-flux, a tension most vividly captured in Hölderlin’s comment on the Ister that it seems to flow backwards, towards its source.

Rivers were a recurrent theme in Hölderlin's poetry, and they are central to Heidegger's own remarks on Hölderlin. The river is itself a demi-god, a "being-between" (GA 39, 163-64), originating in the mountains that are seen as the dwelling-place of the gods, and descending to water the land, making it habitable for mortals. Crucial to Heidegger's understanding of Hölderlin's rivers is his insistence that the river is not simply an image of Heraclitean flux. Remembering everything Heidegger has said about the nature of poetic language, the poetic figure of the river is not an image "of" or "for" anything else: it is itself the meaning it articulates. Consequently, the river itself exemplifies becoming-in-the-midst-of-flux, understood as the emergence of order, pattern and stability in and on the basis of flux. Take the Danube, which originates in the Southern German mountains but then seems abruptly to change course, and to veer off sideways, winding its way eastwards to the Black Sea. This may at first seem to be an example of sheer errancy, an aimless meandering across the face of the earth. Indeed, Heidegger says, "The river is the state of wandering" (GA 55, 35). Yet such wandering is not aimless. For a start, the river only exists and only continues to be able to flow at all as long as it retains its connection with its source (as in the image of the river seeming to flow backwards). Therefore a memory or trace of the source abides throughout the whole course of the river. Even the sea into which it flows enters into this relationship, a point that Heidegger makes in connection with a line from the poem "Remembrance," where Hölderlin figures poets as sailors seeking riches at sea. Such seeking is not in the spirit of those Heidegger describes as "planetary adventurers" (GA 55, 59), who have lost all sense of home and of the distinction between belonging and rootlessness, for the riches that such sailor-poets seek belong to the origin. The river's connectedness to its source means that as it wanders across the surface of the earth it is able to shape the landscape, creating places where mortals can dwell (GA 39, 93). The river

makes paths on the previously pathless earth. "That state of wandering defines what it is to make oneself at home on earth (GA 55, 36). "The river bears 'place' within itself. The river itself dwells" (GA 55, 36).

Once again warning us against a leveling, philosophical or allegorizing approach to language, Heidegger cautions against seeing the river as "just" a symbol for time, and place as "just" a symbol for space, as though we could achieve a higher level of understanding by translating the figures into abstract ideas. More decisive is the identification of the rivers with the poet himself: "the rivers are the poets who establish the poetic as the basis upon which man dwells" (GA 55, 183). As such, and in the sense of what was said in *What is Called Thinking?* about humanity as a sign pointing towards that which calls for thinking, the poets are a sign: "the sign, the demi-god, the river, the poet – all this poetically names the one and only basis of historical humanity's making itself at home and its being founded by the poets" (GA 55, 192).

The poetic word is only possible by virtue of heavenly fire, the lightning, and is thus an ecstatic word. But, as in the case of the river, ecstasy should not be taken as implying anything aimless or random. The poet "founds what abides in the midst of flux" (GA 4, 45f.). "The poet is the founder of Being (*Seyn*)," i.e., of the people, the *Volk*, existing as historical unity of gods, earth, humans, and beings as a whole (GA 39, 214). The poetic is not boundless but "The poetic is the measure of all things that remain constant" (GA 52, 164). Heidegger explains further in the *Contributions to Philosophy*:

The question of being is *the* leap into be-ing which man as seeker of be-ing enacts, insofar as he is one who creates in *thinking*. The one who seeks be-ing, in the ownmost overflow of seeking power, is the poet who “founds” be-ing.<sup>162</sup>

If Heidegger seems to be affirming Shelley's view that the poets are the unacknowledged legislators of humankind, and if the poet seems in this regard to be pulling ahead of the statesman, we should not lose sight of the enormous tension that is involved in the destiny of the poet. For if the poet exists as one who retains a memory of the source in the midst of life's temporal meanderings, that source is never available in any immediate or simply way. The poet's path leads through darkness and remote places, and only one who has been a wanderer far from home will be able to bring home the message concerning what lies at the place of origins (GA 4, 23-24). The way to the source is difficult, and means going against the stream (GA 52, 170). The source can only be named poetically, and that means only in the ambiguity of the hinting sign. The gods are present in memory, only as having-been (GA 39, 107). For a journey away from the source is not simply a mistake but is the precondition for the coming into existence of gods and mortals in their interrelatedness. “What this means is that humanity in its historicity is from the very beginning not at home, but because its thinking and meditation (*Sinnen*) seeks what is homely its supreme concern is joy” (GA 52, 189). For the poet of the West, the evening land (i.e., modernity), it is axiomatic that the gods have fled. We are in Germany, not Greece.

This insistence on the inescapability of homelessness not only distinguishes Hölderlin's position from that of naïve Romanticism, it also marks

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<sup>162</sup> Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. P. Emad and Kenneth Maly, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 9.



off Heidegger's strategy from a simply valorization of poetry, Greece and the world of origins over against the wasteland of modernity. The errancy of modernity is not the fault of this or that error in philosophy, still less is it an accidental by-product of industrialization, for it is a destining that comes from Being itself (understanding Being, of course, in the twofoldness of its nominal and verbal aspects, Being in beings).

Nevertheless, in the midst of flux, in the midst of ontological homelessness, in the face of the absence of the gods, the poetic word reaches out, transcending the consciousness of the poet himself, into the "Between," creating a space and a time wherein, in the figure of the poetic word, gods and mortals meet in their mutual boundedness. Poetry, at its most elevated, is therefore essentially festal, for the feast is precisely and fundamentally the event in which Gods and mortals encounter one another and acknowledge, affirm, and order their respective domains. As an interruption to the routine of work it can be the occasion for mere idleness and escapism, but it can also be a time when we concern ourselves with what is most authentic and most fitting to humanity, "which," says Heidegger, "is always out of the ordinary" (GA 52, 65). In this latter sense the festival is preeminently the wedding feast of gods and mortals (GA 52, 69) and therefore a time for play, for dance, for lighting up the darkness (GA 52, 66). The festival arouses rapture – not, however, in the sense of mere drunkenness, but in the sense of the elevation of feeling to what is highest, to the holy. Such rapture is modest and chaste; it does not dispel thought, but calls for thinking (GA 52, 146-47). Like poetry itself, the festival gives order and measure. The cycle of festivals determines the calendar, giving order to time (GA 52, 66). Therefore the festival is "the ground and essence of history" (GA 52, 68).

Once again, however, Heidegger retains a note of reserve. This has two aspects. On the one hand, Heidegger notes that Hölderlin's characteristic theme is that of the "eve," the night of celebration preceding the festival proper. As such it is the "vigil of destiny" (GA 52, 92). At the same time, the festival occurs in poetry precisely under the condition of the poetic word being spoken now, in the godless time of the West and in the face of the need and destitution of planetary homelessness. The event of appropriation exists for us only in the mode of "remembrance," as the title of one of Hölderlin's poems has it.

We are now in a position to see the significance of Heidegger's references to Hölderlin towards the end of *What is Called Thinking?* in the context of his interpretation of Parmenides and, particularly, of Parmenides' term *chrē*, "useful." The first reference is to "The Ister" and runs,

It is useful for the rock to have  
    shafts,  
And for the earth, furrows,  
It would be without welcome,  
    without stay.

To this Heidegger comments that,

There is now welcome where no meal, no food and drink can be offered. There is no stay here for mortals, in the sense of dwelling at home. If mortals are to be made welcome and to stay, there must be water from the rock, wheat from the field... Shafts pierce the rock. They break a path for the waters... Shafts are no more necessary to the rock than furrows to the earth. But it belongs to the essence of welcome and being at home that it include the welling of water and the fruits of the field... The home and dwelling of mortals [...] is not determined first by the pathless places on earth. It is marked out and opened by something of another order. From there, the dwelling of mortals receives its measure. (*What is Called Thinking?*, 190-91)

This giving of measure, as we have seen, is precisely the task of the poetic work itself, the word that names beings and allocates to them their place, their office, their meaning. Analogously – yet more than analogously, because we are talking about “shafts” and “furrows” as represented in a poetic word – the shafts, the rock, and the furrows are not mere brute facts, items of geological information, but hang together with the whole complex of meanings that constitute human Being-in-the-world (as Heidegger might have put it in 1929) or “mortals dwelling on earth (as he was putting it by 1950). The poetic saying does not itself create beings. Poets do not bring rocks, et cetera, into being. What they do do, however, is to set up and order the fugal articulation by which beings are brought into mutually limiting yet mutually respecting order that is an order of a quite different kind from that of causality.

This is also the burden of a quotation from Hölderlin's poem, “The Titans.”

For under the firm measure,  
The crude, too, is useful,  
That the pure may know itself.

In this case Heidegger identifies the “firm measure” with “the face of the sky” as “the place where the unknown God conceals himself” (*What is Called Thinking?*, 190). Left to itself, the earth would be shrouded in perpetual obscurity, but the fact that the earth lies open beneath the clearness of the sky makes it possible for a world to come into being. As so often, it sounds almost as if Heidegger himself is mythologizing here, but he is not really concerned with what we might call cosmogony. For the measure given by the sky, the alternation of day and night, of summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, only becomes a measure for human dwelling by virtue of the festival, and, as we have heard, the meaning of the festival, its essential nature or truth, is revealed exclusively in the poetic word.

Now whether or not he is successful in persuading us of this, it is important for Heidegger that this poetic word is not to be understood in the perspective of pure subjectivity, along the lines of Nietzsche's creator-artist, as if the world itself were empty of meaning unless or until human artistry stamped a subjective meaning upon it. Nor is it to be taken in the sense of Romantic immediacy, as if the poet simply received his vision in a kind of unconscious or preconscious trance. The poetic word comes to us only in and as the appropriating event, the destining in which we come into possession of what is proper to us, namely, to dwell on earth, as mortals, under the open vault of the sky, before the face of the gods.

If in expounding Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin we seem to be moving in circles, that if perhaps inevitable, both in the light of Heidegger's fundamental commitment to hermeneutical circularity, and of his understanding of the co-implication of the manifold elements that are fugally articulated in the

order-bestowing speaking of the poetic word. Heidegger himself speaks of this circularity in "The Thing," when he writes of the Foufold that,

The fouring presences as the worlding of the world. The mirror-play of world is the round dance of appropriating. Therefore, the round dance does not encompass the four like a hoop. The round dance is the ring that joins while it plays as mirroring. Appropriating, it lightens the four into the radiance of their simple oneness. Radiantly, the ring joins the four, everywhere open to the riddle of their presence. (*PLT*, 180)

That this invocation of the round dance flows from Heidegger's meditation on the jug points to the fact that the Hölderlin-interpretation is not itself separable from the other themes that make up the thought world of the later Heidegger. Whether we begin with the poetry of Hölderlin, the temple, or the jug, each in their own way gives us a way of envisaging the world as the Foufold of earth, sky, mortals, and gods and in that way restores to us a genuine sense of what it is to be at home in the world. This vision of what it could mean to dwell on the earth offers an alternative to the nihilistic planetary adventure of technology. But this poetic vision also converges with the task of thinking and, above all, with the task of thinking what it is for beings to be. As such – and Hölderlin's own relation to the Greeks is paradigmatic here – poetry also brings us to that place of primordial saying that is found at the very beginning of Western thought, in the pre-Socratic naming of one-and-all, of being-and-becoming, Being and Logos (word). And this, to repeat, is not intended as some kind of philosophical primitivism, but as an insight into possibilities of saying, possible modes of language, that are both chronologically and ontologically prior to language as conceived by logic, i.e., as a means of asserting propositions. This is the place of seeing-as, understood as a linguistic event: the

recognition that “there is” (*es gibt*) Being, and the appropriation of that recognition as what is most proper to thinking.

And so the spiral could continue, turning back upon itself in ever larger, ever more inclusive revolutions, until it has taken in all of Heidegger's manifold exegeses, meditations and analyses, saying the same thing in different ways and in different combinations, as winding and endless as a forest path or the meandering of a great river.

But what does it all mean? Is this still philosophy in any recognizable sense? Or is the later Heidegger no more than a literary critic, or even a kind of poet? Or perhaps (and perhaps still worse, from the standpoint of philosophy) a mystic or a prophet of new epiphanies and new gods? His language is certainly maddening to read and decipher. It has been said that students should skip Heidegger's philosophy altogether and just study Buddhism instead. For their effort, they would receive both wisdom and clarity, whereas even after studying Heidegger for years, they may still leave befuddled from what they read. Or does his talk of mountains, rivers, rocks, and seas mark him out as the first thinker of deep ecology, an intellectual eco-warrior devoted to the destruction of the technological world order and preparing the way for that non-anthropocentric world order that will follow upon the end of technology? And if, finally, it is at all meaningful to talk of Heidegger as a philosopher, what kind of philosopher is he? And, no less importantly, how good a philosopher is he? And how, if we are able to understand it, are to judge his philosophical achievement? It is to these questions that we will turn later.

D. Hölderlin and the Other Beginning in the  
*Contributions to Philosophy*

The other beginning: belonging to be-ing;<sup>163</sup> of art as founding agent of history; Hölderlin as the poet of the Germans; overcoming metaphysics; transmutation of the human essence – these are only some of the great themes one encounters on reading Heidegger. Heidegger's thought embodies an extreme thinking and attracts many scholars precisely because a diagnosis of the world situation as well as an overcoming of this situation is posited in the thinking of be-ing. The diagnosis announced is the forgottenness of and by Being. The overcoming would lead to the human essence belonging to Being. Heidegger himself is a thinker of the transition who wants to prepare this great metamorphosis with all his might and with all the sacrifice necessary. A great shadow is also cast over this illustrious thinking, a shadow with a name: National Socialism, perhaps the most ugly word in German history. Heidegger was, at least for a time and in his own way, a committed National Socialist. It is doubtful whether he ever distanced himself from this commitment unequivocally or felt remorse and shame, to say nothing about whether he confronted himself adequately with his own entanglement in National Socialism and that on a plane equal to his *thinking*. Thinking would have had to suffer through shame and remorse instead of remaining inflexible.

Heidegger expected much from a single poet. He tailored his thinking about art and the artwork to Hölderlin. How can one speak about Hölderlin as the poet of the Germans after the historical disaster of National Socialism? There are two further concepts in Heidegger that crop up regularly in his texts

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<sup>163</sup> The Anglicized spelling of the archaic word for being (*Sein*) will be left intact when making reference to quotations from the *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, tr. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); translator's forward, xxii.

when National Socialism is spoken about: Americanism and Bolshevism. Others would call these capitalism and socialism and they would probably be using more apposite concepts, especially since the word socialism is contained the word National Socialism. Is Heidegger's talk of National Socialism, Americanism and Bolshevism in various lectures of the 1930s and 1940s a match for his thinking proper, or is it a much too direct and unsettling short circuiting of his thinking of the history of being with the political events of his time? Did Heidegger ever *think* National Socialism adequately?<sup>164</sup> If not, this would presumably be the gravest charge that could be leveled at this great thinker.

Even sixty years after the collapse of National Socialism, German is in many quarters an ill-reputed word that arouses suspicion. That the Germans today could have an historical mission to fulfill would still provoke uneasy astonishment and fear. Many people today think that it is a good thing that the Germans have been dipped in the element of Americanism, and that not only because the German economy has flourished since the Second World War, but because so-called "Americanism" has instilled significantly more democratic attitudes in the Germans. Heidegger's commitment to a revolutionary change in the course of Western history and even to a leap into another beginning must arouse considerable mistrust as long as the ugly word National Socialism in its relation to his thinking has not been clarified. What is the locus of National

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<sup>164</sup> Jacques Derrida formulates this in the following way: "Perhaps Heidegger said to himself, I could only damn National Socialism if this were possible in a language not only on the same plane as what I have already said, but on the plane of what happened here. He was not capable of this." "Heideggers Schweigen" in *Antwort: Martin Heidegger im Gespräch*, G. Neske and E. Kettering (eds.) (Neske Verlag: Pfullingen, 1988), 160. He is referring to Heidegger's "silence after the war concerning Auschwitz and lots more," which Derrida terms "a wounding of thinking." Heidegger was not silent, however, but spoke evasively (as in *Das Rektorat 1933/34*), and certainly not on a plane adequate to his thinking (in lectures in the 1930s and 1940s), and briefly expressed himself shockingly (as in "The Set-Up" GA79).



Socialism in the history of being? Did Heidegger ever define this locus, or did he only hide in Sybilline remarks? What does it mean when Heidegger speaks of the “historical uniqueness of National Socialism?”<sup>165</sup> Is that black humor? Does the historical “matchlessness” (GA 53, 98) of National Socialism consist in the German essence having destroyed itself in an orgy of self-annihilation? Was the attempted annihilation of the Jews the successful suicide of Germany, i.e. the German essence, as an independent historical magnitude? Can this self-annihilation, i.e. decline, be discerned in the post-war history of German philosophy?

Since with the word “Americanism,” Heidegger had drawn a line between himself and everything American, he was never able to involve himself with an American. In 1933 he remained as a German on the side of the Germans, while others of his generation, pressed by the distress of these times, immigrated to the United States. European intellectuals have had a profound influence on American art, and especially German intellectuals have had a profound influence on American thinking. In the 1940s, the “German spirit” flourished there in the “colony.” It lived in one of the towers on Manhattan. For this reason I want to bring the name John Cage (an artist and intellectual deeply rooted in European traditions, even though he breaks with them) into play as a counterweight and alternative to the German name Hölderlin. At the start it cannot be foreseen where this gamble will lead to, presupposing that Cage, as a trailblazing American composer, has a status to equal that of the German poet Hölderlin. Probably no greater artistic contrast could be imagined than that between Cage and Hölderlin. These are two completely different worlds,

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<sup>165</sup> M. Heidegger *Gesamtausgabe* (GA = Complete Edition) (Klostermann Verlag, Frankfurt/M. Bd.) Vol. 53 p.106, or rather (GA 53, 106).

perhaps two different historical destinies. Heidegger expressed his assessment of modern art globally in the *Spiegel* interview in 1966:

That is precisely the big question: Where does art stand? What is its locus? [...] I want to say for the record however that I cannot see what is pioneering in modern art, especially because it remains obscure where it sees the propermost element of art, or at least searches for it.<sup>166</sup>

Heidegger regards art as a pioneering force that guides history into its course and thus grounds history. He is speaking here of course against the foil of his own questioning that made a great effort to determine the locus of art, especially in the Hölderlin lectures as well as in the lectures on the origin of the work of art in the 1930s. The locus of art (how could it be otherwise?) can only be determined in the thinking of being by proceeding from be-ing. For Heidegger modern art is obscured. Does it lie in concealment, in that which conceals itself? Can clarity about the locus of modern art be gained?

To finally reach a point where Heidegger and Cage can have it out with each other, and that on a philosophical plane, we must first lay the groundwork by interpreting core elements of Heidegger's understanding of art, i.e. his determination of the locus of art.<sup>167</sup> The artwork is located in the transition to the other beginning. We must therefore find out more about the other beginning.

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<sup>166</sup> "Spiegel-Gespräch mit Martin Heidegger" in *Antwort - Martin Heidegger im Gespräch* (Eds.) Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, (Pfullingen: 1988), 110.

<sup>167</sup> M. Eldred, "Sprache (und Musik) nach Heidegger" in M. Eldred (ed.) *Twisting Heidegger* (Junghans Verlag, Cuxhaven, 1993), 153-178.

The *Contributions to Philosophy* from 1936-1938 represented Heidegger's great attempt at self-clarification. Here the quarry staked out in the years to follow Heidegger would enrich his writings. All the essential components of this thinking after *Being and Time* are worked out here in private in the turning stillness of a three-year meditation. The *Contributions* are therefore today *the* treasure trove for deciphering the deepest intentions of the thinking of Being. According to Heidegger, a lot is at stake, namely, the decision "between history or loss of history, i.e. between a belonging to be-ing or abandonment among non-entities" (GA 65, 100). Abandonment would mean the "transition to the technicized animal," (GA 65, 98) history by contrast would mean "dread in the jubilation of belonging to being" (GA 65, 99).

Only the most extreme decision from and about the truth of be-ing can still produce clarity. Otherwise, the twilight of innovations and covering over will continue, or a total breakdown will occur (GA 65, 99).

Heidegger's thinking shifts toward to the extreme. Philosophy and a necessary, distress-turning task of thinking exist only in a situation of historical distress. For these reasons his thinking is an enormous imposition that understandably provokes opposition. If today thinking still has a place, this imposition can only be accepted in order to find out whether there is a distress and a distress-turning necessity in Western history and what their respective characters are. In the above quotation it is remarkable that the "most extreme decision" is to create "clarity," remarkable because Heidegger is the thinker of a turning in the essencing of truth into concealedness and moreover names "presentiment" as the basic mood of the transition to the other beginning. Can the distress in Western history be turned about by a decision that produces clarity?

In the realm of technology, the people of today - we - have been abandoned by be-ing. We have not simply forgotten to think of something but have ourselves been forgotten by be-ing in its self-concealment. For Heidegger therefore, thinking can be nothing other than preparing human essencing to be adopted by be-ing. This would be the event as the appropriation of human essencing to the property of be-ing. What should we think about this? Could the event eventuate in Western history? It could only take place, if at all, if the abandonment by being were the distressing destiny of Western - and by now planetary - humanity. But how can we experience what constitutes the distress of our historical situation? Only by thinking through Heidegger once again. Those who think through are seldom and will presumably remain so. Heidegger saw precisely this circumstance and therefore speaks in the *Contributions* about the “seldom” and the “few.” It would be all too easy to simply label this elitism.

The event would only eventuate through a leap that leaps into the there of being-there, simultaneously founding it. The there is the open clearing for the truth of be-ing, i.e. for the clearing of self-concealment, since be-ing conceals itself. The leap would be the “founding of the open place of momentariness for an historical being of humankind.” (GA 65, 234). Heidegger has solely the possibility of this founding in mind, which “places humankind first of all in the space for the play of the incidence and nonappearance of the advent and flight of the gods” (GA 65, 234). The decision in favor of history would make the passing by of the “last god” possible. In preparing the other beginning through asking the basic question, Heidegger himself leaps to the question about the essencing of be-ing. Today, Heidegger’s questioning and his language cause astonishment in many ways. But there is no escape. We can ask along with Heidegger, even then and especially when we try to think against him. The

opponents have to be co-thinkers, otherwise they think past Heidegger's question and the experience that set his thinking in motion.

The event would be the decision against the predominance of metaphysics in which be-ing was only experienced as the being of entities. Be-ing itself went under after shining up briefly in the first beginning (GA 65, 236) and did not find its way into an enduring language of thought. Thinking is first consolidated in Plato and Aristotle who proceed from the entity as such and never leave it and therefore can only think be-ing as beingness. Entities dominate everything in metaphysics, they are the *arché* that still rules today. The decision in favor of the event would mean a certain turning away from entities. This would mean above all that the distress of Western history could not be turned away or fended off by technology but also that there would be no search to turn away and fend off distress by means of technology. Technology would even lose its dominion as that which puts everything and holds everything, humans and things, in motion.

Heidegger himself is by no means certain that the event will come to pass. Even though he is prophetic, he is a prophet on recall. Everything he writes on the event and the decision must be couched in the subjunctive.

Whether humankind can cope with both, to endure the chiming of the event as refusal and the performance of the transition to founding the freedom of entities as such, to the renewal of the world through saving the earth, who could decide and know that? (GA 65, 412).

The voice of the people speaks seldom and only through few, and whether it can still be brought to resonance is uncertain. (GA 65, 319).

But at the same time, Heidegger has decided in favor of the other beginning, a circumstance that can only be conceived of as faith: "This faith is rather persistence in the most extreme decision" (GA 65, 370). Heidegger is a persistent thinker, he persists in the transition, even though it could be the case "that the other beginning too can only hold on to the event and to protect it as clearing in a single flash, just as in the first beginning only *physis* came into the gathering (*logos*), scarcely and that for only a moment" (GA 65, 236). The other beginning can thus go awry just as the first beginning did.

But not only that: persisting and waiting in the transition to the other beginning cannot expect that the abandonment by being will be abandoned. For this reason, Heidegger's thinking is borne by an uncertain presentiment. Knowledge about the other beginning is not a certainty because the advent of be-ing cannot be known but only surmised. Whereas in the first beginning the basic mood was astonishment, in the other beginning it is presentiment (GA 65, 20). This presentiment is not inferior to knowledge that reveals; quite the contrary: the thinking of being moves within a completely different essencing of truth in which concealedness, withdrawal, refusal and withholding are essential. Concealment even has priority over revelation, a circumstance that is unbearable for a metaphysical attitude, for since ancient times truth has always been a happening of revelation in which entities as such unveil themselves. More than any other thinker previously, Heidegger thinks from within basic moods, which he designates, as historical and as nonpsychological.

Heidegger found himself in the decision in favor of the most extreme gamble on the transition to the other beginning. For him, selfhood exists only in persisting in the there as the clearing for the self-concealment and refusal of being. Authenticity, which in *Being and Time* could still be misinterpreted

anthropologically, is experienced and interpreted after the turning without further ado as appropriation into the event, so that selfhood now can only be regarded as property of the event. This is of course far removed from any psychological understanding of selfhood. Selfhood exists only in the gamble on the transition as founding the there. But what does founding the there mean?

The there is located where the human essence belongs after being released from the metaphysical determination of the human essence as *to zoion logon echon* and variations of this. It is the between where, according to Heidegger, humankind and the gods encounter each other, where they are appropriated to each other in the event.

According to Heidegger, art has a decisive role to play in founding the there. For him, there is only a single artist, a poet namely, called Hölderlin.

In the *Contributions to Philosophy*, Hölderlin crops up repeatedly, at first at the start of the text and then in more detail in the last section, *Being*. Hölderlin is not the subject of investigation here but is named in a more casual way as the crucial point of reference for Heidegger's thinking. A couple of years previously (1934-35), Heidegger gave an extensive series of lectures on Hölderlin that has to be understood as the background to the references in the *Contributions*.

The first remarks in the *Contributions* on Hölderlin concern the relationship of thinking to poetizing, as if the poet had an easier lot than the thinker. Heidegger thinks about what Hölderlin has poetized before him.

How could thinking succeed where the poet, Hölderlin, has previously failed? (GA 65, 12)

The poet conceals the truth more easily than others do in the image and donates it thus to the gaze for preservation. (GA 65, 19)

At the beginning of the *Contributions*, the task of thinking is measured against Hölderlin's poetry. His poetry has a head start over thinking because it reaches out farthest into the future. For Heidegger, Hölderlin is the poet of the transition who only becomes an historical necessity as a poet today. In a section (GA 65, 62) that deals with the abandonment by being and its overcoming in a series of theses and questions, Hölderlin's name appears in the eighth and last thesis:

Why does Hölderlin's poetry only become adventist and thus historical for this transition? (GA 65, 129)

For Heidegger, the future bears the name of Hölderlin. As the one who has poetized farthest into the future, Hölderlin points the way into the future, conjuring up the divine of another beginning. Not only does the profoundness of the suffering through of abandonment by being count, but above all the presentiment of the future, which has to be advent of the gods, even if this advent may be a passing by at a distance.



Hölderlin – Kierkegaard – Nietzsche: nobody should today be so presumptuous as to regard as merely fortuitous that these three men, who last of all have suffered most profoundly through the uprootedness that has drifted toward Western history and who at the same time had a most intimate presentiment of their gods, had to leave the brightness of their daylight prematurely. What is being prepared? What is the significance of the fact that the earliest of these three, Hölderlin, became at the same time the one who poetized farthest into the future in an age where thinking strove once more to know the entire previous course of history absolutely? (GA 65, 204)

Thus, for Heidegger, Hölderlin is one who points the way out of abandonment by being. He is not only someone who points the way, but he is the one who points the way. For this reason, he can be “our necessity”:

To what extent is the poet, Hölderlin, who has already gone ahead, our necessity only now in his unique poetizing and oeuvre? (GA 65, 353)

For those to come, who prepare the founding of being-there, Hölderlin has a unique status because he is the one most removed into the future and thus lays the poetic groundwork for a metamorphosis of humankind.

Hölderlin their [the adventists'] poet coming from afar and thus future poet. Hölderlin is the most adventist because he comes from farthest and, in this farness, measures through what is greatest and transforms it. (GA 65, 401)

Thinking thus has the task of creating an auditorium for Hölderlin's word.

Accordingly, philosophy is now at first preparation of philosophy in the manner of building the first forecourts in whose space Hölderlin's word will become audible, answered by being-there and in such an answer grounded as the language of future humankind. Only in this way does humankind step onto the next slow catwalk toward Being. Hölderlin's uniqueness in the history of being must be grounded beforehand and all comparisons in the history of poetry and literature, all "aesthetic" judgments and enjoyment, all "political" evaluation must be overcome so that the moments of the "creators" have their "hour." [...] The historical determination of philosophy comes to a climax in recognizing the necessity of creating a hearing for Hölderlin's word. (GA 65, 421f.)

If Heidegger otherwise has it out with the great figures of philosophy, these efforts aim at working out the various missive destinies of the being of entities in the course of the history of metaphysics, and that with a destructive intention, i.e. in order to overcome metaphysics historically. The philosophers in the history of metaphysics are not future figures, but foregone figures belonging to the first beginning. Only Hölderlin, according to Heidegger, points beyond metaphysical destiny. For Heidegger he is therefore the only poet and the only artist; only he puts the truth of the other beginning to work in the work. Hölderlin is the origin of Heidegger's references to a non-Christian god and the encounter of gods and humans in the event, one of the axes on the foursome, which play such a prominent role in Heidegger's late thinking. Only through Hölderlin does Heidegger come to a positive draft of the other beginning, even if this draft necessarily remains a presentiment.

Truth, that clearing of self-concealment, in whose open space the gods and humans are appropriated to their encounter, itself opens Being as history which perhaps we have to think if we are to prepare the space that Hölderlin's word, which again names the gods and humans, has to preserve in resonance for its time, so that those basic moods are made to resonate which tune a future humankind into guardianship of the duress of the gods. (GA 65, 422f.)

Hölderlin's greatness derives from his status as demigod who poetizes the gods. We must set aside other considerations and prepare for this historical moment to arrive.

Thereupon philosophy is not primarily preparation of philosophy in the manner of building the nearest forecourts in whose spatial configuration Hölderlin's word becomes hearable and is replied to by *Dasein* and in such a reply becomes grounded as the language of future man. It is only in this way that man enters the next, steady, and narrow walkway to be-ing. The be-ing-historical uniqueness of Hölderlin must be founded beforehand; and all "literary"-historical and poetic-historical comparisons, all "aesthetic" judgments and enjoyment, all "political" evaluations – all must be overcome, so that the moments of the "creating ones" have their "time." (GA 65, 422)

We must perhaps think this history is we are to prepare this arena which in its time must preserve the resonance of Hölderlin's word – a word which again names gods and man – so that this resonance attunes those grounding-attunements which appoint future man to the guardianship of gods' needfulness. (GA 65, 422)

Nevertheless it is of little use to rebut this assumption by explaining how all “literary-historical,” “poetic-historical,” and “intellectual-historical” manners of observation must be avoided. Already here the leap into be-ing and its truth is required, the experience that with the name of *Hölderlin* that unique putting-up-for-decision is enowned – *is* enowned, not somehow *had been* enowned. (GA 65, 464)

The decision that Heidegger poses as the decision between history or the lack of it is at the same time the decision as to the advent or turning away of the last god, a figure poetized in Hölderlin's poetry.

That Hölderlin poetizes the future poet, that he himself “is” as the first of them, who poses the decision as to the nearness or farness of foregone and future gods. (GA 65, 463)

Hölderlin is Heidegger's only artist. For him, however, the artist is a poet who moves in the medium of language and poetizes the history of a people in advance by naming its gods in a myth. In Heidegger's eyes, Hölderlin, as founder of the myth that founds history, is Germany's Homer. Hölderlin thus stands out as a great figure among great figures that manages the leap into the other beginning in a single bound.

The leap into Being and its truth is already demanded here, the experience that under the name of Hölderlin that unique putting-to-a-decision happens; I say happens, not happened. We can try to put this “event” into relief historically in its uniqueness by viewing it in the midst of what still is history to date in its highest potency and its richest unfolding: in the midst of the metaphysics of German idealism and in the midst of Goethe’s forming of the world-picture, in the midst of that which is separated from Hölderlin by a gulf (in “romanticism”), even if it “influenced” him, the bearer of the name, historically, but not the guardian of Being. But what is achieved by setting Hölderlin into relief? It achieves at the most only a new misunderstanding, as if Hölderlin were something “unique” within that history of metaphysics and art; whereas it is not a matter of “within” and also not a matter of “outside” as an exception. Rather, it is a matter of the underivable thrust of Being itself to be caught in its purest facticity, that now and since that time that decision is posed in the history of the Occident, no matter whether it is or can be taken to notice by the still enduring age or not. (GA 65, 464)

At the end of the *Contributions*, which are nothing other than a questioning of the truth of Being, Heidegger asks surprisingly once more as to a justification of such questioning. Hölderlin is again Heidegger’s authority and that not only as an authority among others, but as the sole support for the thinking of Being. The first indication of the other beginning was thrust toward Hölderlin’s poetry in a time when Hegel casts a grand retrospective view over the history of philosophy from a summit. Among other things, Hölderlin decisively determines Heidegger’s thinking on art and the work of art.

On what is the conjecture that the thrust of Being has already thrown a first shock into our history supported in the midst of all the insupportability of such questioning of the truth of Being? Again it is supported by a single circumstance: that Hölderlin had to become that Sayer who he is. (GA 65, 485)

After all that has been said, to think that Hölderlin has the position of a key figure for Heidegger would be much too weakly put. Hölderlin, the poet poetizing in advance, bears an enormous weight in the thinking of Being as the drafter of the advent or final flight of the gods. Today, this all seems quite astonishing. What should one think about the talk of gods? Some are all too eager to stick the label “mystic rumblings” on it. Is this nothing other than the narration of some fantastic myth? Is it convincing that Heidegger views Hölderlin as separated from romanticism “by a gulf?” How so? Has Heidegger here undertaken a violent interpretation, i.e. reinterpretation, of Hölderlin to press him into the mould of thinking of the history of Being? If a gulf is supposed to separate Hölderlin from romanticism, this could only be the case if Hölderlin does not poetize from the subjectivity of the subject, but somehow has a presentiment of the openness of being-there and thus poetizes it in advance, for only then would the talk of the “thrust of Being” have any sense. Does Heidegger succeed in making a convincing connection between Hölderlin’s poetry and the draft of human essence as being-there in his Hölderlin lectures? Heidegger sees the gulf that separates Hölderlin from romanticism, among other things, in the fact that Hölderlin’s poetry is nourished to a significant extent by Heraclitean thoughts. Heidegger interprets one of Hölderlin’s essential words, “innerness” as the taut, resisting unity of the Heraclitean tension of the bow (Frag. 51):

For Hölderlin, this word [innerness] is the foundational metaphysical word and thus far removed from any romantic sentimentality... (GA 39, 249).

Heidegger thinks to the German people as addressee. For him, Hölderlin is the destiny of the German people that decides whether the Germans will find their historical place in the other beginning or not. Only because the German

people were his addressee was Heidegger able to commit himself to National Socialism and attempt to steer the “movement” into a “more authentic” direction. For Heidegger in the 1930s and 1940s, the German essence is sandwiched between Americanism and Bolshevism, both of which represent variants of technicism unleashed and are thus exposed irredeemably to abandonment by Being. If at all, then it remains the privilege of the German essence to save the Western world. Which makes the suspicion plausible that Heidegger became victim of a blind “patriotism” bearing essential characteristics of romanticism. It is blind insofar as it prevents him from seeing the complicity of his own thinking with the disaster of National Socialism[15] as well as from uncovering his deep-seated prejudices, especially against the Anglo-American world. As far as the latter is concerned, consider for example the following passages from Heidegger’s lectures in the 1940s:

“Bringing to a fall” is now going-behind, the “trick,” a word which is not only fortuitously adopted from the “English.”  
(GA 54, 60)

What does the Sybilline reference to the English language mean, which is an addition put into scare quotes? Apart from the fact that “trick” could also be regarded as a French word. The Parmenides lecture cited here is from the winter of 1942-43 during the war in which the English are “the enemy.” More remarkable and unsettling is a passage from the Hölderlin lectures of Summer Semester 1942 in which the entry of the United States into the war is commented on:

Today we know that the Anglo-Saxon world of Americanism is resolved to annihilate Europe, that is, the homeland, and that means the beginning of Western civilization. The beginning is indestructible. The entry of America into this planetary war is not an entry in history but is already the last American act of American historylessness and self-devastation. For this act is the refusal of the beginning and the decision in favor of what has no beginning. The hidden spirit of the beginning in the Western world will not even have a contemptuous look for this process of self-devastation but will await its historic hour in the calm collectedness (*Gelassenheit*) of the beginning. (GA 53, 68)

Heroic words! And at the same time a commentary from the history of being on a concrete historical event (which sounds however more like a forceful act of desperation): the entry of the United States into the war. The word decision is used, and that as the decision of the Americans in favor of what has no beginning. This decision makes the Americans in Heidegger's eyes into the metaphysical enemies of the other beginning, which however is supposed to be indestructible and can wait serenely in the wings for its historic moment. In 1942 still, Germany is for Heidegger the homeland and the representative of the beginning of Western civilization. In 1942 still, Heidegger's identification with National Socialism is sufficient for him to be able to square a German victory in the Second World War with a decision in favor of the other beginning. The American decision, by contrast, is for Heidegger in the last instance futile, since the beginning is indestructible, whereas a German victory would mean a genuine decision in favor of the homeland and Western civilization. Supposing that the Germans had been victorious, would the annihilation of the Jews have been part of the decision in favor of the other beginning and the homeland? Would it have been an acceptable price for achieving another historical greatness?



Whoever affirmed National Socialism also affirmed Auschwitz (no matter whether he knew about it already during the war or not; and it was impossible, even well before the outbreak of war, to have known nothing), for the theory of race and anti-Semitism are part of its essence and were part of the party's program from the very beginning. How did Heidegger want to draw a line in this respect? It is not sufficient to have only wanted to save and reshape the German university out of the entire complex, to want to renew it out of its essential ground when this German university had already begun in 1933 to banish its Jewish lecturers.<sup>168</sup> How did Heidegger intend to remove the murderous elements from the program, to say nothing about his moral evasion?<sup>169</sup> Is it not properly speaking the German spirit that dissolved in the smoke of the stacks of Auschwitz? Is the genocide of the Jews at the same time the suicide of the Germans historically? Does Heidegger have a presentiment of this when he refers at the conclusion of his self-justificatory text to the Germans "after the catastrophe has broken on top of them?"<sup>170</sup> If the Germans annihilate and devastate themselves historically, does it still make any sense to speak of another Western beginning? Did Western history consume itself in the attempted eradication of its Semitic other? And so: far from being indestructible, the beginning would have destroyed itself so that the planet only

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<sup>168</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Das Rektorat 1933-34* (Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M., 1983), 22.

<sup>169</sup> Perhaps not quite: Heidegger left behind a text written in 1945, *Das Rektorat 1933-34* (Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M., 1983) that was published by his son only after his death. If during his lifetime Heidegger did not face up squarely to his commitment to National Socialism, he also does not do it posthumously. The episode is made innocuous and restricted to "facts" concerning his rectorship, which he describes as "the insignificant case, taken for itself." Nor was there a mention of the "fact" of joining the Nazi party. The moral evasion consists in declaring one's own actions to be "insignificant" within a larger movement, namely "within the total movement of the planetary will to power" (40). A moral exculpation cannot take place by changing perspective to a global view. Apart from the disappointing excuses, this evasion is accompanied by consequences for thinking which the present paper attempts to outline.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

endures in the twilight of American gigantism after the decision against history. Heidegger's heroic words always arouse suspicion because they always hint of violence. The other beginning, "standing in the indestructible," (GA 53, 68) demands sacrifice because the indestructible and devastation belong together, "just as the valley and the mountain" (GA 53, 68) belong together. The Germans first have to go through devastation to arrive at the other beginning:

Could however such [being-able-to-wait for the other beginning] ever happen without the historical human breed of this beginning first becoming mature for the beginning as its own through the pain of its sacrifice? (GA 53, 68)

Who can still read about sacrifice and becoming mature after Auschwitz without being appalled? In Heidegger's eyes, the Germans must first be hardened and disciplined for the other beginning so that they can take on their great historical mission.

Two years before writing the *Contributions* and after his resignation as Rector, Heidegger holds his first Hölderlin lectures at the University of Freiburg in which it becomes clear what Heidegger's thinking imposes on this German poet, namely, the founding of "that history which commences with the struggle around the decision concerning advent or flight of the god" (GA 39, 1, preliminary remark). Is Hölderlin thus to be understood as the founder of a new religion, as a poetizing prophet? Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe interprets Heidegger's use of Hölderlin as the attempt "to take the step beyond rigorous questioning or beyond the mere announcement of an 'other thinking' and to

sketch the first lines of this 'other thinking'."<sup>171</sup> According to Lacoue-Labarthe, "Heidegger fails insofar as he does what he expressly warns Jünger against doing: 'crossing the line'."<sup>172</sup> This crossing amounts to founding a "new mythology":

At the same time, the foursome and the "want of holy names," the ring and the light ring and the four, waiting for the new god and other similar motifs constitute a mythology in the philosophical meaning of the word, that is, a mythology without revealing (apocalypse) the name or viewing the location.<sup>173</sup>

Does Heidegger really cross the "line" in drafting the foursome by building on Hölderlin's preceding poetry? With his observations about a mythology, Lacoue-Labarthe does not, however, want to initiate a critique of Heidegger, for "from what locus could one "criticize" Heidegger?"<sup>174</sup> Rather, Lacoue-Labarthe speaks of an "infinite mistrust" "because of Heidegger's political stance."<sup>175</sup> "The altercation must turn on this point."<sup>176</sup> This political stance must, however, be translated into the dimension of thinking because the only thing that can interest us about Heidegger is his thinking.

An alternative to this Lacoue-Labarthean strategy is to put Heidegger's understanding of art into question, a strategy that is tried out in the present text. For Heidegger art has only an historical meaning. But Heidegger's "political

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<sup>171</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, tr. A. Tarnowski (Berkeley, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 31.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 34; cf. GA 65, 353.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

stance” can also be explained from this, since for him art as poetry founds the polis.

The Hölderlin lectures of 1934-35 make the poet into the German Homer. Not in the least can one speak of a “weak Messianic force” (Benjamin) for what Heidegger wants to make of Hölderlin.

Historical human existence is borne and guided from the foundation by be-ing which the poet has experienced in advance, veiled in the word and placed in the people in this way. We grasp this happening in a single phrase by saying: The poet founds be-ing: This founding of be-ing was carried out for Western existence in Homer whom Hölderlin calls the “poet of all poets.” (GA 39, 184)

Essential elements of Heidegger’s interpretation of Hölderlin must now be drawn into an altercation that ultimately should make Heidegger’s understanding of the other beginning as a mobilization of the German people into its historical destiny questionable.

It is easy to ascertain who Hölderlin is for Heidegger: “poet of the Germans” (GA 39, 214) corresponding to Homer as the “poet of all poets” and founder of the historical existence of the Greek people. Heidegger adopts unquestioningly a model of historical founding from the Greeks which envisages three steps in historical time:

This originary, historical time of the peoples is therefore the time of the poets, thinkers and creators of states, i.e. of those who properly found and reinforce the historical existence of a people. They are the creative ones in the proper sense. (GA 39, 51)

The time of the creative ones and the people is riddled by fjords,... (GA 39, 52)

The originary time is not a smooth passing by of moments but is “riddled by fjords” which are the respective epochs founded by the “creative ones.” The creative ones, in turn, are the “poets, thinkers and creative state founders”:

This be-ing however is founded poetically, structured by thinking and put into knowledge, and in the deeds of the state's founder rooted in the earth and the historical space. This historical be-ing of the people, the fatherland, is sealed in secrecy by its very essence and forever. (GA 39, 120)

The creative ones found “the fatherland” lying hidden in the “secret” of be-ing. The poets are the first ones to thus forge the fatherland of a people by compelling their historical destiny into the “rigor of saying” (GA 39, 273). For Heidegger, this is “the Greek-German mission”: to retrieve and repeat the Greek beginning by founding the German fatherland (GA 39, 151). The “other beginning” is nothing other than this. In the retrieving repetition, however, the status of thinking is raised or at least strengthened, for:

Western historical existence is ineluctably and ineradicably a knowing existence. ... Because our existence is knowing, ... for us there is no longer any purely poetical becoming of existence, just as little as there is a purely thinking becoming, but also just as little as there is a solely activist becoming. It is demanded of us not only to erect suitable and continual compensating connections between the poetical, thinking and active powers but to take their hidden, summit-like isolation seriously.... (GA 39, 184)

Just as Sophocles' poetry achieves a “founding of Greek existence in its entirety ... in the face of the gods,” (GA 39, 216) so, too, should Hölderlin take on this

role for the Germans so that they can “stand on solid ground” (GA 39, 184):  
“this living is founded in and through poetry, i.e. it is ‘poetical’” (GA 39, 184).

It is a matter of the genuine appearance or nonappearance of  
the god in the being of the people out of the distress of be-ing  
and for be-ing. This appearance must become a fundamental  
happening. (GA 39, 147)

Poetry as founder of steadfast living, rooted in the soil of the fatherland,  
also prepares the divine for the people:

The poet compels and banishes the flashes of the god into the  
word and puts this lightning-charged word into the language of  
his people. (GA 39, 30)

In this way,

...through the arrival of the new gods a new course is to be  
allotted to the entire historical, earthly existence of the  
Germans and a new determinacy created. (GA 39, 93)

The poets are translators of the language of the gods:

...and since ancient times, winks are the language of the gods.  
Poetry is the transitive winking of these winks into the  
people,... (GA 39, 32)

In this lecture series, a great deal of Heidegger's thinking about history,  
art, language, the gods, among other things becomes more concrete and clearer.  
In particular, the obscure phrase concerning the “passing by of the last god”  
from the *Contributions* achieves greater clarity:

The transience of the eternal is not for nothing, but rather precisely passing by is the way in which the gods are present, the ephemerality of a scarcely comprehensible wink that in the instant of passing by can show every degree of bliss and terror. (GA 39, 111)

The gods are present in passing by; they wink “scarcely comprehensible” and move on. The be-ing of the gods is an “ephemerality” which is scarcely there. Their ephemerality, in being winked on further, is supposed to open up an historical course, place a people before a decision and thus found a steadfast living of the people in its soil.

But how is the poetical language that relays winks supposed to open up such an historical possibility? Heidegger is very clear on this point: the poet awakens a basic mood in the people that is always an opening up of world. The temporal manifestation of “originary time” (GA 39, 109) is the “basic happening of mood” (GA 39, 109). The particular basic mood that was to be awakened by Hölderlin’s poetry is the mood of “holy mournful, compliant tribulation”:

To decide in favor of the proper time of poetry means however: to enter into the basic mood of holy mournful, compliant tribulation. Since such a mood cannot be brought about violently and artificially without any conditions, we must pose ourselves before the decision whether we want to participate in creating the presuppositions for such an experience or whether we want to work against it, even if only through indifference and perplexity. The decision proper in favor of or against shifting into the basic mood of poetry presupposes that we are strong enough to experience distress, from which tribulation and preparedness will first rise up. (GA 39, 112f.)

The people must be “strong enough” to look into the eyes of the distress of distresslessness and thus to feel a mournfulness. The poet too must be strong enough, for:

The basic mood itself must however first be awakened. For this struggle of changing mood in the moods that predominate in each situation and linger on, the firstborn have to be sacrificed. These are those poets who speak out in advance the future be-ing of a people in its history and are necessarily overheard in doing so. Hölderlin is such a poet. The basic mood of holy mournful, but compliant tribulation awakened in his late and most mature poetry founds the metaphysical locus of our future historical be-ing still struggling for a determination of its greatness. With this, our historical existence is put into the highest distress and a decision that lies far before and above the question whether Christianity will prevail or not... (GA 39, 112f.)

The poet makes history by compelling an historical destiny into language. Hölderlin, Sophocles, Homer found an historical temporal space with their language, which puts a world up for decision.

The opening revelation of entities happens in language, not only a recapitulatory expression of what is revealed but the originary revelation itself, and precisely therefore concealment too and its predominant distortion, illusion. ...Only where there is language does world prevail. Only where world, i.e. where language [prevails], is there the most pressing danger, danger at all, i.e. the threat to being as such posed by nonbeing. (GA 39, 62)

Only the poetic power of language is able to open up an historical world. It does this by awakening a basic mood in the people and leaving “the unsayable unsaid” (GA 39, 119) in saying. Heidegger takes his essential



concept of language as such from poetic language. Everyday language, communication, statements are for Heidegger not language in a primary sense, but poetry as the “originary language of a people” (GA 39, 64) is, compared to which language in the conventional sense as understood by theories of language and in linguistics is only an insipid dilution. But where does this priority of language come from, even if it were a priority of poetic language? This question becomes even more urgent considering the fact that originary poetical language that founds history is supposed to primarily awaken a basic mood. Can a basic mood eventuate or be awakened originally only in (poetic) language? If the basic mood is supposed to call an opening of be-ing and entities in their totality into temporal being, then, according to Heidegger, only language is able to unlock an historical world. How so? Is world only where language is? For Heidegger, language is and will remain “the house of being” (letter on humanism).

And what is this poetic language supposed to say in 1934-35 when it founds an historical world? This is expounded especially in the second part of the lecture series, which treats the hymn entitled *The Rhine*. Hölderlin poetized the “demigod,” the Rhine, who is supposed to powerfully found the fatherland, for the river is “primordially overflowing will” (GA 39, 265); the will of the demigod is “*superwill*” (GA 39, 208). In the founding, everything proceeds from the will and toward the will of the people for “an historical people is a people as community only when it knows, and that means wills that community can only be an historical community when those others risk and consummate their being-other as the others” (GA 39, 284). The poet as the other puts his language in the midst of the people so that it can know what it wills and wants. The *superwill* of the river that wills the fatherland springs from mother earth as “the closedness of the womb that allows submergence” (GA 39, 242) and also

from the “ray of light” (GA 39, 242) of the divine lightning flash, in the Greek manner. The “excessive fullness of a great willing” (GA 39, 243) has to be “compelled toward a figurative forming” (GA 39, 243) which is called “putting the truth to work in the work,” originary energy, in the lectures on the origin of the artwork. This overflowing will is what pushed Heidegger in the direction of National Socialism and holds him fettered until the end of the war.

The “Greek-German mission” (GA 39, 151) is supposed to be realized according to the three-step model of the poet-thinker-statefounder. Hölderlin comes forward here as “proclaimer and caller for those concerned who themselves are engaged in a vocation as constructors constructing the world” (GA 39, 221). Even after the war, the interrelationship between building and poetizing is maintained (cf. e.g. “...humankind lives poetically...” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* [1954]). The thinkers have the role in this enterprise of molding “poetry into the hardness and determinacy of thoughtful-questioning knowledge” (GA 39, 221). It is evident that this cannot happen without struggle and strife because poetry “as founding act is nothing other than the noise of armed nature itself, be-ing, which brings itself to itself in the word” (GA 39, 257). Thus does Heidegger translate the thought contained in the Heraclitean Polemos-fragment into German. The predominance of the will as superwill is the hinge that connects Heidegger’s thinking, which dreams of a great historical task of the German people, intimately with National Socialism. That after the disaster of the collapse of Germany’s attempted conquest and especially after the revelation of the horror in the death camps this dream has been irrevocably dreamt to nothing has been visible for a long time.

Any striving for greatness and unification, especially national greatness, is more than suspect today. Any strong thinking that promises a new beginning, a

*tabula rasa* smells of totalitarianism and violence and murder. Strength and greatness have become categories that are more than questionable. The way Heidegger worked through the disaster of National Socialism consisted mainly in turning away from the will, which characterizes and marks his thinking after the end of the war, even if the will to a national historical greatness rooted in the German soil is never completely extinguished. Talk of being saved by a god, which only makes sense on the foil of the Hölderlin lectures of 1934-35 and the *Contributions*, is retained even in the late *Spiegel Interview* of 1966. Thinking waits still for a great future which it is preparing. The advent of the other beginning founded by the Germans is only postponed to a far off, indefinite future.

If Heidegger supports himself in the *Contributions* solely on Hölderlin, and if his nationalist interpretation of art under the leadership of poetry has to appear extremely questionable today, then everything surrounding Heidegger's thinking opens up once again. When Heidegger maintains in the *Spiegel interview* that he "does not see what is pioneering in modern art," this has to do essentially with his understanding of art bearing Hölderlin's stamp. If the "national element" disappears from Heidegger's writings after the war, this does not mean that everything has now been extended from the German to a planetary scale and that the specific German element could be forgotten. Rather, Heidegger's thinking about art, poetry, language, the other beginning and essentially the will has to be put into question. The retraction of the strong will in Heidegger's postwar writings is indeed striking, after it had characterized his stance during the regime of National Socialism. The transitional text to this altered stance is *On Locating Letting-be* from 1944-45, in which thinking turns away from will and toward waiting. However, elements of Hölderlin are retained in the draft of the foursome.

On an appropriate occasion it will prove worthwhile to investigate the text on letting-be, especially with respect to Heidegger's attempt to come to terms with the German defeat that is becoming apparent. The disaster of National Socialism probably broke Heidegger's will, not in a psychological sense, but in an essential, philosophical sense. Now, however, we should risk a leap across the Atlantic to New York in the fifties to find out what modern art was doing at that time. Heidegger, of course, did not see what was "pioneering" in this new art, which is not surprising in view of what has in the meantime come to light about Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin. The leading form of art in the New York art scene of the fifties was not poetry but initially painting, which then irradiated fundamental, powerful effects onto music, mediated above all by the composers John Cage, Morton Feldman and Christian Wolff.

#### E. Hölderlin and the Dialogue Between Poets and Thinkers

The phrase "The Dialogue between Poetry and Thinking" is unmistakable. It is readily decoded as referring to the dialogue between Hölderlin and Heidegger. One scarcely notices that, in its reinterpretation, poetry has been defined in terms of a poet and thinking in terms of a thinker, even though to do so runs counter to the tendency of *Origin*, where the artist as creator is referred to the work and not vice versa (*PLT*, 40).<sup>177</sup> Not that the work, in the sense of the poem, is precisely what is at issue. Heidegger's preferred word was not *das Gedicht* or *die Dichtung*, but *das Dichten*, which suggest the act of composing a poem, versifying. I shall follow the usual convention and translate it, somewhat

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<sup>177</sup> Heidegger confirmed the point in his 1942 lectures: "The poetic never lets itself be construed in terms of the poet, but only from the essence of poetry" (GA 53, 149). See also GA 52, 6.

unhappily, as “poetizing,” and thus I shall refer to the dialogue between poetizing and thinking. the dialogue between poetizing and thinking establishes a relation, perhaps even a community, between the poet and the thinker. What is the character of this community?

In the Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger wrote that “we know nothing of the dialogue [*Zwiesprache*] of poet and thinker,” and then added, in words borrowed out of context from Hölderlin’s “Patmos,” that they “dwell near on mountains farthest part.”<sup>178</sup> The use of the image suggests that, in spite of his disclaimer, Heidegger did know something about the relation between poets and thinkers. Moreover, the image of the mountain seems to place both poet and thinker “above” men (cf. GA 39, 166). Heidegger’s more rarefied essays on language, from the 1950s, and above all his cult of the thinker, might lead one to suspect that the thinker and poet join with each other to the exclusion of everyone else. This picture of an isolated community of two would also fit with the image of Heidegger retreating into poetry in disillusionment, following his allegedly brief and certainly ill-fated excursion into politics in 1933.<sup>179</sup> But the recognition that Heidegger’s political interest was longer lasting than many commentators had previously thought, or wanted to think, and the publication of some of the relevant volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe*, along with the early versions of “The Origin of the Work of Art,” suggest a very different picture.<sup>180</sup> Before reexamining the evidence it is

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<sup>178</sup> *Existence and Being*, 392.

<sup>179</sup> Even Karsten Harries can be found attempting to maintain the myth in the face of the evidence when he wrote that it was “only in the Winter semester 1933-34, following the disappointment of his hope to help bring about a spiritual revolution of the German people, that Heidegger, having resigned his political ambitions and with it political responsibility, offered for the first time a lecture course on Hölderlin” (*Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, ed. G. Neske and Emil Kettering (New York: Paragon House, 1990), xxxvi.

<sup>180</sup> For examples of the new scholarship that uses the recently published lecture courses to develop an appreciation of the role of politics in Heidegger’s lectures on Hölderlin’s poetry,

useful to recall some of Heidegger's better-known statements characterizing the dialogue between poetizing and thinking.

The tendency to refer the dialogue between poetizing and thinking to a dialogue between the poet and the thinker is encouraged by the confidence that we can more readily identify a poet or a thinker than we can the acts of poetizing or thinking. But we identify the poet in the light of the tradition of aesthetics; in which poetry is reduced to what Heidegger called poesy (*Poesie*), just as the thinker is thought of as a figure in the philosophical tradition. This sets the poet and the thinker apart, in opposition to each other, because conventionally philosophy is generally opposed to poesy, just as art, which is referred to beauty, is usually distinguished from truth. The dialogue between thinking and poetizing is not a dialogue between philosophy and poesy (GA 52, 6). Furthermore, once art is subordinated to philosophy, as already happened in Plato (GA 53, 142), the path is set for art's function to be taken over by philosophy. This process reached its culmination in Hegel's statement about the so-called end or art (cf. *PLT*, 79-80). Aesthetics is therefore an obstacle to the dialogue between thinking and poetizing, because it already decided in advance in favor of thinking, specifically the unique historical form of thinking called philosophy. The precise relation between poetizing and thinking in the dialogue remains unclear, undergoing some variation across Heidegger's various accounts. Nevertheless, there is perhaps more differentiation within Heidegger's discussion of the dialogue between thinking and poetizing than is usually recognized, with Heidegger marking a difference between the dialogue of

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see Fred Dallmayr, "Heidegger, Hölderlin and Politics," *Heidegger Studies* 2, 1986, 81-96; Véronique Fóti, "Textuality, Totalization and the Question of Origin in Heidegger's Elucidation of *Andenken*," *Research in Phenomenology* 19, 1989, 43-58; and Annemarie Gethmann-Seifert, "Heidegger and Hölderlin: The Over-usage of Poets in an Impoverished Time," *Research in Phenomenology* 19, 1989, 59-88.

thinking *with* poetizing, in which the former is subordinated to the latter, and the dialogue of poetizing *with* thinking, in which the reverse is true.

When Heidegger referred to what he was doing in his essays on poetry as a dialogue of thinking *with* poetizing, the formulation did more than reflect the one-sidedness of a dialogue being conducted by someone who identified himself preeminently as a thinking, whatever one may think of his efforts at writing poetry. By using the phrase “dialogue of thinking with poetry,” Heidegger also acknowledged his subordination to the authority of the poet. The idiosyncrasy of Heidegger’s essays on Hölderlin, of which Hölderlin scholars have often complained, has its basis in this dual structure, whereby Heidegger acknowledged the poet but at the same time appropriated the poet to his own concerns. Heidegger was engaged in a work of transformation, as much as one of clarification or elucidation. The objections to Heidegger’s dialogue with Hölderlin raised by scholars such as Max Kommerell<sup>181</sup> are not dissimilar to those that have been leveled against the equally notorious “dialogue between thinkers.” Heidegger’s defense of the latter was that the dialogue between thinkers is “bound by other laws, laws which are more easily violated,” than those that govern the methods of historical philology.<sup>182</sup> Whenever Heidegger rendered a text barely recognizable, the temptation is to suggest that he was engaged less in a dialogue than in a monologue (cf. *OWL*, 134). It might even be possible to establish some measure of agreement on the point that only one voice is heard. Critics complain that it is Heidegger’s own. Heidegger himself says that it is the voice of Being. “The thinking says Being,” is how he explained it in the Postscript to “What is Metaphysics?” (*Existence and Being*,

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<sup>181</sup> Max Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen 1919-1944*, ed. Inge Jens (Freiburg in Breisgau: Walter, 1967, 396-405.

<sup>182</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. R. Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 8.

391). In the same place it was said, “the poet names the gods.” Does that mark a difference between the poet and the thinking? Or is the naming of the gods to be assimilated to the saying of Being? If so, by whom if not the thinker? Heidegger did not address these questions directly, but he did insist in “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry” that “poetry is the founding of Being by means of the word” (*Existence and Being*, 304). And in the *Contributions to Philosophy* he notes,

The question of being is *the* leap into be-ing which man as seeker of be-ing enacts, insofar as he is one who creates in *thinking*. The one who seeks be-ing, in the ownmost overflow of seeking power, is the poet who “finds” be-ing. (§4, 9)

Nevertheless, in his 1953 essay on Trakl, Heidegger wrote, “the authentic dialogue with the poet’s poem is the poetic dialogue” (*OWL*, 160). That seems to imply that the thinker is somehow less than authentic. In other words, Heidegger not only acknowledged that his writings on poetry were a certain kind of distortion – a disaster, a misfortune (*ein Unglück*), as he conceded in response to Kommerell.<sup>183</sup> He also admitted that the discussion of a poem as it takes place within the thinking dialogue with poetizing interferes with that listening which allows the poem to sing (*OWL*, 161).

The thinking dialogue with poetry and the poetizing dialogue with thinking have different aims. Thinking and poetizing each define differently the region of their neighborhood (*OWL*, 70) and each are in the service of language in quite different and distinctive ways.<sup>184</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the differences that hold them apart, poetizing and thinking are no longer to be

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<sup>183</sup> Kommerell, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, 405.

<sup>184</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* tr. by W. Kluback and J.T. Wilde (London: Vision Press, 1956), 95. Hereafter referred to in parenthesized text as “WP.”



thought of as separated in the sense of being cut off in a relational void (*OWL*, 90). Hence, it is no surprise to find Hölderlin described as “one of our greatest, that is, one of our coming thinkers, because he is our greatest poet” (GA 39, 6). Hölderlin is not a thinker by virtue of an interest in philosophy. it is as a poet that he is a thinking. Heidegger makes a similar comment with respect to Mörike’s poem “On a Lamp,” Heidegger insisted that “the poet does not need to concern himself with philosophy, for a poet, of course, grows ever so more poetical the more thoughtful he is” (GA 13, 101). The dialogue of poetizing with thinking is unconcerned with the question of identifying precisely which philosophical texts have influenced which poets. It is said to have a deeper, more intimate, source. For Heidegger, therefore, the dialogue between thinking and poetizing does not begin only when a thinker turns to poesy or when a poet draws on philosophy. certainly, when a thinker like Heidegger takes up a poem, there is a thinking of the poem (e.g., GA 52, 11-12). But the dialogue *between* poetizing and thinking, as opposed to the dialogue of thinking *with* poetizing, does not await a thinker who is prepared to break the confines of his or her trade; poetizing and thinking are not joined together in dialogue as a result of the dialogue between poet and thinker (*OWL*, 84). In 1957, in the “The Essence of Language,” Heidegger wrote,

We must discard the view that the neighborhood of poetry and thinking is nothing more than a garrulous cloudy mixture of two kinds of saying in which each makes clumsy borrowings from the other. (*OWL*, 90)

Thinking and poetizing do not need to be brought together. “All meditative thinking is poetic, and all poetry in turn is a kind of thinking” (*OWL*, 136). They already belong together. They already reside in an intimate, essential

dialogue long before they are differentiated, and it is this proximity that makes possible the dialogue between thinker and poet:

The neighborhood of poetry and thinking is not the result of a process by which poetry and thinking – no one knows from where – first draw near to each other and thus establish a neighborhood. The nearness that draws them near is itself the appropriation by which poetizing and thinking are directed into the ownness of their essence.” (OWL, 90)

Heidegger's first step in the redetermination of thinking and poetizing was to reexamine their relation in the early Greek period, a task he began already in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. He observed that the early Greeks had a strikingly different perspective on the distinction between poetizing and thinking: “The thinking of Parmenides and Heraclitus was still poetic which in this case mean philosophical and not scientific” (IM, 144). It is not accident, therefore, that Heidegger's 1946 essay, “The Anaximander Fragment,” was the occasion of some of his most extreme assertions of the close proximity of poetizing and thinking. As the first fragment of Greek thought, the Anaximander fragment was prior to the advent of conceptual language.<sup>185</sup> Heidegger wrote in this context that,

Thinking is primordial poetry, prior to all poesy, but also prior to the poetics of art, since art shapes its work within the realm of language. All poetizing, in this broader sense, and also in the narrower sense of the poetic, is in its ground a thinking.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1972), 314; also *Early Greek Thinking*, tr. D.F. Krell and F.A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 29.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., *Holzwege*, 303; *Early Greek Thinking*, 19.

And again, "Thinking is the poetizing of the truth of Being in the historic dialogue between thinkers."<sup>187</sup> In saying what the truth of Being dictates, the thinker poetizes the primordial saying of Being. Drawing on the etymology of the German word *dicten*, Heidegger related it to the Latin word for saying: thinking, that is to say, "the poetizing essence of thinking," is "the original *dictare*."<sup>188</sup> The thinker's recollection of the primordial saying of Being, for example, in the course of translation, is also a poetizing. Hence, *der Brauch*, which is the word Heidegger selected to translate *to chreon*, is said to be "dictated to thinking in the experience of Being's oblivion."

This last phrase confirms that the dialogue of thinking and poetizing is historical. If scholars in their study of Greece have often kept "the poetic thinking of Parmenides and Heraclitus" separate from "the thinking poetry" of tragedy (*IM*, 144-45), it is clear that the distinction results from what philosophy and art have subsequently become. Poetic thinking, where "thinking has priority," has come to be appropriated retrospectively by philosophers who have judged them according to their own standards. Confidence in the separation of poesy and philosophy is a product of the history of Western metaphysics, but it was by no means characteristic of the beginnings of that history. Heidegger was quite explicit, with regard to poetizing and thinking, about the extent to which "each needs the other" (*brauchen einander*). And yet, that need has been concealed by the prejudice sustained for centuries that thinking is to be understood as *ratio*, calculation in the broadest sense (*OWL*, 70). It is perhaps only at the end of philosophy, at the uttermost extremity of the oblivion of Being, that the dialogue between poetizing and thinking could take the form of a dialogue between poet and thinker. The alleged separation of

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., *Holzwege*, 343; Early Greek Thinking, 57.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., *Holzwege*, 303; Early Greek Thinking, 19.

poetry and thinking which denied their proximity would collapse, but not as a consequence of the dialogue between Hölderlin and Heidegger. Rather, the dialogue between Hölderlin and Heidegger will have been possible, on this scenario, only because the tradition of philosophy and of art that upheld this separation was at an end. Nevertheless, Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin helped him formulate his account of the history of philosophy as the history of Being. That the dialogue with Hölderlin would institute a history, the idea of which would have been entirely foreign to Hölderlin, instructs us in the complex nature of how thinking rediscovers itself in the thinking dialogue with poetizing.

Heidegger wrote in the *Contributions* that "the historical determination of philosophy reaches its summit in acknowledging the necessity of creating a hearing for Hölderlin's word" (GA 65, 422). Why Hölderlin in particular? What is his *seynsgeschichtliche Einzigkeit*? Until recently it was still possible to address this question independently of the political context in which Heidegger gave Hölderlin a privileged role. The texts initially available to scholars were relatively silent about this context. In the 1936 Rome lecture "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" Heidegger maintained that the reason why he was focusing on Hölderlin, in his attempt to show the essence of poetry, was because Hölderlin was the "poet of the poets" (*Existence and Being*, 294).<sup>189</sup> It was Hölderlin's vocation to poetizing the essence of poetry that singled him out. In Heidegger's thoughtful dialogue with Hölderlin, the poet's ability to institute what remains gives rise to the claim that the essence of poetry is the founding of Being in language (*Existence and Being*, 305). Poetry in this sense was said to be "doubly bound" (*Existence and Being*, 310), bound to the gods and to the

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<sup>189</sup> *Existence and Being*.

people. Yet the nature of this relation was far from clear in “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.” On the one hand, the speech of the poet apprehends the hints of the gods so as to pass them on to his own people. Poetizing as the original naming of the gods is thus possible only when the gods themselves bring us to language (*Existence and Being*, 311). On the other hand, the poetic word is only the interpretation of the “voice of the people” (*Existence and Being*, 311). The poet is thus identified as the one cast out into the realm between men and gods. What Heidegger left obscure in the Rome lecture was how the poet could give to the people the hints of the gods while at the same time serving as their voice, just as he left unclarified what he had in mind in describing Hölderlin’s poetry as determining and defining a new time. However, much that Heidegger left unsaid in the Rome lecture he had already set out quite clearly over a year earlier, in the 1934-35 lecture course from which it was drawn. But *Hölderlin’s Hymnen “Germanien” und “Der Rhein”* was not published until 1980, and it has taken some years for its significance to be generally appreciated.

The main difference between the two texts is that, whereas in the lecture Heidegger was clear that Hölderlin was “the poet of poets,” it is only in the lecture course that he specified that hold was “the poet of poets” as “the poet of the Germans” (GA 39, 214). Heidegger here clarified his claim that the founding of Being in language could take place only as the founding of a people, so as to include acknowledgment of the fact that Hölderlin had not yet become a power in the history of the German people (GA 39, 214). As the early versions of *The Origin of the Work of Art* emphasized, the German public were, in Heidegger’s view, not yet a people. Hölderlin is “the poet of the Germans” in the sense that he awaits the German people; he stands before them (GA 5, 65; *PLT*, 78; GA 39, 1). The crucial point is that it was as a thinker that Heidegger

assigned himself the task of elevating Hölderlin to this role in German history (GA 39, 214). He knew that to do so was to engage in “politics,” albeit politics “in its highest and most authentic sense,” a politics that did not need to talk endlessly about the political. In other words, the dialogue between thinking and poetizing was, at least at the time it was introduced, political. It was political in the specific sense of being concerned with the founding of a people. The poet had the central role in the accomplishment of this task, that which the thinker made a preparatory contribution. Is it true that in the lecture course Heidegger had only relatively little to say about the role of the thinker. Indeed, at one point Heidegger explicitly acknowledged that he was concentrating on the poet at the expense of what belongs to those and its necessities (GA 39, 151). But it is clear, at least, that there was not supposed to be anything exclusive about the company that the thinker kept with the poet – even if “the voice of the people” speaks only in a few (GA 65, 319). The thinker’s task in this context, like the poet’s, was directed to the coming people. In other words, the questions of the identity and community of the poet and the thinker cannot be posed appropriately independently of the question of the constitution of the people.

The strange, paradoxical temporality that characterizes the foundation of “we, the people,” according to classic social contract theory, such that the people must already be a people in order to constitute themselves as a people, undergoes some variation in the case of the poet’s foundation of a people. Poetry institutes, founds, and would bring us to the site of the historical existence of a people, a site on which, Heidegger observed, we are not yet standing, although it awaits “us,” would “we” but attend to what it says (GA 39, 113). And yet, poetry awaits the people, as the people await poetry. It is in respect of this relation that the 1934-35 lecture course was more specific than the subsequent lecture. Hölderlin is said to transmit the hints of the gods to the

people only to the extent that he gives voice to the people, and so helps to bring them to existence. Hölderlin's "time" can be understood only with reference to the history of the still-awaited German people. Who Hölderlin is is not yet decided and will only be decided by the German people. And yet, in a sense it is in that decision that they become the German people. All talk of a dialogue between poetizing and thinking, at least with reference to the 1930s, must be understood as directed to, and in an important sense sustained in advance by, the future or coming people. It is in this respect, and for this reason, that with some consistency Heidegger continued to join thinking, poetizing, and the founding of the state or *polis*, following the Greek model (GA 39, 51).<sup>190</sup>

The description in "Hölderlin and Essence of Poetry" of poetry as the original language (*Ursprache*) of an historical people, and as the saying which first makes language possible (*Existence and Being*, 307), was offered by Heidegger without clarification. He did not explore how this reference to the past related to the time that Hölderlin's poetry anticipates (*Existence and Being*, 313). Only in the lecture course did he specify that this original language was to accomplish an essential transformation of the experience of the essence of language in the historical existence of a people, a transformation of their existence to bring them back into the original realm of Being (GA 39, 64). This original language was not a "primitive language," as the English translation has is (*Existence and Being*, 307). Heidegger contrasts it with idle talk (*Gerede*) and thereby seems to keep the discussion within the orbit of the fundamental ontology of *Being and Time* (GA 39, 64; 217). But that impression is deceptive, because the question of "who we are" is here posed in terms of whether we enter into the original historicity of our historical language, a question of

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<sup>190</sup> For Heidegger's understanding of the *polis*, see especially GA 53, 97-107.

whether language itself comes to language in relation to the decision of the *Weltzeit* of our people (GA 39, 76-77). Heidegger's answer lay in introducing the language of the "Fatherland." The Fatherland, far from being the source of "unruly patriotism," was presented as "the historical Being [*Seyn*] of a people" (GA 39, 120).

The question that naturally arises at this point is whether this focus on the people governs Heidegger's understanding of poetizing and thinking only in the brief period following Hitler's rise to power and Heidegger's Rectoral Address, or whether it persisted longer. The answer can be found in the interpretation of Hölderlin's poem "Homecoming" that Heidegger offered in 1943.<sup>191</sup> At the end of the essay Heidegger took up the final lines of the poem:

Sorgen, wie diese, muss, gern oder nicht, in der Seele  
Tragen ein Sänger und oft, aber die anderen nicht.

Cares like these, whether he likes it or not, a singer  
Must bear in his soul and often, but the others not.

Heidegger identified these "others" as the poet's kin. Without rehearsing all the details of Heidegger's reading, it can be said that Heidegger interpreted the poem as itself a homecoming (*Existence and Being*, 281), in the sense of a call to the "others" in the Fatherland to hear the poem so that they might for the first time come to know the essence of the homeland (*Existence and Being*, 287). This homecoming is therefore "the future of the historical essence of the

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<sup>191</sup> Even in the never completed lecture course from the winter semester of 1944-45, "Introduction to Philosophy, Thinking, and Poetizing," Heidegger seemed to be suggesting that the special sense in which the Germans were recognized as "the people of poets and thinkers" provided them with a basis on which foreigners might be made questionable in their essence (GA 50, 102-03).



Germans" (*Existence and Being*, 288). For this reason Heidegger strained the final lines of the poem until they displayed an ambiguity: the others as the carefree ones are said to be free only of the cares of poetic saying, but not from the cares of hearing the poetic word (*Existence and Being*, 286). By contrast, the careful hearers are those others who, together with the poet, *think* "the mystery of the reserving proximity" and so, in turning toward the same thing that occupies the poet, become the poet's kin. The kin are in this way identified by their thinking, a thinking that prepares for what is to come: "For now there must be thinking in advance, so that the poetizing words may be heard" (*Existence and Being*, 288). The German people are prepared for this not just by the poet, but also by the dialogue between poetizing and thinking. That is why Heidegger described them as "the people of poetizing *and* of thinking" (*Existence and Being*, 288). "The others" are not just those who do not share the cares of the poetic word. They are at the same time those who hear the poetic word and in thinking about it become the poet's kin. Heidegger ended the essay by emphasizing how the poet cannot easily hold to the word of the reserving proximity and so needs this help (*Existence and Being*, 289-90). "The others" seem therefore to perform the task assigned to the preservers in *The Origin of the Work of Art* (GA 5, 56-58; *PLT*, 68-71).<sup>192</sup>

Three or four years after offering this interpretation of Hölderlin's "Homecoming," Heidegger returned to it in a remarkable passage in the "Letter on Humanism." There was nothing surprising about Heidegger's insistence that "homeland" (*Heimat*) be thought "not patriotically or nationalistically." One

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<sup>192</sup> Heidegger similarly posed the question "Who are these 'others'?" in 1974, when commenting on the lines from Hölderlin's "Dichterberuf": "And a poet gladly joins with others / so that they may help him understand." This shows the continuity of Heidegger's concerns. "Der Fehl Heiliger Namen," GA 13, 231; tr. B. Radloff, "The Want of Holy Names," *Man and World* 18, 1985, 263.

does not need to refer to the fact that World War II had meanwhile ended. The stipulation recalls Heidegger's comment over ten years earlier that "Fatherland" should not be thought in terms of unruly patriotism. However, there was one decisive change. Instead of referring the Fatherland to the historical Being of a people, the *Heimat* is not thought in terms of the history of Being (*Basic Writings*, 217). The change in vocabulary is underlined when, in his attempt to support Hölderlin's effort to help his "countrymen" (*Landesleute*) find their essence, Heidegger rejected what he called "the egoism of a people," preferring to speak instead of "the destiny of the West" (*Basic Writings*, 218). On the face of it this would appear to be an attempt to purge his previous account of its focus on the German people. The impression is reinforced when the notion of "the West" is itself made the subject of reinterpretation by being understood "regionally as the Occident in contrast to the Orient, [and] not merely as Europe, but rather world-historically our of nearness to the source." At this point Heidegger offered two brief observations, each referring the reader to poems he had discussed in lecture courses held in 1942. Heidegger's first comment was to suggest that we have still scarcely begun to think the mysterious relations to the East to be found in Hölderlin's poetry. A note directed the reader to "Der Ister" and to the third strophe of "Die Wanderung," where Hölderlin declared himself "bound for the Caucasus" and celebrated an earlier encounter by the Black Sea between the Germans and "the children of the sun." Yet Heidegger's own lectures on "Der Ister" did not reflect this interest. Their focus had fallen heavily on the relation between Greece and Germany at the expense of Hölderlin's references to the East (GA 53, 170). It would seem, therefore, that in saying that the mysterious relations to the East had not been adequately thought, Heidegger was implicating himself in the general criticism. The temptation is to say the same about the second comment, which referred explicitly to the final pages of Heidegger's essay "Andenken,"

first published in 1943 and drawing on an earlier lecture course. Heidegger wrote, "'German' is not spoken to the world so that the world might be reformed through the German essence; it is spoken to the Germans so that from a fateful belongingness to the nations they might become world-historical along with them." But Heidegger's reference to the essay "Andenken" is of no help here. Just as, earlier in that essay, Heidegger seemed more interested in the German women of the poem "Gesang des Deutschen" than "the brown women" of "Andenken,"<sup>193</sup> so also the discussion at the end of the essay about the need for the German people to learn to be at home is left unencumbered, either by references to other nations or to what he would elsewhere call "historical dwelling in the nearness of Being" (*Basic Writings*, 218). Heidegger does nothing here, or elsewhere, to complicate the simply picture by which the Greeks and the Germans alone are singled out. Or, rather, they are paired, so that every claim about the originality of the Greeks, from *An Introduction to Metaphysics* on, indirectly bolsters the Germans. Thus, Heidegger systematically excludes Egypt from his reading of Hölderlin.<sup>194</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that in these brief remarks in the "Letter on Humanism" Heidegger engaged in what was for him the all too familiar task of ontologizing ontic language. In this case, the seemingly nationalistic language of the Hölderlin essays was the issue, just as a few pages earlier he had sought to ontologize the seemingly anthropological language of *Being and Time* (*Basic Writings*, 205-07). The attempt was by no means unambiguous, because almost always in such attempts Heidegger would not fail to underline the ontic sense at

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<sup>193</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt: Klostermann; 1-143, zweite Auflage, [1951]; 152-193, vierte Auflage, [1971]). The page numbers of the second edition, given in the margin of the fourth edition, will be cited in this study.

<sup>194</sup> See Andrzej Warminski, who, in *Readings in Interpretation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), chapters 1-3, has established the distortive effects of this omission from Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin.

the very moment he was withdrawing it. This was no exception. Returning to the poem “Andenken” and the notion of homelessness, Heidegger commented that “When confronted with death, therefore, those young Germans who knew about Hölderlin lived and thought something other than what the public held to be the typical German attitude” (*Basic Writings*, 219). A strange scene to evoke in a letter written to a French officer in 1946!

It seems that the 1959 lecture “Hölderlins Erde und Himmel” fulfilled Heidegger’s attempt to reread Hölderlin as primarily a world-historical poet rather than as simply the “poet of the Germans.” Heidegger’s reading of “Das Griechenland” was governed by his understanding of Hölderlin’s letter to Böhlendorff from the autumn of 1802, just as the reading of “Andenken” had been governed by his understanding of Hölderlin’s 1801 letter to Böhlendorff about the indispensability of the Greeks and the difficulty of the Germans learning what is proper to them. By focusing on Greece the problematic of the Germans disappeared into the notion of the West, as Heidegger had proposed it should in the “Letter on Humanism.” If Heidegger, contrary to the “Letter,” then went on in this essay to refer the West to Europe, it was not in geographical terms. If the West has become Europe, it is in terms of a certain technological and industrial dominance. Heidegger posed the question here of whether the advent of another dawn of world history must not arise in Europe, given what he took to be the fact that the present condition of the world was in its essential origin European through and through.<sup>195</sup> But the German people had not disappeared from Heidegger’s agenda, any more than their relative absence from “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry” was anything but an illusion. As “the poet of poets,” Hölderlin remained “the poet of the Germans”

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<sup>195</sup> Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 176-77.

for Heidegger. This was the premise underlying all of Heidegger's writings on Hölderlin.

The notorious *Der Spiegel* interview, conducted in 1966 but not published until Heidegger's death 10 years later, confirms this.<sup>196</sup> In an attempt to lead Heidegger "away from generalities to a specific destiny of the Germans,"<sup>197</sup> the interviewer confronted Heidegger with a passage from his 1936-37 lectures "The Will to Power as Art," in which Hölderlin and Nietzsche are said to have "placed a question mark after the task of the German people to find their essence historically."<sup>198</sup> Heidegger's first answer was in the language of the essay "Hölderlin's Erde und Himmel": "I could put what is said in the quotation in this way: I am convinced that a change can only be prepared from the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated." Only when the interviewer repeated the question, "Do you allocate a special task specifically to the Germans?" did Heidegger revert to his earlier language and conceded, "Yes, in that sense, in dialogue with Hölderlin."<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, Heidegger specified that what suited the Germans for this task was "the special inner relationship between the German language and the language and thinking of the Greeks."

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<sup>196</sup> Warminski offers a brief analysis of this portion of the interview in "Monstrous History: Heidegger Reading Hölderlin," *Yale French Studies* 77, 1990, 194-95. "Monstrous History" continues the approach of *Readings in Interpretation* and extends it to Heidegger's reading of "Der Ister" in GA 53. Warminski in his essay and book gives extensive consideration to Heidegger's readings of Hölderlin's letters to Böhlendorff. I would maintain that a comparison of Heidegger's readings of these letters in his lecture courses and essays throw an important light not only on the role he assigns to the Germans, but also on the way he comes to think of the task of overcoming metaphysics.

<sup>197</sup> *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, eds. G. Neske and E. Kettering. (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 62.

<sup>198</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Vol I. The Will to Power as Art*. Tr. D.F. Krell New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 104.

<sup>199</sup> *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, 63.

It would seem, therefore, that Heidegger never entirely displaced the reference to the Germans as the third party which dominated – albeit for the most part without being explicitly mentioned – his account of the dialogue between poetizing and thinking. If in the 1950s Heidegger referred that dialogue less to the politically charged notion of the people and more to that of language, this does not succeed entirely in concealing the continuity in Heidegger's thought on this point.<sup>200</sup> Language, for Heidegger, was always the language of a people. It is not accident that the two quotations from Wilhelm von Humboldt which close the 1959 lecture on language both concern the transformation of the language of a people:

Through inner illumination and the favor of outer  
circumstances, a people might so utterly impart a different  
form to the language bequeathed to it, that this language would  
thereby become an entirely different and new one.<sup>201</sup>

It is true that this is not how Heidegger would have presented the issue himself. He would have emphasized the sense in which a people first become a people in this transformation of language, whereas von Humboldt was

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<sup>200</sup> Some commentators have argued for a change in Heidegger's relation to poetry after the war, with the publication of essays on George and Trakl. See, for example, Gerald Bruns' illuminating book *Heidegger's Estrangements* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). Without wanting at this point to address in detail the question of a reversal or reversals in Heidegger's thinking, I am sympathetic to the idea of a general shift in Heidegger's thought which can most conveniently be dated around the time of *Einblick in das was ist* (1949). However, some of the differences noted by Bruns are better understood as differences between Hölderlin, on the one hand, and George or Trakl, on the other, rather than as differences in Heidegger's relation to poetry, which remains relatively constant. Indeed, the 1968 essay on Hölderlin, "Das Gedicht," shows a striking continuity with the earlier essays, contrary to Bruns' specific characterization of the change (Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 191. Cf. Bruns 80).

<sup>201</sup> Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über die Verschiedenheit des menschlichen Sprachbaues und ihren Einfluss auf die geistige Entwicklung des Menschengeschlechts, *Werke* 3, ed. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche, 1963), 457; tr. Peter Heath, *On Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 76.

describing how, long after the original creation of a language, an already available soundform might be applied to the inner purposes of language. Heidegger's second quotation from von Humboldt is similarly heard differently, in the context of Heidegger's text, from the way it read in its original context. Von Humboldt was concerned with the way there is some latitude in every language as regards sentence structure and the ordering of speech, such that a people's literature, particularly its poetry and philosophy, can produce new idioms and so bring to language what it does not yet possess. In the context of Heidegger's essay one understands that the transformation of our relation to language can be brought about through the belonging together of poetizing and thinking (*OWL*, 136). Time can introduce new meaning to old words and old laws of syntax can give rise to different ideas. "This is a continuing harvest from the *literature* of a people, though especially there from its *poetry* and *philosophy*."<sup>202</sup> More striking still is the fact that the questions dominating the essays on language, questions about undergoing an experience with language and about bringing language to language, were already raised in the first lecture course on Hölderlin with an explicitly "political" aim in mind (GA 39, 76). The indications are, therefore, that Heidegger did not purge the dialogue between poetizing and thinking of its "political" reference to the foundation of a people, so much as conceal it.

That he did so is disturbing, but of itself it probably cannot be regarded as sinister. It is not the reference to a people that compromises Heidegger's thought by tying it to the political context of Germany in the 1930s. It is that he employs the idea of *the* people, which in context means, of course, the German people. It would be a mistake to suppose that Heidegger's insistence

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<sup>202</sup> von Humboldt, (tr.) "Über die Verschiedenheit," 472; 86-87.

specifically on the German people was simply the product of the nationalism of his times. The story according to whether the Germans were the privileged heirs of the Greeks and shared a unique relation with them was not original to the twentieth century, although – as Heidegger himself pointed out (GA 53, 98) – it took a particularly distorted form among the National Socialists. Even if Heidegger did misrepresent Hölderlin's account of the relation of the Greeks with the Germans by excluding reference to Egypt, he nevertheless relied heavily on that account to understand the task of thinking at the end of philosophy.

However, the dialogue between poetry and thinking went farther than confirming a traditional, if often neglected, truth that poetry is the poetry of a people, just as philosophy is the philosophy of a people. It went beyond privileging, according to a version of the history of Western philosophy that Heidegger accepted and rewrote, the Greek and German peoples (GA 65, 42). Heidegger neither ignored the idea of a people nor took it for granted. He posed the question of the way in which a people becomes a people. The poet and the thinker, as “the few” in which “the voice of the people speaks out rarely [*selten*],” was Heidegger's answer to this question (GA 65, 319): “The people first becomes a people when the most singular ones arrive and begin to presage [*ahnen*]” (GA 65, 43). The verb *ahnen* had special echoes for Heidegger. Hölderlin in *Wie wenn am Feiertage* had written of nature:

Drum wenn zu schlafen sie scheint zu Zeiten des Jahrs  
Am Himmel oder unter den Pflanzen oder den Völkern,  
So trauert der Dichter Angesicht auch,  
Sie scheinen allein zu seyn, doch ahnen sie immer.



Thus if she seems to sleep at times of the year  
In the heavens or among the plants or peoples,  
So the faces of the poets also mourn.  
They seem to be alone, but are always presaging.

The poets, like the thinkers, may appear to be alone, but in their presaging they, as the coming poets, are not alone. Presaging, the poet names the holy, a word which “still unheard, is preserved in the language of the Germans,”<sup>203</sup> and which served to call the German people to themselves.

The dialogue between poetizing and thinking originally provoked suspicion because it appeared to establish the exclusive community of the poet and the thinker, “on mountains farthest part,” neighbors to each other in their isolation from the rest of humanity. The publication of the lecture courses from the 1930s and early 1940s has given rise to a new suspicion directed at Heidegger’s politics and his evocation of “the German people,” at a time when such remarks were at best “unpropitious” and at worst damning. Nevertheless, in the urge of Heidegger’s readers to distance themselves from this gesture, there is a danger that they miss the fact that his reference of poetry to a people serves as a decisive step in withdrawing art from its subordination to aesthetics. The community between poet and thinker arises as the community that founds community, the community of a people who are more than a public. Such a conception, Heidegger insists, breaks the arts, and poetry in particular, from their confinement within aesthetics, where they stand divorced from the broader realm of political concerns. Of course, art within aesthetics was never entirely free from politics. Within humanist aesthetics one might be regarded as somehow less of “a man,” even less than human, to the extent that one was a barbarian or a philistine, unable to appreciate the nobility of the arts.

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<sup>203</sup> Heidegger, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, 74.

Heidegger's conception is ripe for continuing the same tyranny of taste, where the capacity to discriminate within the arts reflects and justifies discrimination between peoples and within a people. Heidegger's rhetoric is not free from remarks of that tenor, but they arise to the extent that he forgets the paradoxical temporality of the constitution of the people. It is not the poet who, with the thinker, founds a people simply. It needs a people to prove the poet to be a poet in the operative sense and to prove the thinker a thinker. It is in the coming community of a people that the community of the poet and thinker will have been established.

#### F. Hölderlin's Testimony: An Eye Too Many Perhaps

Heidegger may well turn aside from the question of the relation between Being and human being in the *Origin*. But in the reading of Hölderlin that begins to take shape at approximately the same time (Heidegger lectured Hölderlin's hymns "Germanien" and "Der Rhein" during the winter semester of 1934-35, and in 1936 he first presented "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry"), Heidegger addresses forcefully the question of the human *Dasein* in relation to the problem of art. Hölderlin's writings are chosen for a meditation on the essence of poetry, Heidegger explains, because Hölderlin's poetic destiny is to say this essence poetically. This means, Heidegger says, that Hölderlin is the poet *of the poet*,<sup>204</sup> and he goes on to assert that Hölderlin's grounding of the poetic self is an exemplary act for the German people that define their historical destiny.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 34. (Within this section of this chapter, parenthesized references will refer to pages of *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, and hereafter abbreviated as *EHD* in the text.)

But the gesture by which Heidegger assigns this destiny to Hölderlin and at the same time defines the poetic relation of Being and human being is no less problematic, I want to argue, than Heidegger's elision of the question of man in the *Origin*. Its forced character, even its violence, demonstrates that Heidegger perceives a danger in Hölderlin's meditation on the possibility of a poetic founding of the human *Dasein*. Indeed, I would suggest that the theme of danger as it appears in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" works symptomatically (in a way that resembles which Freud calls *Verneinung*) by veiling and unveiling Heidegger's recognition of the unsettling nature of Hölderlin's understanding of human finitude. For this understanding challenges Heidegger's own assertions concerning the unity and simplicity of the clearing of Being and the "gathering" appropriation of the human essence – assertions for which Heidegger calls Hölderlin as his chief witness.

I would not be the first, of course, to decry the violence of Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin. In fact, within the limits of this study, I can only begin to consider the criticisms that have been made (as in the previous section), nor even, in a more fitting, positive mode, consider the large number of issues brought forth in the literature concerning the implications of Heidegger's thinking encounter with Hölderlin's poetic thought. There are perhaps more books in print right now that deal with Heidegger's relation to Nazism and that period of his life than with all of his philosophy, which for the reader interested in *philosophy*, can obviously be frustrating. This literature is of particular interest at this moment of the development of Heidegger scholarship, I believe, because it is informed by the intense theoretical reflection that has developed in recent years out of the discipline of literary theory. The contemporary concern with the problem of the relation between philosophy and literature has brought into relief Heidegger's claim concerning the fundamental

nature of the dialogue between poetry and thought, while Heidegger's own methods of reading have posed a significant challenge to the most basic assumptions of philological research.<sup>205</sup>

My own approach to Heidegger's interpretations of Hölderlin is shaped primarily by the guiding concern of this study: the question of finitude as it presents itself in relation to the self-definition (or self-affirmation) of *Dasein* in a project of Being, and more specifically, in Heidegger's later thought. In my reading of "The Origin of the Work of Art," namely, in trying to prepare the ground for a formal understanding of the "arresting" character of the matter of Heidegger's thought inasmuch as it comes to be only as it is *written* (to recall Derrida's term for the trace structure in his own interpretation of the finitude of Being), and thus inasmuch as its "arrest" is the work of a text. In this way, by attempting to approach the question of language in Heidegger's text in a way that goes beyond a conceptual or thematic approach to this question (as Heidegger invites us to do) but that follows Heidegger in his performative reflection on how language works. Thus I hope in this section and chapter to address some of the basic concerns in current theoretical and philosophical questioning concerning the nature of the text and the act of interpretation. With this reference in mind, I will undertake a reading of Heidegger's essay

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<sup>205</sup> A partial bibliography for this literature includes Beda Alleman, *Hölderlin and Heidegger*, 2d ed. (Friburg: Atlantis Verlag, 1954); Else Buddeberg, *Heidegger und die Dichtung* (Stuttgart: S.B. Metzlersche, 1953); David Halliburton, *Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Karsten Harries, "Heidegger and Hölderlin: The Limits of Language," *Personalist* 44 (1963): 5-23; Paul de Man, "Heidegger's Exegesis of Hölderlin," in *Blindness and Insight*, 2d ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 246-66; Michael Murray, "Heidegger's Hermeneutic Reading of Hölderlin: The Signs of Time," *Eighteenth Century* 21, no. 1 (1980): 41-66; Otto Pöggeler, "Heidegger's Begegnung mit Hölderlin," *Man and World* 10, no. 1 (1977): 13-16; and David A. White, *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978).

“Andenken,” (translated as “*Remembrance*”) a lengthy consideration of what Heidegger designates as the reflexive character of Hölderlin’s poetry.

We may glimpse the nature of the divergence between Hölderlin’s poetic experience of the relation between Being and human being, and Heidegger’s appropriation of this experience, in Heidegger’s use of the figure that I would like to take up as the leitmotif for this reading. From Hölderlin, as I have said, Heidegger draws the figure of the “eye too many” to designate the mark of Western man’s tragic destiny. In Heidegger’s view, Hölderlin expresses his own historical essence as a poet with this same phrase concerning Oedipus. In “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry,” Heidegger writes:

This poet thinks poetically out of an excess of pressure from the ground and center of Being. The words said of Oedipus in the late poem ‘In the lovely blueness...’ apply to Hölderlin himself: ‘King Oedipus has an eye too many perhaps’” (*EHD*, 47).

This designation applies to Hölderlin, Heidegger says, because he is the poet of the poets – not by virtue of some specifically modern failing, an excessive self-consciousness experienced as a lack before the plenitude of Being, but rather by virtue of the excessive richness of his experience of belonging to the intimacy of Being. The “eye too many” marks Hölderlin as a witness to the modern German historical destiny.

Heidegger is quite justified in identifying Oedipus’s destiny with Hölderlin’s own on the basis of the line from “In lovely blueness....” But what Heidegger describes (and, with much of the philosophical tradition, admires) as Oedipus’s “wild and radical assertion of his fundamental passion” (*IM*, 81; 107) receives, as we might also gather from “In lovely blueness...,” a far more

ambivalent characterization from Hölderlin. In his “Notes to Oedipus,” Hölderlin names Oedipus’s tragic quest for his identity as a self-conscious subject “the desperate struggle to come to himself, the extravagant search for a consciousness,” and further describes this struggle as “the insane questioning in search of a consciousness.”<sup>206</sup>

For Hölderlin, Oedipus's “eye too many” is the sign of a particularly modern malady. Correspondingly, the tragedy of Oedipus is, in Hölderlin’s view, a presentation of a catastrophic suspension of Oedipus's speculative overreaching and the catharsis of his interpretive passion. Oedipus suffers a kind of exile, an *irreversible passage* away from the Greek “oriental” nature that Hölderlin describes as an “excentric enthusiasm” or “sacred pathos” – a panic drive toward unification with the divine whose counterpart Hölderlin finds in modern art (in Schiller’s sentimental mode) and modern thought (the speculative tendency of modern philosophy). When Heidegger, in his lectures of 1934-35, describes this same destiny (as I will demonstrate) in terms of an *accomplishment* of Oedipus's original drive for unity, he redresses – in a way that is very close to being dialectical, and perhaps inevitably so – some of the most radical elements in Hölderlin’s thought on tragedy. In the same gesture, he fails to recognize his “monstrosity” of Hölderlin’s image of Oedipus's eye too many and its meaning for Hölderlin as he reflects upon his own inability to know the measure of his experience as a poet.

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<sup>206</sup> In “Anmerkungen zum Oedipus,” in Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1941-), SW2.1, 199-200. It should be noted that Heidegger qualifies his earlier use of the figure of the “eye too many” in his essay of 1951, “...Poetically Man Dwells...” (*PLT*, 228), but does not comment on the “strange excess” of which it would be the sign. (Within this section of this chapter, parenthesized references will refer to pages of Hölderlin’s *Sämtliche Werke*, and hereafter abbreviated as *SW* in the text.)

In his book-length study of Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin, Beda Allemann recognized the importance of Hölderlin's "Notes to Oedipus" and "Notes to Antigone" for understanding the distance Hölderlin takes from the metaphysics of subjectivity as elaborated in German Idealism by Hölderlin's contemporaries.<sup>207</sup> He recognized as well that Hölderlin's "Notes" represent an astonishing anticipation of Heidegger's thought – one that Heidegger is not fully prepared to recognize – and that Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin is in many ways regressive with respect to those developments in Hölderlin's late thinking that seem to offer the grounds for Heidegger's dialogue with Hölderlin. But Allemann's interpretation of this "regression" is somewhat off the mark, I would argue, as is his effort to understand it positively as being in part a calculated regression that helps to prepare a leap beyond metaphysics. Finally, Allemann proves to be too faithfully Heideggerian when he comes to interpret "In lovely blueness..." and essentially ratifies a reading of Hölderlin that he did not fully appreciate. Allemann's argument is very strong, but he fails to recognize the full complexity and even the beauty of Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin; most important, he does not recognize where Hölderlin's thinking might shake the edifice of Heidegger's project.

Thus it seems worthwhile to repeat Allemann's reading, to a certain extent, by returning to Hölderlin's "Notes" and by contrasting these first with Heidegger's lectures of 1934-35 (which illustrate Heidegger's response to the tragic dimension of Hölderlin's thought) and then with his reading of "Remembrance." The essay on "Remembrance" is the specific focus of Allemann's criticism of Heidegger, but it is also a text that will allow me to carry forward the discussion of art that I opened with my earlier reading of "The

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<sup>207</sup> Allemann, *Hölderlin and Heidegger*, 27-41.

Origin of the Work of Art.” By then reading “In lovely blueness...,” I will frame Heidegger’s reading in the same way as Allemann but will reach quite different conclusions.

It is hardly possible to provide here anything like a complete reading of texts as dense and even obscure as Hölderlin’s “Notes,” but a few general observations might be made. Hölderlin posits in his “Notes” that a modern tragedy, if formally well founded, would provide what might be called a calculus of human finitude. The formal constitution of the work or art, its “poetic logic,” as Hölderlin refers to it (SW<sub>5</sub>, 265) would define and manifest the development of the various human faculties in their total interaction (unlike philosophy, whose logic represents in their coherence the articulations of a single faculty). In tragedy, Hölderlin says, this play of the faculties appears in equilibrium:

The law, the calculus, the way in which a system of sensibility, the entire person, develops under the influence of elements, and the way representation, sensibility and rationality emerge in different successions one after the other, but always following a sure rule, is in the tragic more of a equilibrium than a pure succession. (SW<sub>5</sub>, 196)

Tragedy manifests this equilibrium in its rhythmical structure. It is a metaphor, Hölderlin says (Hölderlin had defined it in “Über den Unterschied der Dichtarten” as “the metaphor of an intellectual intuition” [SW<sub>4.1</sub>, 266]) – a “transport” (*meta-pherein*) presented scenically in a succession of representations and depending for its binding or determination upon what Hölderlin calls “the pure word,” nothing more or less than what it termed in meter the caesura, an “antirhythmical” intrusion or suspension (SW<sub>5</sub>, 196). By virtue of this pure interruption, Hölderlin argues, the succession of



representations gives way to the appearance of representation itself [*Vorstellung*], and the rhythm of the work, or the succession of its “calculus,” is divided in such a way that it relates itself to itself (here is a “self-contrasting” similar to what I identified in my reading of *Origin*) and produces the appearance of its two part in equilibrium. The equilibrium of the work, then, is the appearance of its calculus or measure in its rhythmical succession as divided by the pure word or the antirhythmical suspension.

Hölderlin suggests that, if the work's formal law were brought to appear in this way in tragic art, then this art could be posited as exemplary in this way in tragic art, and then this art could be posited as exemplary and, in its technical disposition, of no lesser stature than “the *mēchanē* of the ancients.” The technical precision of this art would provide it with an infallibility as well as the formal basis for its reduplication. We glimpse here Hölderlin's obsessive concern with mastering the artistic process and assuring that there can be no mistake in the “principal moment,” as he writes at the end of the extraordinary sentence that opens “Über die Verfahrungsweise des poetischen Geistes.”<sup>208</sup> But above all, we should note that Hölderlin's primary concern with his *craft* and the fact that his meditation on tragic experience cannot be dissociated from a meditation on tragic poetry.<sup>209</sup> This is part of what Heidegger means when he says that Hölderlin's poetic thought always turns back upon itself. But this reflexive turn does not suspend the phenomenological claims that Hölderlin is making; rather, we should recognize that Hölderlin, like Heidegger, is defining art as fundamental event for *Dasein*. Art, for Hölderlin, is mimetic not in the sense of an *imitation* of what is, as it is defined by the aesthetic tradition after

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<sup>208</sup> A translation of this essay by Ralph R. Read III is presented in *German Romantic Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 219-37.

<sup>209</sup> Andrzej Warminski emphasizes this important point in his essay “Hölderlin in France,” *Studies in Romanticism* 22 (Summer 1983), 172-97.

Plato, but rather in the more inclusive sense defined by Aristotle when he writes in his *Physics*, B (II, 8, 199a), “Generally art partly completes what nature cannot bring to a finish, and partly imitates [*mimētai*] her.”<sup>210</sup> For Hölderlin, as for Heidegger, art is necessary to the production of something like a world, and this necessary, supplemental function of art must be understood in relation to art’s material nature. “Art” is something found in works – its event does not transcend its finite determination. Hence Hölderlin’s preoccupation with the rhythm of Sophocles’ texts and the strange attention he paid to the letter of these texts in his translations,<sup>211</sup> all of which answered to Hölderlin’s sense of the propriety of Sophocles’ language (“Eigentliche Sprache” [SW<sub>5</sub>, 266]) and the *justice* of his form of representation for his time (“Sophokles hat Recht. Es ist dies Schicksal seiner Zeit und Form seines Vaterlandes” [SW<sub>5</sub>, 272]).

Thus it can be misleading to say that the caesura *figures* the separation between men and gods that Hölderlin describes in his “Notes.” The caesura first gives form to this separation and first allows it to be. And as the caesura appears only in the work’s equilibrium, it functions very much like the composed Riss as it is described in “The Origin of the Work of Art.” Hölderlin describes the separation to which I am referring in the following definition of tragic art:

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<sup>210</sup> Jean Beaufret discusses the Aristotelian notion of mimesis in his “Hölderlin et Sophocle,” in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Remarques sur Oedipe, Remarques sur Antigone*, ed. and tr. Jean Beaufret and François Fédier (Paris: Union générale d’éditions, 1965), 8. Beaufret refers to this Aristotelian definition of art in order to interpret Hölderlin’s concept of the production of the natural by means of the nonnatural. It also appears quite explicitly in an essay such as “Grund zum Empedokles” (see, for example, SW<sub>4.1</sub>, 152).

<sup>211</sup> See the notes that accompany Lacoue-Labarthe’s translation of Hölderlin’s *Antigone* in Friedrich Hölderlin, *L’Antigone de Sophocle* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1978).

The presentation of the tragic rests principally upon this, that the monstrous [*das Ungeheure*], how the God and man couple, and how without limit the power of nature and the innermost of man become one in fury, is conceived in that the limitless becoming-one is purified through limitless separation. (SW<sub>5</sub>, 201)

Hölderlin understands this separation primarily in temporal terms inasmuch as he seeks to represent it in a modern fashion (SW<sub>5</sub>, 268). Thus in the “Notes to Antigone,” the God Zeus is named “the father of time,” and in the “Notes to Oedipus,” the cathartic event of separation is described as a veering of time:

In such a moment man forgets himself and the God and turns about, indeed, in a pious fashion, like a traitor. At the extreme limit of suffering there remains in fact nothing more than the conditions of time or of space.

At this limit man forgets himself because he is entirely within the moment; the God, because he is nothing but time; and both are unfaithful: time, because in such a moment it veers categorically, and in it beginning and end cannot rhyme whatsoever; man, because in this moment he must follow the categorical turning; and in this, what follows absolutely cannot resemble the initial situation. (SW<sub>5</sub>, 202)

Holding firm in this moment, man “stands there most openly in his character [*karakter*]” (SW<sub>5</sub>, 266) – a description that we should probably understand in a literal or formal sense, since man stands forth in this way as a *sign*. (This assertion will form the center of Heidegger’s reading of “Remembrance,” a point missed by Allemann). Communication between the gods and men is preserved in this way, Hölderlin says, but beginning and end no longer accord. Countering in this way one of the fundamental propositions of

Aristotle's description of tragedy in his *Poetics*, Hölderlin describes what I have termed the irreversible nature of Oedipus's tragic destiny. The tragic event marks a revolution of time – a revolution that preserves the past (men and gods communicate in their infidelity so that “the memory of those of the heavens should not fade” [SW<sub>5</sub>, 202]), but in a radically altered form. Man, following the “categorical veering” of the gods, can no longer return to his initial situation. There is no self-recovery in the tragic experience, as Hölderlin underscores when he writes that man “forgets himself.” Defining the impossibility of self-appropriation in terms of this irreversible temporality, Hölderlin returns in a most severe manner to the Kantian notion of temporality as the fundamental condition of human subjectivity.<sup>212</sup>

If man thus “most openly” assumes an objective character and is able to hold or remain (*Bleiben*) in the categorical turn, this self-definition does not constitute a self-assumption or mastered self-consciousness. In the highest tragic consciousness, Hölderlin says, the soul swerves from consciousness (SW<sub>5</sub>, 267). Consciousness “then always compares itself with objects,” as Hölderlin seeks to illustrate with the case of Niobe, and counts the simple passage of time – as Danaë – without projecting a future from its present. This “heroic hermit's life” (SW<sub>5</sub>, 268), a mist firm dwelling (*festeste Bleiben*) before the progress of time (holding itself in this passage, but not holding it), is the highest consciousness, Hölderlin says.

Beaufret remarks that Danaë may well appear in Hölderlin's discussion of *Antigone* as a kind of figure for Oedipus who must longest endure the God's

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<sup>212</sup> Beaufret develops this point in “Hölderlin et Sophocle.” See also Jean-Luc Nancy's “La joie d'Hyperion” (in *Les études philosophiques*, no. 2 [1983], 177-94) for a more extended distinguished of Hölderlin's relation to Kant – one that is in part confirmed, I believe, by the reading of “In lovely blueness...” that I present here.

absence. But in fact, Hölderlin denies to Oedipus the same “simplicity” in his destiny. For while Oedipus manifests a “splendid harmonic form” (SW<sub>5</sub>, 198) at a moment of the tragic transport in which he is swept (a form that Hölderlin says “can yet stay” [*die doch bleiben kann*]), his hyperbolical drive to know exerts itself beyond itself and loses hold of itself. Could Oedipus then be the kind of exemplary tragic figure for Hölderlin that Heidegger wants him to be? To Oedipus's excessive transport there corresponds his long suffering, as present in *Oedipus at Colonus*. This is an experience of death or absence that is characteristically modern for Hölderlin in that death does not appear in corporal destruction, as is proper to Greek artistic form, but rather as a more spiritual suffering. In the contentment that Oedipus, at the beginning of *Oedipus at Colonus*, claims to have learned from time and suffering, Hölderlin may find a figure of a specifically modern dwelling that no longer shows the superlative beauty that belongs to Antigone's bearing. It may well be a figure of the contentment with which Hölderlin finally identifies, a contentment that speaks in the late poetry. But it is hardly clear that this figure may serve the founding role that Heidegger would assign to it.

The divergence between Hölderlin's interpretation of Oedipus and Heidegger's understanding of this interpretation is most astonishing, as I have suggested, because the nature of the tragic destiny described by Hölderlin seems fundamentally related to that structure of existence described in *Being and Time*, in which the assumption of death as the extreme possibility of human existence (and with it the assumption of thrown possibility) *pushes Dasein* into the world and *binds* it in history. The relation seems most profound in that the same kind of binary structure is at work; in both cases, the event in question involves a double movement of approach and withdrawal that issues in a kind of passage that is the very movement of history and defines the conditions of

historical existence. Hölderlin's notion of a temporally defined event of language (the caesura of the pure word) conditioning tragic existence would seem to define the foundation of the modern *Dasein*. It is true that the fate Hölderlin describes seems somehow more severe than Heidegger's own representation of the modern tragic fate, the need for binding more extreme (the backdrop of Hölderlin's reading of Sophocles' tragedies is his imminent "collapse"). But the logic at work in these readings is very close to that logic developed in *Being and Time* and in subsequent essays by Heidegger.

Indeed, in his lectures of 1934-35, Heidegger calls the task of hold the separation between gods and man, between the earth and what Hölderlin calls "the savage world of the dead," the essence of the poetic, founding project of historical *Dasein*. In the fundamental tonality of mourning – which is the essence of the tragic experience – the poet occupies and found the *Mitte des Seins*. This latter, Heidegger suggests, is to be understood in relation to the ontological difference.

But in speaking of found this difference, Heidegger goes further than Hölderlin does in his "Notes" and in his later poetry. When Hölderlin writes, "the holy be my word" (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 118) in "As on a holiday," he does express such a desire for a saying that founds the relation between man and divine. Heidegger interprets such a saying quite persuasively, I think, when he claims that it would articulate what is a properly *poetic* experience of the opening of the Open as Heidegger defines it in *Origin* (and as he defines it essentially in the lectures of 1934-35, which do not yet focus on the holy in an effort to name the gathering separation of men and gods. According to Heidegger, the holy

must be understood in relation to the truth of Being.<sup>213</sup> Thus, when Heidegger, in his essay “As on a holiday,” develops Hölderlin’s notion of the holy in relation to his use of the word “nature” (which Heidegger locates initially close to the original Greek understanding of *physis*), he articulates this term with a series of notions that each names some aspect of the opening of the Open by which a law is posed for the discernment (from the Latin *discernere*, to separate and distinguish) of what is, and first for the distinction of man and gods: “The holy originally decides beforehand concerning men and concerning the gods, whether they are and who they are and how they are and when they are” (*EHD*, 76). “Intimacy,” then, names the gathering of what is in the firm statute posed by the “rigorous mediacy” of the holy (itself immediate); “spirit” (the name for nature as it inspires) is the unifying unity of the *Auseinandersetzung* by which everything is brought into the well-defined limits of its presence (*EHD*, 60). Both of these terms figure more importantly in the essays under consideration here.

But in Hölderlin’s “Notes,” nothing indicates that the caesura, which marks the separation between men and gods, is anything more than a trace of a relation to an ungraspable alterity. To be sure, it *is* a sign of the holy (though it is nothing more than a rhythmical break); for Hölderlin, there *is* an opening to the divine presence that gives a law for *Dasein*. But the origin of the injunction

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<sup>213</sup> Karsten Harries’s simple statement (in “Heidegger’s Conception of the Holy,” *Personalist* 47, no. 2 [Spring 1966], 179) that the holy is the truth of Being is quite correct, I believe (though it passes somewhat quickly over the source of the difference that prompts Heidegger to distinguish between the tasks of the poet and the thinker). Thus, Heidegger can state in his “Letter on Humanism” that he reads the notion of *Heimat* in Hölderlin’s “Homecoming” in his essay of 1943 in terms of the proximity to Being that is “there” of *Dasein* (GA 9, 337/217). In this essay, in fact, Heidegger speaks not of a proximity to Being but of a proximity to the origin, and he defines this later concept in relation to the notion of the holy. Heidegger is not imprecise here, for Heidegger’s later elaboration of the Fourfold entails precisely such an understanding of the holy as part of the “intense intimacy” of the infinite belonging of gods, mortals, earth, and sky. Below, I discuss further Heidegger’s interpretation of the holy.

(to “count time” or to “dwell”) remains veiled. Thus Hölderlin asserts that Sophocles’ authentic speech describes human understanding “as it advances under the unthinkable” (SW<sub>5</sub>, 266). Hölderlin’s certitude that there is such a law given and that a trace of the holy does offer itself will not falter in the poetry he writes after he names this law in his “Notes,” but his own ability to grasp and to assume its injunction comes increasingly into question.

One might want to argue that Heidegger is describing in his reading of Hölderlin nothing more than Hölderlin’s certitude (which for Heidegger always emerges in a questioning) concerning the fact that his poetic saying is a saying of the holy, even if it says no more than a trace of the holy. Heidegger’s words in the opening pages of his essay “What Are Poets For?” (an essay devoted largely to Rilke but opening with an extended reference to Hölderlin) concerning the “near obliteration” (GA 5, 95) of the traces of the holy in this destitute time between the flight of the gods and their return might suggest such an interpretation. But when Heidegger brings forth the “unsaid” of Hölderlin’s poetry by reading it in terms of the history of Being and when he thereby ascribes to him a founding of the holy, he projects upon Hölderlin’s desire for a poetic saying in a way that not only misrepresents the ever-increasing rigor with which Hölderlin defines the absence of God and the poet’s stance in the history defined by this absence but also forecloses any understanding of the *questioning* that accompanies Hölderlin’s search for the conditions of a measure for human existence.

To begin to describe how Heidegger “accomplishes” Hölderlin’s poetic saying by projecting it in terms of his thought of the history of Being and to suggest how Heidegger’s reading diverges from the “poetic logic” of the “Notes,” I would like to turn briefly to Heidegger’s lectures of 1934-35. Since



Heidegger refers to the “Notes” in his readings of both “Germania” and “Der Rhein” (poems that predate the “Notes”) and since his argument in his readings of Hölderlin’s later poetry will not invalidate the claims I want to describe here, I believe it is not inappropriate to introduce the contrast I want to establish by focusing on these lectures. There is a very clear development in Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin; Heidegger’s increasing focus on the notion of the holy in Hölderlin’s poetry and his attention to the implications of Hölderlin’s notion of the “vaterländische Umkehr” (SW<sub>5</sub>, 271) certainly transform his reading. But the effort to define the founding character of Hölderlin’s poetic saying also gives to Heidegger’s reading of Hölderlin a remarkable continuity, as we see in Heidegger’s consistent claim for the possibility of the founding of a poetic self. With this brief consideration of the 1934-35 lectures on Hölderlin, I particularly wish to introduce this last component of Heidegger’s argument.

The contrast between the logic of the “Notes” and what Heidegger seeks in Hölderlin’s *Stromdichtungen* appears most immediately when Heidegger describes the course of the Rhine, as it is presented in the poem to which the river gives its name, in terms that recall aspects of the destiny of Oedipus. The Rhine’s destiny, Heidegger says, is the destiny of a “halfgod” – its Being is the *Mitte* (the center or middle region) that defines or determines the Being of both gods and men. To think the hlafigod, as the poet does in “Der Rhein,” is, as Heidegger states, to step into the founding differentiation (*Unterschied*) between gods and men and to bring this differentiation into question. “This thinking founds and breaks open the entire domain of being” (GA 39, 167).

The stream’s destiny is a tragic one in that it is founded in conflict. The Being of the stream first comes to *be* in the movement of revolt by which the stream turns back upon and assumes its origin. The revolt is a tragic “fault,” but

it is one that issues from the stream's original determination. At its origins, the stream manifests an "excess of will" (GA 39, 230) – a "blindness" in its original surge that derives from an origin that is uncanny and overdetermining, and itself of a conflictual nature (the stream's origin is a reciprocal, differential relation of the earth and the gods). But the stream's original, excessive *Stromwillen* is broken with the eruption in it of a counterwill. The stream's counterwill brings it into necessity or distress (*Not*) and first makes it possible for the stream to encounter its destiny. By virtue of this *Gegenwille*, the stream's assumption of its destiny is a manifestation of freedom. The stream suffers its fate in an active sense; it carries out its fate not in the manner of a preordained lot but as a destiny that it creates. The stream's revolt – its entry into distress and its turn in a creative counterdecision – belongs to the "mystery" of Being (*Geheimniss*), and we may observe that it is the same mystery as that impetus to which was questioned for the passage from the experience of *Unheimlichkeit* to the decision that Heidegger terms "resolution."

In his reading of Hölderlin's *Stomdichtung*, Heidegger is describing the same event as that which forms the center of the existential analytic. We recognize, too, that the figure of destiny described here is that of Oedipus. Heidegger points to this fact when he writes:

Now we sense to what extent these half-gods are the blindest – because they will to see, as not being ordinarily sees, because they have an eye too many: an eye for the origin. Such a vision is no unconstrained looking or retrospection, but rather the accomplishment of an original binding. This hostility of its essence, grounded in the origin itself, that urges to boldness only in order to will the preservation of the origin – that is the fault. (GA 39, 267)

Inasmuch as this tragic destiny entails a manifestation of freedom in an active assumption of destiny, we might suspect that the Oedipus that figures here owes as much to Schelling as it does to Hölderlin. As in a dialectical model, the tragic conflict issues in, indeed produces in this case, a unity (though this unity is to be thought not in terms of a synthesis but rather in terms of the unity in conflict described in *Origin*):

In that which springs purely from its origin must the origin, as well as the having-arisen [*Entsprungensein*], unfold in the serenity of their determining powers. However, insofar as these, according to their essence, enter into conflict against themselves, they must unfold as more pure in the highest hostility. But because hostility as supreme bliss constitutes the unity of Being, this unity must also gain, and better, retain the highest purity. (GA 39, 241)

As in the “Notes to Oedipus,” in which tragic destiny entails a “turning about,” we see in this description of the stream’s course a “revolt.” But the revolt allows an appropriation and founding of the origin’s conflictual nature – a preservation and accomplishment of the conflict. Here, beginning and end accord as the stream comes into its own and achieves its destiny. I hardly need to emphasize that this description of the tragic conflict does not correspond with Hölderlin’s description of the categorical veering that he finds in Sophocles’ *Oedipus*. In Hölderlin’s “Notes,” we remember, the tragic “turn” marked a temporal caesura by virtue of which “beginning and end cannot rhyme whatsoever” and “what follows absolutely cannot resemble the initial situation.” A “purifying separation” in the tragic conflict does in fact produce a lawful “equilibrium,” but nothing in Hölderlin’s “Notes” would allow us to describe this separation in terms of a gathering unity, as Heidegger does when he defines

the reconciliation (Austrag, “settlement”) of the tragic conflict as “intimacy” (*Innigkeit*).

We know from Hölderlin’s own note to “Der Rhein” that he had sought to present in the final strophe of the poem a “total metaphor” reconciling the movement of the poem in a dialectical fashion.<sup>214</sup> It would thus seem that Heidegger is not unjustified in reading it in terms of a movement of reconciliation and in seeking to find in the poem the “essential simplicity” of a “gesagte Innigkeit.” The gathering and unifying movement of Being that Heidegger describes is certainly suggested in the great poems of the Hamburg period (consider, for example, the magnificent opening section of “Homecoming,” which suits so well Heidegger’s descriptions of the gathered nature of conflict). But insofar as Heidegger extends this understanding of Being to Hölderlin’s later thought on tragedy, including the “Notes,” he turns aside from the more radical thought of tragic “separation.” This is the avoidance of Hölderlin’s later thinking that Allemann sought to document in his lengthy study.

One more example of this avoidance may help to establish the point. As I have noted, Heidegger asserts that the poem, as it brings into speech and thereby founds the original relatedness of Being and Nonbeing that belongs to the origin, “stands before us as a ‘holy chaos’” (GA 39, 259) – it is the birth of Dionysus, Heidegger suggests.

Heidegger’s identification of Dionysus as the essence of the halfgod is quite appropriate inasmuch as “Der Rhein” begins and ends with a reference to him. The poem’s act of founding, Heidegger says, reaches into the

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<sup>214</sup> Allemann cites this note and analyzes it in *Hölderlin and Heidegger*, 141-42.

*Grundbereich* designated with his name. But Heidegger's description of Dionysus is particularly worthy of notice, since it would seem to strain the notion of unity (in its "highest purity" as *Innigkeit*) that guides his interpretation:

He is the yes of the most savage, inexhaustible life in its creative urge, and he is the no of the most terrible death through annihilation. He is the bliss of enchanting captivation and the dread of a confused horror. He is the one while he is the other, that is, he is, while at the same time he is not; while he is not, he is. Being, means for the Greeks, however, "presence" (*Anwesenheit*). Becoming present, this halfgod absents himself (*weist dieser Halbgott ab*), and in becoming absent he presences. The emblem of the presencing absenting and the absenting presencing is the mask. This is the preeminent symbol of Dionysus, that is, understood in a Greek and metaphysical fashion: the original relatedness to one another of Being and Not-being (presence and absence)." (GA 39, 189)

This description, of course, recalls Nietzsche; indeed, Heidegger adds: "We know that the last, and at the same time futural, preparatory Western interpretation of Being by Nietzsche also names Dionysus" (GA 39, 191). Heidegger thus names with "Dionysus" the proximity of Nietzsche and Hölderlin as tragic thinkers. But as a "spoken intimacy," it is also the achievement of an essential simplicity. Again, it is the accomplishment of unity in and as conflict. This paradoxical essence of the poem derives from the "ambiguous" essence of language itself. Language is ambiguous or "double-edged," Heidegger says, because it is essentially dangerous. It is *the* danger, the most dangerous, in that it bears in it the opening of what is and thus creates the possibility of the "menace of being as such through nonbeing" (GA 39, 62). Through language, man stands exposed (*augesetzt*) in the "proximity and

distance of the essence of things" (GA 39, 76); language opens to the "overwhelming" while it preserves a distance from it.

Heidegger's description of this double movement and the danger born in it recalls, of course, the definition of tragedy offered by Hölderlin in the "Notes," in which the presence of the tragic resides in a movement of unification and separation and in the presence of the God "in the figure of death." In fact, Heidegger illustrates this ambiguous essence of language with his only citations from the "Notes." From the "Notes to Oedipus," Heidegger draws Hölderlin's sentences on the essence of speech, which is said to bear the "powerful relations" (or *Grundstellungen*, to be compared with the notion of "fundamental metaphysical position") in which Oedipus stands in relation to the totality of what is. Oedipus's speech itself is said to bear the character of the Being that it opens to man as it "bears and conducts the confrontation with the overpowering power" (GA 39, 66). But while language participates in that character of the Being that it opens, it also guards man from the God: "Man turns against the God in it, guards himself against him" (GA 39, 66). Thus, Heidegger cites Hölderlin's words in the "Notes to Antigone" in which he says that the soul, in the highest moment of consciousness (in *Antigone*, a "sacred delirium"), confronts the God with a rash and even blasphemous word in order to preserve "the holy, living possibility of the spirit" (GA 39, 67). Language would thus be a kind of gapping or spacing by which there is an opening to an overpowering relation of Being and Nonbeing that both preserves (*wahren*) this relation and preserves man from it (hence the protecting nature of truth, or *Wahrheit*).

The tragic "revolt" would thus be essentially a turn in language. But whereas in Hölderlin's "Notes" the language of tragedy is said to mark an irreversible temporality, in Heidegger's argument language, as the ground for a

people's historical *Dasein*, founds a repetitive history that takes form in an increasing intensification and unfolding of essence. Heidegger writes, for example:

All that is great is singular, but this singular has its own manner of constancy, that is, historically transformed and altered recurrence. Singular here does not mean present at one time and then gone at another, but rather: having been, and therefore in the constant possibility of a transformed development of essence, and consequently inexhaustibly disclosed in appropriation always anew, and becoming more powerful.... The great has greatness because, and insofar as, it has always a greater above it. This ability-to-have-beyond-itself of the greater is the mystery of the great. (GA 39, 144-46)

Its being, that is to say, *consists in* repetition. In Hölderlin's description, the language of tragedy bears the presence of God "in the figure of death"; correspondingly, in Heidegger's, it opens a proximity experienced as *Nichtigkeit*. In Heidegger's interpretation, however, this difference is recovered as the source of an ever more profound unity in the poet's creative preservation of the opening of Being.

For Heidegger, this unity manifests itself perhaps first of all in the unity of the poet's own being (a notion that finds an echo in Hölderlin's statements in his "Notes" concerning the accomplishment in tragedy of an equilibrium of faculties). For the poet's stance in relation to the intimacy of conflict drawn out in the poem is also defined as intimacy. His understanding of the "mystery" of Being preserves its character as a mystery – it is a "standing in" and "holding" of the mystery that Heidegger describes as,

...not just any enigma, the mystery of intimacy [*Innigkeit*], this latter, however, Being itself, the hostility of the conflicting powers, in which antagonism decision occurs regarding the gods and earth, men and everything that is made. Poetry, as the institution of Being, is the grounding manifestation of intimacy. (GA 39, 250-51)

The poet stands in and founds by his saying this *Auseinandersetzung*, in which the being of the halfgod as the *Mitte des Seins* comes to define the relations of gods, men, and earth. The stream, whose essence is to create paths and borders for the history of a people and whose course is the establishment of a land *as* a land and as a home, comes to be in the poet's saying. The destiny of the stream is in its essence the destiny of poetry, and to the destiny of the stream belongs the poet himself: To these halfgods belong the creators themselves, to these latter, the poets. the Being of the poet is grounded in 'Nature' (Being as such), which originally says itself in poetry" (GA 39, 259).

In "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," an essay that appears to be based largely upon the work presented in the 1934-35 lectures, Heidegger will take up this argument for the founded character of the poet's dwelling in the intimacy of Being and assert most clearly that this founding of a poetic self is a representative act for a people ("the poet holds out in the void of darkness, and by thus remaining true to the law of his own being, he brings about truth as a representative of his people and therefore can bring truth truly home to it" [*EHD*, 45]). In this essay, as I have noted, Heidegger asserts that Hölderlin's poetry distinguishes itself for the purposes of a meditation on the essence of poetry, inasmuch as Hölderlin's poet determination (*Bestimmung*) is to poetize this essence. Hölderlin, he adds, is thus the poet of poetry. He approaches this assertion through five leitmotifs, the second of which is: "Therefore, man was given language, the most perilous of all blessings... that he bear witness to what



he is.” Explicating this phrase, Heidegger argues that for man to bear witness to what he is, he must show *who* he is:

Who is man? He is the one who must bear witness to what he is. To bear witness means to give evidence, but it also means to answer for the evidence that is being given. Man is *who* he is, precisely in the testimony he gives of his own existence. This testimony does not refer to an incidental expression of human nature coming after the fact; rather it contributes to the constitution of the human *Dasein*.” (EHD, 36)

To show *who* is to posit a historically defined identity that is not accounted for with the properly philosophical question “*what* is man?” The question “what is man?” can be answered authentically only in a testimony that is an *Auseinandersetzung* of men, the gods, and things, as Heidegger explains in the course of the essay. (Both the lectures of 1934-35 and “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry” follow the argument of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, as I presented above.) as an *Auseinandersetzung*, this question of man’s identity is *constitutive* for man’s essence, as Heidegger asserts in the passage I have just quoted. But Heidegger adds here that the testimony given in such a “performative” questioning authenticates or authorizes the answer inasmuch as the identity posed answers for the testimony given. Hölderlin’s poetry, Heidegger suggests, is “guaranteed” as authentic inasmuch as Hölderlin posits *himself* in the act of reflecting on the essence of poetry. Thus, even though poetry is essentially endangered by the essence of language itself inasmuch as language can never overcome the ambiguous simplicity of its appearance (no word can ever guarantee its own authenticity, the second aspect of the danger to which Heidegger refers in the 1934-35 lectures), Hölderlin’s poetry seems to

offer itself as authentic by virtue of the fact that Hölderlin offers *himself* in his speaking.<sup>215</sup>

But this in itself is a most dangerous act, Heidegger suggests, since it entails stripping from poetry its normally harmless appearance, thereby removing from it its protection against everyday life from which it is excluded. For this latter description of the isolation and veiling that protects this “most dangerous work,” Heidegger refers somewhat ominously to Hölderlin’s tragedy, “The Death of Empedocles,” just as in a most astonishing way he quotes from this text Panthea’s ecstatic description of Empedocles (assuming her words as his own to describe the poet) in order to illustrate the founded character of the poet’s being. In “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry,” Heidegger quotes the lines “To be him, that / Is life, And we others are but the dream of it” (*EHD*, 45); in the 1934–35 lectures, these lines appear in their full context to define the essence of the poet (*GA* 39, 215–16). Of particular interest is Delia’s response (in the published lectures, Heidegger writes “Rhea” instead of “Delia”):

I cannot find fault with what you say, dear friend  
Yet my soul is strangely grieved by it.  
And I would like to be as you  
And again would not want to. Are all of  
You then like this on this island? We too  
Have our joy in great men, and one  
Is now the sun of the Athenians,  
Sophocles!...

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<sup>215</sup> David Halliburton provides a useful discussion of Heidegger’s complex and ambiguous notion of the referent of Hölderlin “himself” in *Poetic Thinking*, 86–91. Halliburton identifies too rapidly, in my view, the poet of “Remembrance” with the future poet to whom the poet’s remembrance turns (for the nature of the poet’s solitude must not be neglected), but he points out appropriately that the “me” of “Remembrance” is the poet of “Remembrance” – the one whose essence is realized in and by the poem.

But our pleasure is untroubled  
And the good heart never loses itself so  
In painful, rapt homage.

(GA 39, 215-16)

Delia's response ends as follows: "You sacrifice yourself – I believe he is / Too great to leave you peace / The unlimited you love without limit." In the commentary that follows his citation of these lines, Heidegger does not take Empedocles as the exemplary poet but rather takes Sophocles – despite that Heidegger states elsewhere in the lectures that Hölderlin sought to fashion (*dichten*) in Empedocles the figure of the poet. It would appear, though suggested only by the rhetorical structure of Heidegger's argument, that the poet's gesture of self-identification, which forces us to decide whether we will take poetry seriously as the ground of our historical Being (*EHD*, 34), is analogous to – and just as volatile as – Empedocles' act of presenting himself to the Agrigentine people as a semidivine, exemplary figure. If Heidegger only hints at this analogy in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," his reiteration of the phrase "the first born are sacrificed" in his lectures of 1934-35 and later in the essay "Remembrance," as I will note, confirms that his tragic rhetoric is overdetermined by a dimension of tragic experience that is more or less effaced in the philosophical elaborations of German Idealism but powerfully present in Sophocles and increasingly constraining, as Lacoue-Labarthe has argued,<sup>216</sup> in Hölderlin's successive elaborations of his *Empedocles*. Heidegger, in other words, sets up Hölderlin as a *pharmakos* when he sets him up as exemplary – and Hölderlin's madness serves to warrant this sacralizing interpretation. The gesture, I would argue, is not more benign than Plato's own similar response to the poets. And we might surmise that it is motivated by a response to the same

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<sup>216</sup> "La césure du spéculatif," 213-14.

perceived danger, namely, the destabilizing character of mimesis as it appears in the plasticity of the poet's self-presentation: his capacity to move between voices and roles, and *apparent* lack of propriety of poetic discourse.<sup>217</sup> Something in Hölderlin's poetry provokes in Heidegger what Girard calls mimetic violence.

The phrase, "the first born are sacrificed" occurs twice in the interpretation of "Germanien." In both cases, the "sacrifice" is said to be the result of a kind of "historical struggle" that takes place in and through language. The first born (the poets) are "sacrificed" in that their original saying is lost in the mediation of everyday, "inauthentic" usage:

The highest pleasure of the first founding saying is at the same time the deepest pain of loss; the first born are sacrificed. The original language that grounds Being stands under the fate of necessary downfall: the flattening out in debased idle talk.  
(GA 39, 63)

The second instance of the use of the phrase comes in relation to the poet's struggle to transform the "fundamental tonality" of a people (GA 39, 146), and is in the first, "sacrifice" seems a curiously strong word. Heidegger summarizes the position of the poet in relation to the "struggle for Being" when he writes, "The poet experiences poetically a creative downfall of the hitherto existing truth of Being, that is, in the dissolution he is captivated and carried away by the youthful and the new powers" (GA 39, 150) – words that recall the "thrusting down of the familiar" in *Origin* (GA 5, 66), where the work is said to

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<sup>217</sup> For a discussion of Plato's own recourse to this ritual mechanism, see Jacques Derrida's "La pharmacie de Platon," in *La dissemination* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1972), 69-197, tr. B. Johnson in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 61-172. See also Lacoue-Labarthe's "Typographie."

embody the struggle between the old gods and the new and where this struggle, again, is essentially one of and in language. In the lectures on Hölderlin, Heidegger remarks in this respect that a change in the experience of the essence of speech must come about if *Dasein* is to be brought back into the “original domain” of Being (GA 39, 64). In these descriptions of the “battle over Being,” Heidegger may well be referring to Hölderlin’s essay “Das Werden im Vergehen,” in which Hölderlin describes the creative aspect of “authentically tragic language” through which “the *possible* enters into reality” (SW<sub>4.1</sub>, 283), and to Hölderlin’s designation of Empedocles as a sacrificial victim in “Grund zum Empedokles” (SW<sub>4.1</sub>, 156).

In accounting for a response such as Heidegger’s to Hölderlin’s *text*, we must presume that the provoking element belongs somehow to the very structure of the linguistic act by which Hölderlin posits an identity in his written work (or posits the failure to achieve an identity). As the poet *of the poet*, Hölderlin somehow brings forth in poetry – which takes its essence from language itself – an abyssal dimension that threatens, perhaps even as it makes possible, the constitution of identity. Heidegger has pointed to this dimension of poetic language in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” I believe, by referring to the concealment that occurs in poetry. The event of truth in art is originary, as we have seen in Heidegger’s essay, and thus the work of art must necessarily play a determinant role in the constitution of its “preserver’s” very identity. Though the preserver’s response cannot be simply passive, the work of art opens the possibility of its own reception. The ambiguity of the work’s “strange beauty” (residing in what might be termed, a “double concealment”) might then be understood as the source of a fundamental distress. The work will both prompt self-definition and call it constantly into question.

But Heidegger's description of the fascinating or unsettling nature of the work remains quite indirect in *Origin*; I would argue, in contrast, that Heidegger is attempting to describe formally what he finds so arresting in Hölderlin's language and what it means for a poetic act to be exemplary, when he attempts to define how Hölderlin's poetry works reflexively as it poetizes the essence of poetry and thus of the poet. He does this most explicitly in his reading of "Remembrance," and so I would like to turn now to this reading and follow Heidegger's argumentation somewhat more closely than I have thus far. The claims Heidegger makes for the act of poetic founding are essentially the same as those of his readings of the mid-1930s, and thus I will be able to reinforce a contrast that I have sought to establish between Hölderlin's understanding of what it means to dwell in the nearness of Being in the time of God's absence, and Heidegger's understanding of this poetic act. This analysis of Heidegger's reading of "Remembrance" will allow me to demonstrate the persistence of Heidegger's most fundamental claims for poetry and for the relation it finds between Being and human being, beyond the period of Heidegger's writing that is distinguished (as I have tried to demonstrate) by its tragic tones. The concern with selfhood and with the grounding of *Dasein* remains a priority for Heidegger beyond the period of his description of an essentially tragic self-affirmation – and it remains no less a problem.

The reflexive nature of "Remembrance," Heidegger asserts, is already marked in the title of the poem.<sup>218</sup> The title does not indicate that the poem contains a description of something remembered – it is not a poetic account, for example, of the poet's trip to Bordeaux, but rather a poetic saying of the essence

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<sup>218</sup> The full text of the poem, along with others by Hölderlin, appears below in Appendix 1.

of remembrance (*Andenken*) itself. The poetic truth of this essence is said poetically in this poem, meaning that this essence is first founded in the poem. The essence of remembrance thus founded, Heidegger says, is “the essence of the poetic thinking of the future poets [of Germany]” (*EHD*, 84). The poem “Remembrance” poses in an initial or originary fashion the essence of remembrance.

But if the poem works in this originary way, it is because this poem’s own mode of poetic saying is remembrance. “Remembrance,” as Heidegger defines it, is letting what has been unfold initially as what is to come. (“Initially,” because what has been exists in no simple past. It is not found, Heidegger says, nor is it made, rather, it is projected or predicted in a manner that remains an opening or “letting happen.”) The poem “Remembrance,” of itself, turns upon or turns to remembrance in this way, letting a poetic destiny that has been given – and a fitting (*geschicklich*) mode of saying – unfold in a way that is historical not simply because this letting-happen answers to a history (of Being) but also because this answering is an active transformation that initially poses or transposes this destiny.

We should recognize in this performance the structure of the hermeneutic circle. “Remembrance” is a speech act that opens the conditions of its own performance; it poses them initially with the act of defining the nature of “Remembrance” (late in his essay, Heidegger says that we recognize poetry in such an event of the constitution of a new genre [*EHD*, 138]). It *enacts* a mode of poetic saying, both posing the law or rule for such a saying and being itself such a saying. It is a speech act that takes form and founds itself in a reflection upon its own performance. Whether or not speech act theory can account for such a proposition, this event is nevertheless fully characteristic of Heidegger’s

writing (or at least we can say that Heidegger's writing works constantly toward such an event; *Being and Time*, as I have suggested, would be such a project that describes itself). The riddle of Heidegger's extraordinary preference for Hölderlin may lie in large part in Heidegger's fascination before Hölderlin's repeated enactment of such a reflexive mode of enunciation.

This self-reflexive nature of "Remembrance" is understood by Heidegger in terms of a complex structure of repetition that is signaled with the opening words of the poem. These words, he says, break a concealed silence: the silence of the decision to will that the wind should be as that wind that has opened the time-space [*Zeit-Raum*] out of which the poet may will the destiny that comes to him and out of which he may name this will, thereby posing a time and place for this founding act. "The north-easterly blows... go now" is an enunciation that corresponds precisely to the performative utterance that is made manifest or is "spoken" by the work of art as it projects its createdness, as Heidegger describes it in "The Origin of the Work of Art." The act of creation is created into the work, as we have seen, and the work brings forth, literally, the phrase "dass es sei" ("that it be"). Heidegger isolates the famous lines from "As on a holiday" – "But now day breaks. I waited and saw it come, / And what I saw, the holy be my word" (*das Heilige sei mein Wort*) – as a similar performative enunciation; in fact, Heidegger designates these lines as the initial lines with which Hölderlin assumes his poetic destiny. So, just as Heidegger implies in *Origin* that the work brings forth the artist's creative act, his offering "that it be" (the truth should be offered a site for its appearance), Heidegger argues in "Remembrance" that the poet's will (his assumption of his destiny) is brought forth in the poem and situated in the space it opens: "The poem does not express the poet's experiences, but rather takes the poet into the domain, opened as a poem, of his essence" (*EHD*, 151). The poem thus brings forth and founds



(marking its time and place) a relation in which the poet already stands and which is the source of his poetic act. I have said that Heidegger's fascination for Hölderlin may be explained in relation to the structure of Hölderlin's poetic saying. I might add now that Heidegger finds in Hölderlin's poetry a mode of saying that realizes what Heidegger terms the "step back," or that circling by which a saying would point beyond itself in such a way as to become a sign of the relation (the opening of Being) that makes it possible and that must escape any representational mode of description.<sup>219</sup>

The wind gives its movement to the entire poem, we might say, since it is a figure that embraces all poles of the journey that the poem commemorates. The wind promises an experience of the heavenly fire of the foreign land (the appearance of the holy) by favoring the voyage south; in so doing, it clears the northern sky, bringing forth the essential properties of this sky of the homeland. At the same time, it salutes those already in the south, calling up them to return. Promising the foreign land and calling back to the homeland, the wind also figures the poet's own act of poetic remembrance. As it goes forth, Heidegger says, it remains.

Heidegger's interpretation works toward an understanding of precisely such a remaining (Bleiben) and thus turns upon an interpretation of the last line from "Remembrance" – virtually a leitmotif for his meditation on poetry – "But the poets found what remains" (*Was bleibt aber, stiften die Dichter*, translated by Michael Hamburger as "But what is lasting the poets provide"). Heidegger

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<sup>219</sup> Karsten Harries addresses the problem of language's pointing beyond what he calls its "ontic" aspect in "Heidegger and Hölderlin: The Limits of Language." Harries focuses upon Heidegger's privileging of the individual word's isolated meaning over its grammatical determination. But with Heidegger's emphasis on *aber* in his reading of "Remembrance" (to which I will turn), as well as his emphasis upon the poem's movement, we see that rhythm, syntax, and tone must also be accounted for in defining the distinctive reflexive character of poetic saying.

will define “what remains” in terms of the poet’s own poetic dwelling in his homeland near the origin. The act of remembrance, he argues, founds the poet’s dwelling or remaining in proximity to the origin in that it consists in an appropriation of what is proper to the poet in his homeland through a constant recalling of the experience of the holy in a foreign element. The poet has already received his proper capacity for poetic exposition when he begins the act of remembrance; he has already undertaken the journey to the foreign land and experienced the holy fire, and he has already been given the free use of his proper mode of exposition that must now be learned – that is, appropriated in such a way that it is founded for the coming poets (let us recall Hölderlin’s concern with such a founding in the opening paragraphs of his “Notes to Oedipus”). The repetition marked with the opening of the poem thus signals, we might say, that the poet’s proper capacity has been released to him in his previous journey between the home and the foreign land; the act of remembrance, however, represents the acquisition of this capacity and its historical definition.

Heidegger defines the relation between the foreign (*das Fremde*) and the proper (*das Eigene*) in the terms of Hölderlin’s letter to Böhlendorff of 4 December 1801, in which Hölderlin states that nothing is more difficult to learn than the free use of the proper (also what is “natural” or “national”). Heidegger draws from Hölderlin’s remarks what he terms Hölderlin’s “law of history”: what is proper or natural for a people can be appropriated only when it is founded historically in an encounter with what is foreign for that people. This law, Heidegger argues, led the poet into a kind of exile. The natural for the German people, Hölderlin says, is clarity of exposition (*Klarheit der Darstellung*). Heidegger interprets this trait as the ability to grasp a destiny through the capacity for setting up frameworks, classifying, articulating, and

disposing – these terms all pointing to Heidegger's later meditation on the essence of modern *Technik*. The German foreign, on the other hand, is defined by Hölderlin as “beautiful passion” and corresponds, in the chiasmic structure of terms that Hölderlin posits in defining the relation between the Germans and the Greeks, to the “holy pathos” of the Greeks and their relation to the “heavenly fire” that secures for them, as Heidegger puts it, “the approach and nearness of the gods” (*EHD*, 87). This Greek natural corresponds to the German foreign, then, just at the Greek foreign – what they mastered through their art or culture – corresponds to what is natural for the modern German.

Heidegger appropriates these definitions of the foreign and the proper for his reading of “Remembrance” in a fairly abstract manner. He does not pose the question of the relation between the modern proper (clarity of exposition) and a foreign that it might encounter in Greece (the Greek proper corresponding to the modern foreign) in terms of a relation between modern and Greek *art*, as Hölderlin does by positing his “law of history” in relation to the question of the ancients and the moderns. Were he to have done so, he would have had to recognize that access to the modern proper through an artistic encounter with the Greek proper is a more problematic task than the one he describes – in brief, he would have had to recognize the necessity of translation.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Lacoue-Labarthe has opened this question in an exemplary manner in his essays “La césure du spéculatif” and “Hölderlin et les grecs,” *Poétique* 40 (1979), 465-74. Andrzej Warminski, in “Hölderlin in France,” also provides a cogent discussion of Hölderlin's notion of the relation between Greece and Hesperia. See also his analysis of Peter Szondi's reading (“Überwindung des Klassizismus,” in *Hölderlin-Studien* [Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1967] 85-104) of Hölderlin's letter to Böhlendorff of 4 December 1801. While Heidegger fails to take up the problem of the relation between modern and Greek art in this fairly schematic presentation of the relation between the “natural” or “proper” and the “foreign” in “Remembrance,” he is nevertheless quite attentive elsewhere to the distinctive character of Hölderlin's position on the question of the ancients and the moderns. One may consult on this point the remark of “Remembrance” that appears in the “Letter on Humanism” (GA 9, 219).

Hölderlin signals the problematic nature of the relation between Greek and modern art (and signals his break from a Winckelmannian classicism) when he says in his letter to Böhlendorff that, “aside from that which has to be the highest for the Greeks and for us, namely the living relation and the skill, we ought not to have anything in *common* with them” (SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 426). The Greeks are “indispensable,” but they cannot be imitated: first, as Hölderlin suggests in his letter, because their art is the product of a specific destiny and corresponds in its distinctive character to the modern natural – we cannot deduce from it, Hölderlin says, laws for modern art or culture. But Hölderlin’s “eye too many” also makes him see in Greek art what might be termed an *excessive* mastery or appropriation of what is foreign for the Greeks: the clarity of exposition provided by the “junonian sobriety” of the West. In the very splendor of Greek culture, Hölderlin finds the sign of a Greek failure to appropriate what is proper or natural to them: the “holy pathos.” Hölderlin sought to correct just such a failure in his translations of Sophocles, as he indicated to his editor.<sup>221</sup>

In other words, translation for Hölderlin was a means of repeating, by a kind of *après-coup*, as Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, what never happened in Greek art.<sup>222</sup> Such a notion of translation, of course, cannot be understood in terms of a model of adequation, or in terms of a process of recovery of meaning. For the “unsaid” that Hölderlin seeks to bring forth in the process of translation cannot be defined as a *signified* of any kind: it has no place (even as a veiled or reserved meaning) before its repetition.

While Heidegger’s definition of “remembrance” might be made to accommodate itself to such a project (as I want to show), he bypasses the

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<sup>221</sup> See the letter to Friedrich Wilmans of 18 September 1803 (SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 434).

<sup>222</sup> “La césure du spéculatif,” 204.

question of the modern relation to Greek art in his discussion of the relation between the proper and the foreign and focuses instead on Hölderlin's description of his trip to France in the letter to Böhlendorff written after his catastrophic journey. In that letter, Hölderlin says he was "struck by Apollo," a figure for an experience of the heavenly fire. But it should be noted that Heidegger does not rest his interpretation upon biographical data in this way; rather, he is interpreting the poet's voyage as itself a figure of a law that defines the course of Hölderlin's poetic experience. In this way, Heidegger can suggest that the foreign encountered by Hölderlin is not the proper of Greece but is rather a more initial, more oriental source. Hölderlin repeats more originally, it seems, the Greek beginning. But we might assume that only by sidestepping Hölderlin's *reading* of the Greeks (and particularly as it takes shape in a project of translation) is Heidegger able to present this original encounter as a *domestication* of the foreign.

"Domestication" may be too strong, but the economy that Heidegger describes in defining the relation between the proper and the foreign is sufficiently closed to have prompted Beda Allemann to argue that this relation is thought by Heidegger in the dialectical terms of the metaphysics of subjectivity. Allemann finds evidence for his argument in Heidegger's interpretation of lines from a late revision of "Bread and Wine":

For Spirit is not at home  
In the beginning, not at the source. It is consumed by the  
homeland  
Colony spirit loves, and bold forgetting.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Allemann cites these lines and discusses them in *Hölderlin and Heidegger*, 168-73.

Allemann contests on primarily philological grounds Heidegger's assertion that these lines describe the "law of history" of the poetic spirit. He holds that one cannot import the master term of German Idealism into an interpretation of Hölderlin's late poetry without recognizing the profound displacement to which Hölderlin subjects it. Allemann's criticism does not withstand an attentive reading of Heidegger's use of the term "spirit," though I believe that Allemann is correct in find in Heidegger's presentation an argument that points to the absolute metaphysics of Hegel insofar as Heidegger describes a movement of the same to the same through *its* other in the course of his description of the "law of history."<sup>224</sup> I would differ from Allemann merely by suggesting that Heidegger situates this dialectical moment within a movement of repetition that exceeds its (thereby opening up the speculative economy and permanently suspending it), rather than somewhat forcibly imposing it upon Hölderlin's poetry in order to bring forth all the more visibly Hölderlin's "leap beyond metaphysics."

It seems odd that Allemann does not attend a bit more closely to Heidegger's use of the term "spirit" in order to substantiate his thesis. Even if we recognized a more properly Heideggerian definition of this term (following Heidegger's argument in "Homecoming"), the movement Heidegger describes

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<sup>224</sup> By asserting that Heidegger understands the term "spirit" in its Idealist sense (*Hölderlin and Heidegger*, 167-69), Allemann fails to take account of Heidegger's argument in the lectures of 1934-35, in which Heidegger identifies the spirit in question with Dionysus, and fails to consider how Heidegger is in the process of reworking the term in his reading of "As on a holiday." (A similar argument might be made concerning Heidegger's use of the term "real," which Allemann hastens to identify as a kind of Idealist marker; a more attentive reading would interpret this term in relation to Heidegger's interrogation of it throughout "The Origin of the Work of Art.") Of course, Allemann will recognize that the "formal parallelism" he defines between Heidegger's interpretation of the "law of historicity" and spirit's departure from and return to self in the metaphysics of subjectivity neglects profound differences (for example, between spirit's return to self and proximity to the origin in the return to the proper). Allemann suggests that Heidegger underscores a metaphysical moment in Hölderlin only in order to show better its overcoming.

in accounting for spirit's "inspiration" of the poet and the relation of the poetic spirit to its origin follow a strictly controlled economy. Poetic spirit, Heidegger says, desires immediate access to its home as a proximity to the origin, but the home closes to any immediate appropriation and with this movement directs the spirit to a foreign that allows spirit to remain oriented to its home. The poetic spirit is given the foreign as a *colony* of the homeland, Heidegger says, and goes to meet the "heavenly fire" in the foreign land (with the repose, the circumspection, and the constancy that already belong to being at home but are not yet appropriated as such) already sheltered by the homeland, as it recognizes upon its return (*EHD*, 95). This recognition, following the chiasmic structure of the apparently closed economy Heidegger describes, turns into a knowledge that, without the experience of the heavenly fire, the gift of the poet's proper capacity for poetic expression would never have been given to him as his own.

This is, we might say, a most happy Oedipal scenario – though I used the term this time in a more psychoanalytical sense. Spirit is directed away from its motherland (*Mutterland* [*EHD*, 93]) so that it will not consume its forces in its desire for immediate access to the origin. But it is directed to the foreign land and the fire of the heavens (lightning, Heidegger notes, is Hölderlin's privileged sign for the heavenly father), already sheltered by the motherland so that it will not be consumed in turn by this fire. Finally, the fire orients spirit back to the motherland:

The fire has let it experience that it must be brought back out of the foreign to the homeland, so that there the proper, the capacity for clear exposition should loosen its essential powers in relation to the fire in order to bind them in what is to be exposed. (*EHD*, 94)

In spirit's desire for immediate access to the origin, Heidegger may recognize the theme of a dangerously excessive desire that must be bound and thus answer to Hölderlin's need for articulation of the "vaterländische Umkehr" somewhat more faithfully than Allemann suggests. Allemann argues that the "vaterländische Umkehr" must be understood not in terms of a relation between Greece and Hesperia (or between a homeland and foreign land) but rather in terms of the relation of mortals to the absent gods and the world of the dead. Allemann insists that the turning or reversal to which Hölderlin refers entails a movement of differentiation by which the mortal desire for unification with the divine would be bound and a "sober" dwelling on the earth would be possible. Here again, I would agree in large measure with Allemann's reading (particularly as he seeks to contrast it with that of his predecessors – see his criticism of Beissner and Michel, 41-45), but I believe that Allemann's effort to avoid reading the reversal in terms of the relation between Greece and Hesperia leads him to neglect important aspects of Hölderlin's meditation on history. Allemann's reading of the first and last lines of "Patmos," for example, (175), seems just, but he must neglect the entire central portion of the poem, just as he cannot account for the necessity Hölderlin perceived in *translating* Sophocles.

But it is clear that Heidegger understands the binding of this desire in a far less severe manner than does Hölderlin in his late thinking and that he defines it more in terms of the pure differentiation or caesura that Hölderlin describes in his "Notes." "Mediation" is itself an inadequate term, because in speaking of binding the powers of exposition in what is to be exposed, Heidegger wants to describe the establishing of a proximity or nearness (as I shall demonstrate), and not an appropriation of the origin as immediate – the Hegelian schema is not ultimately applicable to Heidegger's analysis. But Heidegger seems much



closer to Hegel than to Hölderlin when he defines the establishment of a proximity in terms of the *measuring* of a founding difference.

The appearance of a kind of dialectical movement in Heidegger's argument is not limited to his interpretation of the late lines from "Bread and Wine." If Heidegger was misguided by the tradition of Hölderlin criticism in his interpretation of the term "spirit" (a most unlikely hypothesis, given Heidegger's sensitivity to the language of the metaphysics of subjectivity – one that Allemann only partially retracts after offering it), he nevertheless repeats the analysis of the economy of movement that I have described late in his essay when he argues that the answer to Hölderlin's question concerning the nature of remembrance unfolds finally with the phrase "But it is the sea / That takes and gives remembrance." The sea takes the memory of the homeland, Heidegger says, and thus allows the poet the experience of the foreign that he will transform as he appropriates his proper mode of exposition in his homecoming. But the sea also gives memory as it takes. The sight of the foreign awakens remembrance of the proper, which anticipatory remembrance forgets the "merely foreign" in the foreign and transfigures it in such a way that it preserves what in the foreign is *for* the proper.

This remembrance is not pure, Heidegger says, for there is a forgetting; but Heidegger has established that there can be no pure remembrance (otherwise there would have been no need for a detour through the foreign), and it is clear that, through the economy of forgetting, nothing is lost. The poet's exile, in other words, is certainly less aggressive than a colonialism, in Heidegger's account, but perhaps not more risky than tourism, however superior Heidegger finds it to adventurism. In other accounts, as I have noted, Heidegger addresses a danger in poetic experience; but I need not pause to

reiterate that Hölderlin's experience of "exile" is far more radical than Heidegger implies. Hölderlin is referring to his voyage south (though again, as Heidegger shows, this voyage is itself a figure of the movement of poetic experience – already a kind of narrative) when he says in the second version of "Mnemosyne": "and we have almost / Lost our speech in a foreign land" (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 195).

But before concluding that Heidegger simply reduces Hölderlin's law of history to a dialectical relation of same and other, we must note that what I have called a closed economy of remembrance moves between poles that are never fully appropriated in that movement. Spirit has no immediate access to the heavenly fire that it must say poetically, and it always is only in the process of appropriating what is proper to it. The more it appropriates its proper skill of clarity in exposition, the more it approaches the holy, whose advent is promised in the remembrance of what has been. Both the skill in *Darstellung* and the holy that is to be exposed remain always to come. This kind of open-ended movement is indeed quite characteristic of Hölderlin's thinking. And I would fully agree with Heidegger's demonstration, which I will try now to unfold, that the poet's remembrance does no more than announce this coming by reflecting upon the conditions of its enunciation. What is problematic, I want to argue, is Heidegger's assertion that this reflexive movement grounds the poet's saying and first all his self, and that this self-grounding manifests a self-grounding unity of Being.

Heidegger indicates that we must not simply reduce his notion of poetic remembrance to the terms of the metaphysics of subjectivity in a most subtle way as he begins to describe the poet's actual repetition of his original encounter with the holy. This repetition takes the form of a greeting, carried by

the wind, to what the poet has already encountered. The greeting, Heidegger holds, lets what is greeted unfold in its essence and thereby gives it its essential place (*Wesensstätte*). It *measures* a proximity between the one who greets and the greeted, in which both of these poles of the greeting are brought back into the proper distance of their respective essences. This measuring of the proximity, of course, is to be understood in terms of Heidegger's consistent manner of describing a relation that first founds the terms of the relation (though in light of his previous discussion of the transfiguring nature of forgetting and in light of the greeting's being said to strip the greeted of its "false individuality" and give it a place to stand [*EHD*, 96], the remembrance seem distinctly appropriative). In the essays considered thus far, we have seen such a relation described as a conflict; here Heidegger tends to describe it more in terms of love (see also the passage devoted to the concept of love itself [*EHD*, 143]). But in this context, and given the psychosexual resonance of so much of Heidegger's description, this repetition of a relation that measures and articulates the relation, resembles nothing so much as a complex version of the game Freud described as "Fort/Da."

The greeting takes shape in a movement of figuration that is markedly specular (poetic speculation). It moves through a landscape as it approaches a prefiguration of the advent of the holy – a landscape held open by the "gaze" of two trees that dominate it and that is defined and rendered fertile by a stream figuring (as Heidegger argues for all of Hölderlin's stream imagery) the poetic spirit. Hölderlin thus begins by saluting a figure of himself as the poet of this founding remembrance and moves through the landscape to salute the oak and white poplar, which appear as parental figures (Heidegger remarks that in saluting this "noble pair," Hölderlin thinks of the day of his departure and the beginning of his poetic destiny). The persistence of a familial configuration in

Heidegger's reading (at work at several levels, as we have seen) merits emphasis and undoubtedly further attention. Heidegger may well be answering in his characteristically indirect manner the discourse of psychoanalysis. I note simply that if Hölderlin's remembrance is autobiographical in nature for Heidegger – it will terminate finally, as Heidegger reads it, with a figure that conflates the poet's birth and his marriage – this autobiography (the term, as we will see, is very problematic in this context) recounts not the history of an individual subject but that of poetic destiny. The "gaze" of the oak and white poplar issues from a play of light and shadow in which Heidegger finds also the difference of concealment and unconcealment. For Heidegger, the poet's "origin" must first be thought in these terms.

Accordingly, what first appears as a specular movement of remembrance reveals itself to be a quite different movement of poetic reflection. Heidegger introduces this point by pausing before explicating Hölderlin's greeting as it takes shape in the description of the landscape and remarking that what rises so purely before the reader's sight needs no commentary. This remark does not merely reiterate a commonplace of aesthetics; or rather, it reiterates an aesthetic commonplace in order to underscore the image Heidegger is reading must be *read* as pointing beyond its distinct quality as an *image*. Heidegger is signaling to us that the image of the landscape offers itself at first as the kind of image produced by those poets who have not yet returned from their voyage (to which the poet's thought turns late in the poem) and who gather the beauty of the earth like "painters" (*EHD*, 135). These poets still work under the domination of the Platonic concept of beauty: "They allow Being (the idea) to appear [*erscheinen*] in the aspect of the visible" (*EHD*, 135). But Heidegger's interpretation of the line that follows the salute to the "noble pair" suggests that the initial salute is already *aufgehoben*, raised to another level of reflection. The movement of

reflection here, however, is not to be thought in a Hegelian way. What Heidegger initially describes at the end of his essay (*EHD*, 151) as a kind of climbing that retains in memory the levels of reflection that it has passed through is finally designated as a *fugue* articulated around the word “but.” This word indicates transition, Heidegger says, and thus marks a movement in Hölderlin’s poetry; but it also marks a kind of interruption and a retention (a moment of catching breath). “Aber” is not a negation or a simple qualification but, rather, *marks the relation to an alterity*; it gives a kind of rhythmical scansion to Hölderlin’s poetic thought and also sets the poem’s “hidden tone” (*EHD*, 151). Thus the phrase, “Still well I remember this” (“Noch denkt das mir wohl”), which Heidegger lists among the linguistic forms expressing Hölderlin’s “but,” is said to “bind the greeted that has been to what greets in coming” (*EHD*, 99).<sup>225</sup>

“Still well I remember this,” then, does not simply punctuate the salute; it marks the poet’s aware that he greets as one who has been given to greet what has been, that he greets as one already greeted: “It is not the poet who addresses the greeted to himself in thought, rather the greeted addresses itself to his thought” (*EHD*, 99). The image of the landscape, though initially appearing as a kind of mirror for the poet’s speculation, or that specular remembrance, now appears as a prefiguration of what approaches the poet. The phrase “noch denkt das mir wohl” is transitional, Heidegger says, and obliges the poet to think of what has been and what is coming. Thus, the images that follow as Hölderlin continues to move through the landscape now appear in what I have previously termed a “strange beauty.”

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<sup>225</sup> Hölderlin’s use of the word “but” bears comparison with Blanchot’s use of the word “pas.” See Derrida’s analysis of Blanchot’s strategic disruption of dialectic with this term in “Pas,” *Gramma* 3/4 (1976): 111-215.

Heidegger remarks upon this mode of appearance when he comments the lines, "On holidays there too / The brown women walk." Heidegger first discusses the appropriateness of the appearance of women in the remembrance of the time of celebration that prepares a marriage. He then notes that the projective or prefigurative nature of these lines appears with the term *Daselbst*:

In order to hold the distant with its distant presencing near, the poet says this there [*Daselbst*], which to the modern ear harshly borders upon juridical or commercial language.... But above all, the poet at this time so little shrinks back from what first appears as an unpoetic and strange word that he goes toward it for just that reason to listen to it. He knows that the purer the invisible is to be, the more decisively it requires that the naming word yield to the strange image. (*EHD*, 108)

The image of the women appears with the strangeness of what resides near the origin. What Hölderlin wants to show, the distant presencing of the distant, Heidegger asserts, is properly invisible (in contrast to the *eidos* brought to appearance by "painterly" poets). Hölderlin, shows nothing of the origin except its nearness, which appears in the strangeness of an image that is marked by a kind of "interior distance."<sup>226</sup> We will see that in Heidegger's reading it is the poet himself who shows this proximity by dwelling near the origin. He shows, Heidegger says, with his *zeigender Anblick* (showing look) – the eye too many that opens as the poet comes to dwell. But the poet's look only appears in what is seen, in the figure. The poet's reflection on his own dwelling, by which he shows or indicates an origin *beyond his seeing*, moves through the figure and beyond it – back upon the conditions of its visibility; but it does so always *through* the figure. The figure marks this movement by appearing within the

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<sup>226</sup> I borrow this term from Blanchot. See his essay "La voix narrative," in *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 562-63. A translation of this essay by Lydia David appears in Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus* (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), 133-43.

distance opened by the poet's gaze; it bears this distance and thus marks the conditions of its visibility. But the movement of poetic thought (remarked with the words that convey Hölderlin's "aber") is bound by the figure and thus remains bound to a reflection upon figureability. Hölderlin in his poetry simply *reflects* the conditions of a saying of the holy, though such a reflection, Heidegger argues, is already an enunciation. I will return to this point, but I want to note with this description of the strangeness Heidegger finds in Hölderlin's imagery that the logic of the finitude of truth that Heidegger describes in *Origin* directs his meditation on Hölderlin.

As the poet's remembrance moves toward the women of the southern land, it moves, as I have indicated, toward a reflection on the holiday and on the marriage festival for which this holiday prepares. Heidegger interprets the marriage in question as one of men and gods, taking his lead from Hölderlin's "Der Rhein." We may also recall, of course, a more brutal description of this "coupling" in the "Notes to Oedipus." The fruit of this marriage, Heidegger argues, is what Hölderlin terms the "halfgod"; these are the streams that "must become signs" ("Der Ister," cited at *EHD*, 103) and are therefore the poets. thus, as the poet thinks back to preparation for the festival that is to come, he thinks toward his own birth. The birth that the poet commemorates (and thus is in the process of repeating) occurs on the day, Heidegger says, in which the poet sees come what his word must say. As I have noted, the lines from "As on a holiday," "But now day breaks / I waited and saw it come, / And what I saw, the holy be my word" are taken by Heidegger to be Hölderlin's first lines as the poet whose task is to say the holy.

As the fruit of the marriage between men and the gods, the poet is called upon to hold open the relation between them as the dissimilar (*das Ungleiche*)

and to endure this inequality. Unlike either gods or men, the halfgod preserves the “between” (*Zwischen*) out of which men and gods return into their proper beings. In this Auseinandersetzung, destiny finds its equilibrium (*Ausgleich*), a balanced differentiation of men and gods that preserves their essential differences and in which the dwelling of the poet as *Ungleiche* is founded. With his founded dwelling, the poet thus opens the lingering (*die Weile*)<sup>227</sup> that is the measure of any authentic dwelling (including that of the poet) and the essential origin of history. Everything that is in coming has its coming in relation to the lingering as the unique that has been; to this lingering comes the holy.

We recognize in this description a summary of the paradoxical temporality of remembrance. The holy, Heidegger says, first grants with its greeting the Open that the poet is called upon to hold open in his saying. The poet's response, correspondingly (though in an anticipatory way), is a recollective prediction of the coming of the holy that first opens a time-space for its appearance and that first points to the region for man's historical dwelling (though it promises no certain salvation, Heidegger says, as in the Judeo-Christian understanding of prophecy). The prophecy takes on the character of a dream in the domain of poetry's “freien Bildens” – “free” marking again that this initial predication of a poetic dwelling upon an encounter with what is coming as what has been already presupposes the free use of the natural capacity for exposition. The poet's “dreaming” prediction thus found the Open first granted by the holy and first gives the holy a site to which it may come. Most important, perhaps, this site is founded as the poet sets *himself* up in the “between” in his poetry. The halfgod, the poet, is the one properly greeted by the holy in its advent, and he thus becomes himself the

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<sup>227</sup> As it is translated by David A. White. See his discussion of this concept in *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 135-37.



appearance of the holy as he emerges in his essence as the Ungleiche. As the Weile founded by the poet's dwelling is the essential origin of history, the poet himself becomes as well as the founder of the history of humanity. Of course, we shall have to ask again what appearance this Ungleiche (who resembles neither men nor things, indeed no thing that is – for which there can be, therefore, no *Gleichnis*) might have, and how someone who is like no one else can be representative in his individuality for the history of a people.

I have discussed only a small portion of Heidegger's commentary on the poet's prefigurative act of remembrance, but I would like to move now toward Heidegger's conclusion by turning to the repetition of remembrance Heidegger locates within "Remembrance" in the poet's gesture of turning his reflection back upon the conditions of his poetic enunciation. In the third strophe, Heidegger argues, the poet moves to think of his poetic vocation and of the learning of the free use of his proper capacities. This process of appropriation is the poet's actual *Heimkehr*.

In the third strophe, then, the poet turns from what he has experienced in the foreign land to what this experience has given to him to appropriate as his proper capacity for exposition. Heidegger reiterates that the holy light experienced by the poet in the foreign land must have already accommodated the poet's word to its apparition as a word that filters the excessive brightness of the holy light. The poet's learning is thus a reiteration and appropriation of his open disposition to the holy in an ever more lucid and gathered vigilance whose measured, finite nature (*EHD*, 127) Heidegger describes as "repose." The movement of the first two strophes, we might say, repeats the determination of the poet's predictive and projective saying by the foreign ("repeats," since he is saying this determination); the following strophe folds back upon the projection

itself. But this repetition is transformational in the fashion of the chiasmic reversal I have already described. (It also follows, we might note, the movement of progression and regression Hölderlin described in his note to “Der Rhein.”) Thus, the poetic saying appears in the first two strophes as determined by what is to be exposed – the following strophe must now invert this movement and prepare the *Darstellung* as the determining condition for the appearance of what is to come. It must define the poet’s exposition as belonging to a particular homeland by ordering the poet’s clear exposition to what Heidegger terms the “rule of the earth” (*EHD*, 131).

The inverted repetition I am describing belongs to what Heidegger defines as a constant poetic reflection on remembrance and its poetic accomplishment. The poet’s ongoing reflection upon his mode of saying is a constitutive part of the “learning” by which he founds his dwelling – constitutive for the very process of homecoming (*EHD*, 116). But the poet’s reflection upon himself as the poet of this remembrance also belongs to this reflection. This reflection emerges for Heidegger in the fourth strophe in the poet’s veiled question concerning the nature of the poet’s task, though it begins implicitly in the third strophe with the poet’s reference to the themes of dialogue and “mortal thoughts.”

Mortal thoughts, Heidegger argues, are thoughts of what concerns men, inasmuch as they must dwell in what defines their home. The poet must speak of these mortal concerns in a mortal way, and for this, dialogue (or “converse”) is “good.” Heidegger explicates the notion of dialogue with reference to his argument in “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry”; dialogue is to be understood originally in terms of the greeting of the holy and the poet’s response. But the poet acquires a “heart” – an affective disposition – for this

originary exchange through the dialogue, in which he hears of “many tales,” et cetera. This dialogue, Heidegger suggests, is itself a “remembrance” that pronounces the heart’s “notion” (“opinion,” as *Meinung* is translated by Hamburger, does not quite bring out the implications of a will, as Heidegger seeks to do by referring *Meinung* to *Minne*) and thus its willing of the poem of the holy, whose saying belongs to the time of feast. The speaking of the heart’s notion in dialogue prepares the poet to stand in the poetic domain that opens in the feast. At the same time, it accords to him the free and “reposed” use of his proper capacity for exposition as it prepares speech (exercises it) poetically in its give and take of mortal thoughts. The poet’s thought of this dialogue is therefore a remembrance of the conditions of his appropriation of his proper capacity for exposition. Just as the poet’s saying must be ordered by the “rule of the earth,” it is determined by the particular history of this poet’s people. The poet’s capacity for exposition is released to the poet in his remembrance of the heavenly fire, but he appropriates this capacity in a remembrance that turns upon his home.

As the poet turns interpretation early Heidegger fourth strophe to inquire about the location of the interlocutors of a dialogue that is now past, we may conclude with Heidegger that the poet is meditating upon his solitude. I will turn shortly to Heidegger’s understanding of this solitude, but before doing so, I should note that a reading of the lines “It is not good / To be soulless / With mortal thoughts” entirely different from the one offered by Heidegger is possible. One may hear in the German (“Nicht ist es gut, / Seellos von sterblichen / Gedanken zu seyn”) what Heidegger finds, namely, that to be soulless is to be without mortal thoughts. But the line would seem to suggest more immediately that to be with mortal thoughts is to be soulless. As Hölderlin would therefore appear to be contrasting a certain experience of

death with the “good” of dialogue, we may have reason to question Heidegger’s understanding of the nature of the solitude to which the poet’s thought turns furtively in the strophe (furtively because he does not identify himself as soulless in his solitude but merely evokes this theme after asking for the cup, in contrast to the dialogue whose interlocutors will be defined as absent in the next strophe). We must say at least that the *question* of the poet’s solitude is far more problematic than Heidegger is willing to recognize.

To pursue another aspect of this question as we turn to read “In lovely blueness...” and seek to establish a critical perspective on the reading presented in this study. My aim in this presentation of Heidegger’s essay of “Remembrance” is not to consider the philological or critical merit of the reading but rather to identify Heidegger’s essential claims concerning the poet’s reflexive, founding act. But it should be clear, I believe, that the theme of death or mortality offers a critical lever for confronting Heidegger’s reading of “Remembrance.” However we respond finally to the question of Hölderlin’s use of the notion of death (a question that requires a far more lengthy textual examination than is appropriate here), we may recognize that the relation to death of the later Hölderlin is not one of resoluteness but at best one of a questioning endurance for which, as I will try to show at the end of this chapter, no measure is given.

Turning now to Heidegger’s reading of the fourth strophe in his development of the poet’s reflexive turn to the question of his solitude, we may note that Heidegger understands the question concerning the “friends” as a question concerning the poet himself, inasmuch as the reference to Bellarmine and his companions points to Hyperion, the poet recollects one of the sites of his past voyage and in so doing opens the question of his current

location, now that he has returned to his home. Heidegger remarks in this context that this questioning concerning the poet's proper site differs from the questioning of the philosopher insofar as the philosopher's questioning risks itself in the question-worthy and is at home in the *Unheimische*. The poet, whose task is to say the holy, seeks to say poetically the *Heimische*. His distinguishing concern, we may presume, is his testimony of his belonging to the earth, and thus the according of his mode of exposition with what Heidegger calls the "rule of the earth." Since the poet's being-at-home is the one concern of the poet's questioning, the single question of the poem, Heidegger says, is directed to the essence of remembrance itself, and what is asked about in this question is the poet himself – not the "I" of the poet's person but the essential place of the self, "whose 'proper' alone is the accomplishment of the essence of a poetic vocation" (*EHD*, 129). Such a question, as a poetic question, is properly reserved or veiled, since the poet's relation to his origin is determined essentially by a reserve issuing from the knowledge (itself determined by the origin) that the origin cannot be approached immediately. Correspondingly, the answer to the "veiling" question concerning the friends is itself veiled. The reserve that belongs to the an is named: "Many a man / Is shy of going to the source." The answer speaks of the company of friends brought together by a common vocation; it names the coming poets to whom the poem addresses itself from its start. But only the most reserved of the reserved can first undertake the path to the source. The poet thus modestly names himself with the reference to the many, Heidegger states, because he cannot pose an exception.

This preeminent modesty is problematic for Heidegger's argument, since it is defined socially and not simply by the poet's relation to the origin – as an avoidance of posturing, it is necessarily already a kind of posturing. As

Heidegger (no less than Hölderlin) is concerned with Hölderlin's *representative* character, this question of the poet's appearance is not of merely secondary importance; it should recall to us a similar difficulty in Heidegger's remarks on the artist's lack of shame in his reading of Nietzsche. But Hölderlin's reserve does not alone define his solitude. First, he is distinguished from his friends in that he recognizes the necessity, as Hölderlin puts it, that the modes of representation be transformed with the "vaterländische Umkehr" (SW<sub>5</sub>, 271). His friends are still "painting," in the sense already described, and their dialogue can no longer be his own – he must discover a new genre. If the poet now thinks of those afar, out of his solitude, it is in order better to interpret this solitude; he thinks of the coming poets' voyage as a remembrance of his own, in order that the standing (or existing, *bestehende*) law of "becoming-at-home" should be well interpreted. Interpreting this law, he also affirms his solidarity with those who are coming. The poet thus thinks his solitude only in relation to a community that has helped to prepare his saying and whose future he is in turn founding. "So speaks now," Heidegger writes,

...the collected courage of the *solitary man*, who experiences his isolation as the essential accomplishment of a friendship, which demands from poetic men at first who will be offered [*geopfert*] for the learning of the free use of the proper. (EHD, 141)

Near the end of his essay, Heidegger reiterates the point that one is offered (sacrificed) in the founding of a poetic domain (and of the history of a people): "Destiny has sent the poet into the essence of this poetic domain and has designated him in the offering of the first born" (EHD, 150). The thematics of

sacrifice that I pointed to in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" continue to overdetermine Heidegger's *isolation* of Hölderlin.

Heidegger comments at some length upon the lines of the final strophe, in which the poet thinks of those who have embarked for the east in search of what will reveal itself in the most distant distance to be their elder's provenance. He underscores in this discussion a point that has been made but that is worth emphasizing in relation to the question of what Heidegger means by a homeland. The origin sought by the poets is not German and not Greek; it exists in relation to, but is not identical with, the historically defined, "natural" home of a people.<sup>228</sup> The return to the provenance of the elders is a return to the domain founded by the *Stromgeist* of the Indus – a domain therefore grounded poetically, and thus historically. But let us move here to Heidegger's actual discussion of this notion as he finds it expressed in Hölderlin's line "But the poets found what remains."

The meaning of "remaining," Heidegger says, unfolds in the poet's veiled question concerning the remembrance and thus his questioning of his own situation as one who has returned. "Remaining," as it is defined in this questioning, is a dwelling in the poet's proper determination. Though it is a "repose," it is also an ongoing movement into proximity to the origin. But as a founding, this going is a making-fast that takes its firmness from the origin's own self-grounding. This self-grounding is figured, Heidegger says, with the movement of the stream as it flows from its source to the sea and then back to its source. (Heidegger describes this movement at the very outset of this essay when he refers to Hölderlin's lines concerning the Danube's apparent

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<sup>228</sup> See Michael Murray's very sound and useful discussion of the problem of nationalism and Heidegger's interpretation of the notion of *Heimat* in "Heidegger's Hermeneutic Reading of Hölderlin."

movement of reversal near its source.) The origin grounds itself as it makes itself fast in its return upon itself; flowing back, it shelters itself in its ground. To dwell near the origin is to follow this movement, as that poet does in his act of remembrance (moving between the foreign land and the homeland) and in his ever more firm appropriation of his proper capacity for poetic exposition. He repeats the movement in such a way that the essence of the origin, its “intimacy” (in which is reserved a relation of earth and sky and whose withdrawal first prompted the poet to seek the heavenly fire that gave him in turn a knowledge of the earth of his homeland) is unfolded in its essential elements – that is to say, in a “firm character” that brings forth in its clear outline the “rule of the earth” while responding to a linguistic destiny and to its determination by the distant approach of the divine. Following the origin’s movement by yielding to it and holding to it – retracing it – the poet shows the origin’s self-grounding and finds therein the ground of his own dwelling.

*What* is shown, precisely speaking, is the distancing of the origin’s self-grounding, sheltering movement. The more this distancing is drawn out or unfolded in the showing, the more essential the nearness of this showing to what is shown. The showing is thus an unfolding of the proximity in which the poetic dwelling comes to stand. But the showing consists *only* in the poet’s dwelling in proximity to the origin, in the way the poet inhabits the distance he draws out as he follows the movement of the origin. As he follows this movement only in an act of remembrance, the showing must be understood as the *becoming founded* of this act. We must recognize that the poetic dwelling does not found the origin – rather it is founded by the origin in its projective following of the origin’s self-grounding. In this movement, it finds itself (*EHD*, 148). Thus what *shows* is the ever-increasing firmness and clarity of the poetic character as the poet appropriates ever more profoundly and firmly his



proper poetic capacity. (Such, it appears, is Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's statement in the second letter to Böhlendorff concerning the "highest" in art, which "maintains everything standing and for itself, so that sureness, in this sense, is the supreme function of the sign" [SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 433], as well as his interpretation of the final lines of "Patmos" [SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 172] concerning the father's concern that the letter should be maintained in its firmness.)

Neither founding nor showing, as we see, may be understood transitively, in terms of a subject/object relation. The showing approach, as Heidegger emphasizes, is a following that moves only in and through the reflexive movement of remembrance:

The poet dwells near the origin insofar as he shows the distance that draws near with the coming of the holy. The poet can then first perceive what comes, and so be the poet and the one showing, when he first remembers the heavenly fire and brings what he has thus experienced back into the necessity of an exposition that remembers in its turn the appropriation of the poet's proper capacity. For only inasmuch as he is open for divinity and for humanity by virtue of his remembrance of what has been in his voyage and what is to be learned from the place of his home does he have the showing look for the Open, in which alone gods may come as guests and men may build a shelter in which the true is and to which they may hold firmly. (EHD, 148)

The poet's "showing look," his "eye for the origin" (Heidegger's interpretation of the "eye too many"), opens with the founding of the poetic saying that marks itself *as* a relation to the origin. This dwelling is, finally, the manifestation of the reflexive act of remembrance as a *letting itself be founded* that points beyond itself in this founding but that shows no more than this founding. A reflexive act, remembrance founds, paradoxically, from beyond the

poetic self it constitutes and situates in this act; the poet's self-reflection is an opening to an alterity.

"Self-reflection" might seem a misnomer for a process that first constitutes the self of this reflection. Heidegger would seem to be evacuating in this movement any grounding selfhood, and yet he insists that the poet's *self* shows in the reflexive act of remembrance. The poetic act of remembrance reflects what it means to "live poetically on the earth" – it reflexively grounds the poetic project in relation to which a people may subsequently build and maintain its dwelling. But it sets and reflects upon the conditions for dwelling in an exemplary act of dwelling by one being. "The poetizing of the poet [*Das Dichten der Dichter*]," Heidegger writes near the end of the essay, "is now the founding of remaining" (*EHD*, 149). The poet sets himself up in an exemplary fashion (exemplary first, because he shows the conditions of this setting-up), offers himself, much as a being is said to be dedicated in *Origin* to the self-establishing of openness in the Open. To "thesis," as it is described in "The Origin of the Work of Art," corresponds the poet's "Bleiben" (as it appears in the firmness of the poetic character). Dwelling in proximity to the origin, he brings forth this nearness that (following the logic the hermeneutic circle) first gives the possibility of such a dwelling. Standing forth in this way, the poet appears as the one who is properly greeted by the holy in its appearance at the moment of the festival.

Hölderlin thus offers to the German people a grounding figure with which to identify. Yet, even if Heidegger gives testimony of his own identification with Hölderlin (through the words of Panthea to which I referred earlier, for example) we should pause to recall Heidegger's assertion in *Being and Time* that the relation of *Mitsein* (even when defined historically, as in the relation to

a hero chose in an act of repetition) cannot be understood in terms of the traditional notion of identification. Indeed, if we return to “Remembrance,” where Heidegger describes at much greater length the nature of the poet’s self-constitution, we recognize that identification is a most problematic concept in this context, since the poet is said to emerge in his essence as the *Ungleiche*. With which might the German people be asked to identify if the figure with whom they are to identify resembles neither men nor gods – no thing that is? This representative figure cannot be *like* anyone or anything else, and it is a *Gleichnis* of the holy only if we abandon any definition of this term elaborated in the aesthetic tradition. The poet figures only his receptivity to the holy and merely announces what, in coming, appears as absent. To identify with Hölderlin would be to identify with no thing that is. No imitation of such a figure would be possible if we define imitation in terms of reproduction of some visible aspect.

If Heidegger’s preoccupation with the self-affirmation of the German people in the early and mid-1930s thus led him into at least the *rhetorical* stance of inviting the German people to identify with a *führer* (even though he insists that all following “bears resistance within itself,”<sup>229</sup> “Remembrance” (1943) brings forth clearly what in his earlier thinking had already ruled out the possibility of understanding this relation in terms of any simple model of mimetic following. Hölderlin is a most paradoxical example inasmuch as he represents (by pointing beyond himself) the unrepresentable.

Is “Remembrance,” despite the recurrence of the theme of sacrifice, a less violent appropriation of the figure of Hölderlin than an essay such as “Hölderlin

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<sup>229</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität* (Breslau: Korn, 1933). A translation by Karsten Harries of this essay appears in *Review of Metaphysics* 38, no. 3 (March 1985).

and the Essence of Poetry,” and does it offer perhaps a reading more faithful to the later developments in Hölderlin’s reflection upon his role as a poet? The disappearance of the earlier tragic tone certainly marks this essay as being more in accord with the tone of *Gelassenheit*. And when Heidegger posits the poet as the *Ungleiche* and identifies the founding of the poetic self with the mere opening of an eye, he offers a description that corresponds at least to Hölderlin’s *desire* for a poetic saying that would mark no more than a pure receptivity. The opening line of the second version of the “Mnemosyne” refers to such purity – “A sign we are, without meaning,” as does the “pure form” to which Hölderlin refers in “In lovely blueness...” and the late image of the heart of crystal, upon which Allemann focuses (the earlier designation of the tragic sign as “= 0” seems also to anticipate these images<sup>230</sup>). All of these images bespeak for Heidegger the accomplishment of what Hölderlin terms the “vaterländische Umkehr,” though in a transfigured form marked by its calm.

Allemann, in strict accord with Heidegger, finds the most powerful confirmation of the “essential simplicity” of Hölderlin’s late poetry in the poem, “In lovely blueness....” This simplicity would be the measure; it seems, of a grounded poetic dwelling. Yet it is revealing that Allemann, in order to find testimony of this simplicity, must abandon his reading (which he opposed to Heidegger in his criticism of Heidegger’s reading of “Remembrance”) of the categorical turn and the danger to which it answers when he approaches this poem. Allemann misses an explicit allusion to a desire for the unbound and to the corresponding injunction (“Yet the soul... must remain pure”) and turns instead to the image of the comet for an expression of Hölderlin’s achieved simplicity – eliding Hölderlin’s reference to his desire in relation to this image

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<sup>230</sup> See “Die Bedeutung der Tragödien” (SW<sub>4.1</sub>, 274).

and asserting that the image escapes human conception. Allemann's reading of the poem is so blind to the very problematic he sought to define that we can only conclude that his interpretation has a protective function (as one must always suspect when a critic asserts that a poem escapes rational understanding and refuses to interpret it).

What exactly would Allemann be protecting in this way? I suggest that is it nothing other than Heidegger's own interpretation of the poet's showing and preservation of a founding differentiation – one that would gather and define a unified and stable human dwelling. There can be no question that Hölderlin sought such a measure for human existence – but it suffices to read the second and third strophes of “Mnemosyne,” for example, or everything beyond the first strophe of “Patmos” or the last two sections of “In lovely blueness...” to recognize that Hölderlin doubted the possibility of defining such a measure himself and was able to possibility only the *question* of such a measure.

“In lovely blueness...” begins, like several of Hölderlin's major poems, with a tableau that appears as a kind of prefiguration of a harmony or an equilibrium that will prove inaccessible in the course of the poem as the poet begins to speak in the first person and seeks to bear witness to that harmony in the way Heidegger describes in “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.”<sup>231</sup> The

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<sup>231</sup> The full text of “In lovely blueness...,” translated by Michael Hamburger, appears below in the Appendix. I will refer to the persona that says “I” in this poem as Hölderlin, though realizing the problematic character of such a designation. The most basic principles of literary criticism suggest caution in this respect. But we should also note that there is some doubt as to Hölderlin's authorship of this poem. The poem, of which no original version has survived, is taken from Wilhelm Waiblinger's novel *Phaëton* ([Stuttgart: Friedrich Franckh, 1823], 153-56), in which it is attributed to a mad poet and rendered in prose (a transposition, as indicated in the novel, from the original Pindaric verse). Although Beissner refuses to recognize its authenticity, Heidegger does not hesitate to attribute it to Hölderlin and to refer to it throughout his essays on Hölderlin as one of the major supporting texts for his interpretation. I follow the majority of modern commentators in finding in this poem the seemingly unmistakable traits of Hölderlin's late poetry.

poem is also fully characteristic of Hölderlin in the way described by Heidegger in that it is a poem that reflects upon the meaning of poetic dwelling by addressing itself to the conditions of poetic figuration. The poem is virtually a treatise on figuration, often approaching a manifestly discursive form; but the tropological “equations” that it sets up are marked by an imbalance that is finally figured with the image of the eye too many.

The first section of the poem asserts the propriety of calling man the image of the godhead and poses the phenomenal conditions of the appearance of this capacity. Man's plasticity (*Bildsamkeit*), or his capacity to appear in his resemblance to divinity, appears against a kind of frame that is constituted by their beauty of the church steeple. Hölderlin describes the steeple in a way that might remind us of Heidegger's own evocation of the Greek temple in “The Origin of the Work of Art.” It “blossoms” in a play of contrast of light and sound that brings forth the elements in which it emerges, including the blueness of the sky. Descending the steps of the tower (emerging from a doorway, or appearing through the winds that are “like gates in beauty” – hence my reference to a frame), a man will emerge, Hölderlin says, as a detached figure (*abgesondert so sehr die Gestalt ist*) in a kind of still life. “Still” must be understood here as an adjective (*ein stilles Leben*), but the reference to art (in *Stilleben*, a “still life”) is appropriate because, in this framing of the human *Gestalt*, the plasticity or figurality, the capacity to be a figure, is said to issue from man. The notion of framing suggests that human figurality appears *against* natural beauty – hence, the qualifying turn as Hölderlin adds, “But purity too is beauty,” and goes on to suggest that man may be an image of divinity inasmuch as he is pure. Moving “within” this diversity of natural and human beauty, Hölderlin says, “a serious mind is formed.” Poetic thought, it seems, is the

passage between natural beauty and the beauty of purity – to move “between” them, through the “gate” of beauty, is to live poetically.

But Hölderlin also appears to assert that purity and natural beauty are incommensurable. Man may imitate (*nachahmen*) the virtue and joy of the heavenly gods, he may be like them (*auch seyn*), and he may measure himself (*sich messen*) against the godhead (*Gottheit*) by remaining pure in kindliness. He may measure this resemblance to divinity inasmuch as God, though “unknown,” is manifest like the sky: “It is the measure of man,” Hölderlin states. This figure of God’s manifestness appears with the blossoming of the steeple. Correspondingly, as I have noted, man’s figurality appears also in relation to this natural blossoming. But man’s purity, which is the basis of his resemblance to divinity, exceeds any natural appearance of purity. Hölderlin’s phrasing of this incommensurability is exceedingly ambiguous (as is marked by his hesitation): “But the darkness of night with all the stars is not purer, if I could put it like that, than man, who is called the image of the godhead.” The “purest” natural play of light and dark (the shades of night and the stars) is not in itself man’s standard or measure. Natural beauty brings forth man’s figurality (his purity), but his purity exceeds the natural image.

Heidegger’s own reading of this passage in his essay “...Poetically Man Dwells...” (first presented in 1951), accounts for this incommensurability in a persuasive manner.<sup>232</sup> Heidegger read the lines “Is God unknown? Is He manifest as the sky? This rather I believe” as implying that the appearance of God in the manifestness of the sky is an appearance of God as unknown. The measure provided by the godhead, he concludes, consists in precisely this

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<sup>232</sup> This essay is contained in the collection of essays translated by Albert Hofstadter, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 211-29.

appearance of a concealment. To reinforce this interpretation, Heidegger cites lines from a poetic fragment that belongs to the time of the composition of “In lovely blueness...”:

What is God? Unknown, yet  
Full of qualities is the  
Face of the sky. For the lightnings  
Are the wrath of a god. The more something  
Is invisible, the more it yields to what's alien.

Heidegger interprets these lines as follows:

The poet calls, in the sights of the sky, that which in its very self-disclosure causes the appearance of that which conceals itself, and indeed *as* that which conceals itself. In the familiar appearances, the poet calls the alien as that to which the invisible imparts itself in order to remain what it is – unknown.”<sup>233</sup>

He continues,

The measure taken by poetry yields, imparts itself – as the foreign element in which the invisible one preserves his presence – to what is familiar in the sights of the sky.<sup>234</sup>

The measure of the godhead is given, therefore, in and as the holy as that foreign element (or, the “alien”) by which the self-concealment, the form taken by divine presence in the modern period, comes to appear.

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<sup>233</sup> Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), 225.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.



Heidegger's use here of the notion of the holy clarifies, I believe, what remains merely implicit in Heidegger's earlier use of the term. Here, the holy is defined more precisely as the condition for the reception of divine presence (the godhead), which, in turn, names the self-disclosure of the deity (*der Gott*). David White offers what is probably the most exact and helpful analysis of these terms in *Heidegger and the Language of Poetry* (115-39). He defines the holy as "the dispositional capacity in all that is other than the deity to receive the appearances of the divine presence" (127). In this definition, we see a precise reference to the two related notions to which I have referred, the deity and the dimension of the deity's presence. In his *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger refers to the distinction between these notions as follows:

But the holy, which alone is the essential sphere of the  
godhead, which in turn alone affords a dimension for the gods  
and for God, comes to radiate only when Being itself  
beforehand and after extensive preparation has been  
illuminated and is experienced in its truth. (GA 9, 218)

Likewise, in "What Are Poets For?" Heidegger writes:

The ether, however, in which alone the gods are gods, is their  
godhead [*Gottheit*]. The element of this ether, that within  
which even the godhead itself is still present, is the holy. (GA  
5, 94)

In this description of the holy as alien, we find an almost explicit description of what I have referred to as the strangeness of beauty. Finally, we see that if man is an image of the godhead, he own beauty must be a figure of concealment. He must figure absence. Again, we find a reference to a sign that would be "= 0."

Heidegger defines this notion in relation to the concept of image in a way that confirms, I believe, my earlier interpretation of Heidegger's analysis of the image in "Remembrance":

The nature of the image is the let something be seen. By contrast, copies and imitations are already mere variations on the genuine image which, as a sight or spectacle, lets the invisible be seen and so imagines the invisible in something alien to it. Because poetry takes that mysterious measure, to wit, in the face of the sky, therefore it speaks in 'images.' This is why poetic images are imaginings in a distinctive sense: not mere fancies and illusions but imaginings that are visible inclusions of the alien in the sight of the familiar. The poetic saying of images gathers the brightness and sound of the heavenly appearances into one with the darkness and silence of what is alien. By such sights the god surprises us. In this strangeness, he proclaims his unfaltering nearness.<sup>235</sup>

As this figure must be incommensurable with natural appearances, Hölderlin's opening statement in the second section, though apparently contradicting the earlier statement, "It is the measure of man," in fact continues his meditation: "Is there a measure on earth? There is none." But Hölderlin adds now that the beauty of early beings is also potentially excessive for man. The beauty of some beings (Hölderlin may well be referring here to the human figure) threatens to sweep man beyond his essential bounds. We recognize here the theme traced by Allemann but ignored by him in his reading of the poem, as I noted above. Hölderlin describes the sweep of beauty in glorious terms ("else on pinions the eagle reaches far as the Mighty with songs of praise and the voice of so many birds"). But the soul, Hölderlin says, must remain pure (*muss*

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 226.

*rein bleiben*): “It is the essence, the form it is.” The Gestalt that man must adopt in his purity emerges now against the pull of earthly beauty.

Hölderlin thus comes to express his own incapacity to hold the pure form against an overwhelming beauty in the following line: “You beautiful little stream, you seem touching, as you flow so clear, clear as the eye of divinity [*Gottheit*], through the Milky Way. I know you well, but tears gush out of my eyes.” The eye of divinity would seem to mark identity, since the poet has already called man the image of the godhead. The poet looks to the familiar stream of stars (taking up again the concluding image from the first section of the poem) as in a mirror for a specular reflection. But recognition brings with it a collapse of identity (though also a strangely inverted reassertion of it) as the poet’s own eye begins to “stream” with tears, and thus clouds over (unlike the clear flowing of the sky’s stream).

The poem continues with a series of images expressing a failure to achieve the purity of form or appearance by which man would appear in his resemblance to divinity. I pass over here the strongly marked figural transpositions by which the poet finds a “serene life” in the shapes of creation by reading these in relation to death (suggested by *Kirchhof*, churchyard or cemetery) and then juxtaposes to an expression of his suffering before the laughter of men his desire to escape the wounds of subjectivity and to be like a comet. This image, itself a transposition of the “stream” seen in the sky, is developed with two metaphors and a simile – it will be picked up again with the image of the brooks, as they sweep the poet away, and reinforces the fact that the “stream” in this poem is one of figurality. Between the churchyard and the stream of images in which it figures, Hölderlin is providing a most unsettling representation of what it means to “dwell” poetically. The serious spirit,

Hölderlin said, must make the bridge between earthly beauty and human purity – it must bridge a difference that corresponds in some manner to the otherness or the alien quality of the holy as it exists in familiar appearances. And so, Hölderlin says, the serious spirit must praise virtue. But virtue appears in the modern world, or at least in the north, as lacking or somehow unaccomplished: “A beautiful virgin must wreath her head with myrtle, because she is simply both in her nature and in her feelings. But myrtles are to be found in Greece.” The maiden must wreath her head, we might presume, in order to protect herself in her simplicity. But the injunction (*muss*) might also bear upon the maiden’s exposure. *Because she is simple*, she must be veiled or bound in a certain fashion – marked *as* a virgin (*Jungfrau*). The lack of this properly cultural mark makes her natural simplicity appear as nakedness. The German maiden, we might say, is excessively simple – her simplicity is volatile, it lacks measure. Even though she *is* simple, she transgresses in her simplicity. This figure of lack and excess is echoed, I want to argue, in the last images of the third section, in which Hölderlin compares his suffering to that of Oedipus.

Hölderlin begins this section with an image that recalls the previous address to the stream, inasmuch as it involves a kind of disrupted mirroring and a similar exchange of properties. Here the mirroring is explicit, though what is seen interpreted he mirror is not a reflection but a painted likeness – another appearance of human *Bildsamkeit*, but all the more fixed and frozen. There is something vaguely grotesque about the poetic vision described here, and the association that moves by way of the term “eyes” and leads to the statement “King Oedipus has an eye too many perhaps” does indeed carry something *ungeheuer* with it. (“*Ungeheuer*” is Heidegger’s own term for this poem in “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry” [*EHD*, 42], though *unheimlich* might be the more appropriate word here, for in this vision, life and death are

intermingled, as Hölderlin reiterates at the end of the poem: “Life is death, and death is a kind of life.”) Hölderlin continues by saying that the suffering caused by Oedipus's “eye too many” is presented (*dargestellt*) in Sophocles’ drama are indescribable (unrepresentable in discursive terms; at every step in this text, Hölderlin comments upon conditions of representation). Here, the “eye too many” seems to refer to Oedipus’s excessive mourning (“the end of something sweeps me away”); both are unmeasured responses to loss or abandonment.

Among the forms of “affliction” that Hölderlin enumerates in this section (including those of Hercules and the Dioscuri), Hölderlin refers to the affliction of being “covered with freckles, to be wholly covered with many a spot!” This image would almost seem to undo any tragic pathos that Hölderlin evokes with the previous allusions, and the image that follows reiterates the insubstantiality of the afflictions in which Hölderlin claims to share: “The afflictions that Oedipus bore seem like this, as when a poor man complains that there is something he lacks.” The poor man’s complaint is perfectly just of course, absolutely just; but it fails – and it must fail – to express the measure of the poverty out of which it speaks. It remarks almost absurdly a boundless poverty. As a complaint, it not only bespeaks a lack of knowledge of its own limitless foundations (if the poor man knew his poverty, this knowledge would make it impossible for him to complain of a particular want) but also is culpable or remarks an impurity – to complain is not to express kindness or purity in the sense of the first section of the poem (or so it would seem), and thus this comportment cannot resemble the virtue and pleasure of the heavenly and the rich. The poor man who complains does not resemble the godhead. He is not essentially poor, as Heidegger asserts the poet must be. But if he is not “properly” poor (and does not show the propriety of the essentially poor), it is because, again, his poverty is measureless or exceeds his ability to know it.

Does the image of the freckles not in fact function in the same way? Freckles caused by the sun seem almost neutral or perfectly gratuitous in relation to the concept of beauty, and yet their abundance signifies a kind of taint (“to be wholly covered with many a spot!”). The voyager has freckles to show for following the beams of the sun (a figure of the journey towards the heavenly fire). These, again, are a sign of the *Bildsamkeit* to which Hölderlin referred in the first section of the poem; their very abundance marks them as a sign. Yet, what they remark is the lack of a pure figure adequate to this *Bildsamkeit* (if the human figure is to be somehow commensurable with the absence of that divine) and perhaps even the impossibility of such an image in general, insofar as they show the illusory nature of the promise of the sun (“the allurements of its beams”).

Heidegger suggests, as we have seen, that every image in Hölderlin’s poetry (at least after “As on a holiday...”) is an image of the poet. The clarity and firmness of the poetic character would be a sign of the founding dwelling of the poetic self (though remarking as such the relation to an alterity). This founded dwelling would mark in its turn the founding of a space/time for the advent of the holy and thus provide the grounding for a people’s history. In “In lovely blueness...,” however, Hölderlin appears to figure his own inability to achieve the purity of such a sign. If I am correct in thinking that we may read the images discussed here as part of a series that includes the “eye too many,” by which Hölderlin marks his identity with Oedipus, then we may conclude that Hölderlin understands his poetry to be like the complaint of the poor man or to have the character of the virgin’s nakedness or to be “covered with spots.” Each of these figures, if they reflect upon the poet himself, gives a troubling aspect to a self that should appear with a purity commensurable with the absence of the divine. Hölderlin’s self-reflection, he seems to say, is like a “painted likeness”

whose “createdness,” appearing in the obtrusive materiality of the image, is not quite subsumed by the life of the poetic spirit – death is intermingled with life in this reflection that fails to achieve even the apparent life of a mirror image or the luminosity of the “painted” image of the moon.

But the images of “In lovely blueness...” seem to figure more than failure or inadequacy and a certain accompanying guilt (which cannot be reduced to shame, as *dh* defines it). Again, the freckles *are* a sign of the capacity to appear as an image of the divine, just as the poor man’s complaints are just and the maiden *is* simple. The very excessiveness of each manifestation (like a strange beauty) constitutes a trace of the holy even as it marks in some way its self-refusal. Hölderlin is opening (reopening) with these images the question of his relation to the holy – with all the certitude that Heidegger attributes to him, but in a far more questioning way. The trace of the holy – or what he designates as the holy – does offer itself in Hölderlin’s poetic experience and offers a promise in the absence it shows (“Near is / And difficult to grasp the God / But where danger is, there grows / Also what saves” [“Patmos,” *SW*<sub>2.1</sub>, 165]). But although he is certain that the promise is given (brought forth in the strange beauty of the poetic character), he finds it increasingly impossible to define a history by situating himself in relation to this promise. Hölderlin may cast this relation in eschatological terms at certain points in the later poetry and thus project an end to the experience of a lack of measure that consistently remarks itself in his effort to found a space/time for the advent of the holy. But to accept this projection as Heidegger does is to fail to recognize that it takes shape in a questioning that Hölderlin does not close – perhaps not even in his final retreat (“In lovely blueness...” is dated after the onset of what is termed Hölderlin’s “madness”). It is to refuse the possibility that in reflecting upon and seeking to bring forth the conditions of poetic representation, Hölderlin both opens a

promise and denies it – remarking the trace of an alterity that refuses itself to any appropriation. Only by beauty, Hölderlin wrote in the sketch of a preface to *Hyperion* (referring explicitly to Plato), is it possible that we should ever seek unity – ever be moved to question. But the ambiguity of a “painted likeness,” or the poetic character in general, is irreducible for Hölderlin; it is marked always by an excess or a privation that points beyond itself, but it offers no ground for subsuming its appearance.

If in his “Notes” Hölderlin seemed to hold to the possibility of defining an equilibrium of human faculties in tragic art and the possibility of defining a “splendidly harmonic form,” his poetic reflection on his own language and thus on his own “poetic dwelling” undercuts any attribution to Hölderlin himself of a founded and founding poetic saying. Hölderlin repeatedly answers in his poetry to an alterity that he experiences as near or imminent – he “remembers” a dimension of experience that the metaphysics of subjectivity works to repress, but he cannot achieve the firmness and purity of a poetic character that would bring forth this otherness in such a way as to found a “dwelling” in its proximity. Hölderlin assumes the finitude of his poetic language in a most authentic way, according to Heidegger’s own definition of what constitutes a responsible discourse, namely, one that situates itself in its own act of saying and never closes the question of the place from which it speaks. In this way, Hölderlin reveals exactly what Heidegger himself announced in his earlier work when he said that our deepest and most authentic finitude refuses itself to the measure of our freedom.

In this respect, we may say of Hölderlin what Hölderlin says of Sophocles in the “Notes” that accompany his translations: his speech is just. It answers uncompromisingly to a time when the metaphysics of subjectivity reaches its



limits. Of course, to a large extent, it is Heidegger's thought that makes possible such an assertion of the historical propriety of Hölderlin's poetic project. And insofar as the answering address of Hölderlin's text to a Heideggerian form of analysis brings into question the very notions of justice or propriety, we can measure its justice perhaps only in relation to the degree to which it brings forth the necessity of rereading Heidegger and reposing the question of measure (that is, the measuring or gathering nature of difference). No final arbitration in such a circular movement of analysis is possibility, and neither is a final decision possible regarding the justice of this movement of thought. Its justice lies in its temporal character or historicity – the degree to which it opens the *question* of history.

## *Chapter 8*

### A SECOND LOOK AT THE QUESTION OF BEING

Is the question of Being really a question at all? The study of the subject of Being interminable, because who could ever think of being finished with Being and, even more, with the task of saying so? The word itself has and continues to perplex us with its omnipresent simplicity. We speak it constantly without awareness or attention. But is saying, “it is” the same as saying “Being”? Is Being to be said? Is it not rather to be thought? There is a world of difference there: even if thinking does not go with saying, the inverse has taken place only too often. Thus, we say, “I said it without thinking,” and, in all rigors, this manner of speaking describes our habitual way of talking. If we had to think about every word, soon we would no longer be able to utter a single one, or only one – the Word, the final word.

Being, thinking. Immediately, the name of the man who asked, “What is Called Thinking?” springs to mind. What calls us there, if not the “it is,” that is to say, Being? Yes, the name Heidegger will always weight heavily on this question, whether we like it or not. And it is thus that we can say, “contemporary thought never stops being explained through Heidegger. It can think with or against him, but rarely without him.”<sup>236</sup> But has it not been thus with all great thinkers? Thinking is always thinking with (or against), and even thinking without is still thinking with.

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<sup>236</sup> Marlene Zarader, *La Dette imipensée. Heidegger etz l'héritage hébraïque*. (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 13.

But is Being a question? Is it even? And is “Is Being a question” a question itself? Does putting a question mark at the end of sentence suffice to make a question? Or is not the questioning of which Heidegger (up to a certain point) made the supreme gesture of thought but a manner of saying? By way of an answer, I come to René Char’s *Aromates chasseurs*: “The interrogative response is the response of Being. The response to a questionnaire is but a fascination of thought.”<sup>237</sup> In this division, and that also means hierarchization, between a good and a bad response, I am sure of neither the order of precedence nor even the pertinence of the distinction. To be sure, Being is not a questionnaire to which we respond with a Yes or a No, a True or a False. How, then, can we speak of “Being’s response”? How would Being respond? This is exactly like the story of the two lunatics: “Are you going fishing? No, I’m going fishing! Oh, good, I thought you were going fishing....”

Fishing after Being, we in fact risk being taken in, or mystified at any rate, we who thought we would reel it in as we have seen in the preceding pages of this examination of Being. The question always presupposes its own meaning, the meaning of Being, and, primarily, the meaning of being a question. It is like asking a stone for directions, even if, like Hermes’ stone,<sup>238</sup> it points out the right path. In order to question, we must already know which a question is and must dispose of the means to say it. I see quite clearly which Char means: the response to the questionnaire puts a term to questioning, whereas the “interrogative response” revives questioning, sharpens it, makes it more pointed, more thinking, more “pious” (*fromm*). Most of the time this response [réponse] is but a replication [répons], an echo that has been sent back and that

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<sup>237</sup> René Char, *Œuvres complètes*. (Paris: Gallimard; Pléide, 1983), 516. In English, *Selected Poems of René Char*, eds. Tina Jolas and Mary Ann Char, (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1991). All notes will reference the original collected French edition.

<sup>238</sup> The reference to Hermes’ stone is elaborated in the opening pages of the following chapter.

is interrogative only in coming afterwards. But if there is a question of Being, it cannot come after Being; it can only precede Being. But nothing can precede Being (if not Being). We might well say that these two “but’s” cancel each other. And even if, late in the game, Heidegger renounces questioning in preference to “simple” listening, the same procedure is carried out there. Can Being be heard (to speak)? Do we not always lend it speech? From that point on, what is the difference between the response and the question? The two lunatics pronounce their soliloquies along the banks of the water. They are the same in having been but the invention of an author, himself perhaps no less crazy. But since he will not give his name, he saves face.

No one has really posed the question – of Being. We have indeed asked its name, its identity, where it was going, from where it was coming, in short, all the questions one normally puts to a stranger. But we have forgotten to ask its meaning. True enough, this is a loaded question – these are not things one talks about. The question probably makes no sense, at least not if we are waiting for a clear answer. What do you want Being to answer? You yourself, in its place... you would be hard put to answer, would you not? “Meaning,” you see, would be its “interrogative,” or simply its rogative, response. (In the past, the rogations named a prayer procession instituted on Saint Mark’s Day and the three days preceding Ascension. But prayer, supplication, is not a tormented plight [supplice], which rhymes with delight [délices] in a poem by Nerval that I cannot put my finger on at the moment.) Indeed, that is the whole question.... “Meaning” is not simply a question of orientation, even though we must orient ourselves in thought. First, we must discover the meaning of the question (of meaning).... Would this be something like a final word that, short of responding, stops us upon the slippery path of the that is to say: perhaps rather a first word, and not just the final word? But the final word, if it comes, will

always be the word of the end, of the end of everything, including the word. Yet, to begin with, how can the word still be to be said? This cannot be: even Being (or its meaning, or the forgetting of its meaning) will never be the final word. Even the word word is a word, one among others, calling all the others and thus having lost any privilege over them. What would not be a simple word? Perhaps this is the question that guided Heidegger. But toward [vers] what? Not a word, but the thing itself, unspoken, to be thought. Perhaps he was not led toward a “what” but toward the toward itself, the “to” of the to-be-spoken.<sup>239</sup> This is something else altogether, says Mallarmé,<sup>240</sup> another beginning toward which a thought without name advances:

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<sup>239</sup> The word for “toward,” *vers*, is also the French word for “verse” or poetry, so that the movement “toward” is also the movement toward verse, or a certain poetics.

<sup>240</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. H. Mondor. (Paris: Gallimard; Pléide, 1945). In English: *Collected Poems*, tr. H. Weinfield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). All notes will reference the original collected French edition. Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) is one of the giants of nineteenth-century French poetry. Leader of the Symbolist movement, he exerted a powerful influence on modern literature and thought, which can be traced in the works of Paul Valéry, W.B. Yeats, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Jacques Derrida. From his early twenties until the time of his death, this great writer produced poems of astonishing originality and beauty, many of which have become classics. In the *Collected Poems*, the oeuvre of this European master to life. Mallarmé's work subverts the standardized, highly rhetorical conventions of traditional French verse; he uses the confines of poetic form to set free and play with private images and syntactical or semantic ambiguities. English poetry is much less formal – many of the conventions it once observed have fallen into abeyance during the last century. All of the poems – in verse and prose – that the author chose to retain are here, superbly rendered by Weinfield in a translation that comes remarkably close to Mallarmé's own voice. Weinfield conveys not simply the meaning but the spirit and music of the French originals. Deeply affected by the religious crisis that shook the world of nineteenth-century intellectuals, Mallarmé saw his task as “the Orphic explanation of the earth.” His response was to develop a symbolic vocabulary with which to explore the deepest philosophical questions in highly condensed forms. In 1866, when Mallarmé was composing “Afternoon of a Faun,” which the French poet Paul Valry considered the greatest poem in all of French literature, Mallarmé wrote, “When a poem is ripe, it will drop free. You can see that I'm imitating the laws of nature.” Throughout, the poet's creative process imitates nature as it ripens into the fresh fruits of his poetry. Whether writing poetry in verse (the *Poesies*) or prose (the *Poemes en Prose*), or inventing an altogether new genre – as he did in the amazing “Un Coup de Des,” his final work – Mallarmé was a poet not only of supreme artistry but of great difficulty.

The metamorphosis [of thought] takes place as a migration in which one place is left for another.... The first place is Metaphysics. And the other? I leave it without name.<sup>241</sup>

Metamorphosis is perhaps not the right word either. Is there, in fact, a name for this displacement? The other (place) must be left without name. This strategy is perfect, since all names come from the first abandoned place.

As we will see in connection with Hölderlin, to the extent that this operation rests upon the force of the name (Nennkraft), this other place, for lack of a name, will never take place or will remain the other of the thought of the Same. All thought is the thought of the Same, in that it is thought. Parmenides foresaw this about thought, and nothing will break this alliance, this nuptial ring wedding Being to thought, not even a thinking of the other that, if it wants to be thought, must be the other of the Same. Thus, “the” thought (of Being) will be able to reach this “other place” only in renouncing itself, which is to reach a constitutive limit. Arrived there, it would cease to be (thought, and the thought of the Same). At the same time, this place is thought’s proper, but inaccessible (except metaphorically), place. What, then, is the “metamorphosis” if not that poetic voyage that advances toward... let us say, what withdraws every arrival and every shore? It is Abschied... that is to say? Death? True enough, “poetic” (or metaphorical) death is not “real” death, which is all the more difficult to name thus. But in this gap, the difference between one death and the other, a space (as white as a stone) is marked that digs into thought to the point of opening it up to its other, its other verse-ion. In his poetics, which is the ultimate or first gesture of a thought driven to find the name of the other that, however, is without name, Heidegger introduced thought into the other place, but not

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<sup>241</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. H. Mondor. (Paris: Gallimard; Pléide, 1945), “Way,” 138.

necessarily the place thought had in mind, not the place of Being, finally delivered from its metaphysical shadow, but only the place of metaphor. Or rather, Being [Seyn] has indeed reached us, but in the poetic mail....

Letters in place of Being? With this postal forwarding, what can we hope for, that Being return to us with an acknowledgment of receipt we are to sign in order to certify that it is indeed Being? But would not the “thinker of Being” (assuming that he named himself thus) turn in his grave upon hearing me play in this way? A nice metaphor... if by “Heidegger” we do not only understand mortal remains but a corpus, for example that of the *Gesamtausgabe*, the definitive edition that was completed posthumously – as though torn from his hands – then “Heidegger,” both name and locality, might well come out completely turned over by this plough, overturned into a verse (versus) or a poetics. Is this so illicit? We will have done nothing but read the other side (verso) of the page, and how are we to read it if not by turning it over? (RSVP: Is that to return or to respond?)

That Heidegger's clerk held onto the page with both hands so as to let us read nothing of it is only fair (play): perhaps he knew that there is nothing, nothing but a blank space, on the other side. But this grip must be loosened the day that it becomes the grip of a dead man – or the grip of a text, which, as Heidegger's hand-work (of art), it will have been from the beginning. Handy-work, an allegorical hand, this is the hand taking the place of Being, one more hand taking Heidegger's place. Offering a hand to Being, this turn of phrase figures how, here and there, the thinker effaces himself in order to take the dictation of Being literally, gives way or plays dead, takes Being's place, even though without him the game cannot be played. He acts as if (he were no longer

anything at all): his is a metaphorical, displaced death, and that makes all the difference.

Let me be sure that I making myself understood here. (This injunction would itself demand that it be understood.) We might be surprised by the fact that Heidegger made the experience of death as death (that is to say, as what?) the pivotal question of Dasein, to the extent that Dasein is never defined in relation to "life." In the horizon of Being-there, "dying" is not simply ceasing to live; it is always some-thing else. Or rather, it is not a thing, not even dying, but Being toward death, just as saying is not simply saying, but Being toward saying. This is even the secret of the "it is," its coffin (Schrein) inasmuch as it contains precisely no secrets. In a letter, Mallarmé confides his secret as a man of letters:

Everyone has a Secret in him. Many die without having found it and will never find it because, dead, neither it nor they exist any longer. I died and was brought back to life with the key to the precious stones of my final spiritual casket.<sup>242</sup>

The conjunction of these two sentences explodes the transition from one death to the other. We (everyone, or many of us, at any rate) can die without having found the Secret – death proper. Inversely, only he who is already dead can, not die, but be toward death. In Mallarmé, there is an echo of the dialectic or of the fable of the turtle and the hare; the turtle always finishes first because it has doubled itself – its other, its imperceptible (better) half, is already positioned at the finish line. This is to say that the secret is always like Punchinello's secret.... How can one say, "I am dead"? Therein lies the whole

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<sup>242</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, ed. Rosemary Lloyd. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1988), 42.



secret: perhaps (let us weigh our words carefully) we can only say it, and not be it. When we are dead, we can neither say so nor die. Is this what Heidegger “wanted” to say when he said, “When death comes, it disappears. Mortals die death in life. In death, mortals become im-mortal”? (GA 4, 165)<sup>243</sup>

Everything is thus played out in the difference between one death and another. The first is what we common mortals call death in order to see it at work in others: parents, friends, strangers, it makes no difference; the “fact” of death remains just as banal and unthinkable. Death happens – to others, never to oneself. This is how Heidegger described the “improper” relation to death in *Being and Time*, the “one dies.” The other death is mine, the one no one can take from me, my inalienable property (even if I die for something else), even more so than my liberty or my life, which is as much as saying, my Being. But my death is secret, since far from being mine, I belong to it, am toward it without knowing it most of the time. The trick is believing that in the name of the secret (a name that is common to the core of its very being-mine) I become immortal. This is salvation through the work (as death, death is not mine, but I must “be dead,” efface myself as myself in order to give birth to it), which has always been literature’s secret. Since Homer, the only immortality is fictive. It is the immortality of fiction itself, of the proper name. I am dead in that I have become the other who can say so. By the same token, the death that comes there only ever comes fictively, in the sense that coming is in the first place (to begin with) coming to speech. That the death that comes there (to speech) be allegorical removes nothing of its power; on the contrary, it increases it in this

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<sup>243</sup> Heidegger, “Hölderlin’s Erde und Himmel” (GA 4, 165). This is an *open* secret – and even an open casket – since it is also spoken, written there, in black and white. The fact of an empty casket means that there will be nothing but such writing.

doubling. It testifies to a limit, and it is in this relation to the limit that what Heidegger calls appropriation (Ereignis) is shown.

The secret to appropriation resides in its other side, de-appropriation (Ent-eignis), which alone promises the coming of the Proper, but only as a promise. Being toward death, the mortal loses and thus finds his own identity, the ek-sistence that resides precisely in nothing, has no consistency, does not even belong to itself.<sup>244</sup> Still, we must keep our heads, if only to be able to say this death. To act as if I were dead, and thus to sing the “songs of the Departed” (Trakl), I must keep one foot on the ground, if I can say so, the other being already in the grave. Thus, the voyage to death can only be a return to that place from which no one is supposed to return, at least not in their right mind – the “madness” of an inflamed spirit is never “simple” alienation. Just as a dead person can never say that he or she is dead, a madman will not say he is mad. Or if he does, then this is another madness.

There is but one death, the good one, if it can be put thus, the one from which we do not recover. How is one to recall a “self” to what will no longer be able to say that it is or that it is nothing, unless by imagining it as returning – from the dead? Is it in this return, this future anterior (or the conditional, as when we say, “I wish I were dead”) that the secret of saying, but also the difference that maintains the letter and Being separate and united, are maintained? Both the letter and Being name the Same: Being is the fiction of the letter, since the letter carries the signature of the very hand of Being. But the

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<sup>244</sup> Let us consider the sentence from a lecture course Heidegger gave in 1942, in the middle of the blind belief in nationality according to blood ties and being born in the country in question: “Das Sein aber ist kein Boden, sondern das Boden-lose” (“Being is not a ground but the ground-less”) [GA 54, 223]. With this sentence, the whole thinking of Being is “founded” upon the absence of a foundation or of a ground. Only Being can be solid and take the place of a ground.

difference between them inscribes itself, passes into, the Same: Being has neither a hand to sign with nor a mouth or voice with which to speak (not even to say that it cannot speak). Being always needs an other: mortals, human beings (you, me), whose properness, like that of the letter, is to have nothing proper to them. The difference between the two deaths is an effect of this strange property, a turn in the thought that create fictions: spiritual death is the only one that is thinkable, no matter what takes place, but it is precisely the death that never takes place, or that only takes place in meta-phor, in poetic metamorphosis. To conclude, we can never arrive at what Bataille called “the impossible bottom of things,”<sup>245</sup> since the thing itself, as such, refuses to be grasped other than metaphorically, in the image, for example, of the “thing itself.” This is another way of saying that the other side of the page (the “other place”) will remain cryptic. It does not forbid but rather calls for deciphering, on the condition that we know that the hidden letter will always be missing, or that this letter will always have to be (re)invented.

There is not thought except at the limit of what forbids thought. There is no thought except as the experience of aporia (doubt, contradiction, paradox), the passage through what blocks passage. Death is one name for this impossibility and as such it must always be thought as such an impossibility, even though it cannot present itself as such. But that also means that we must think the “as such” differently, must think it in the experience of its impossibility, which makes possible all identification with the self, for example, death as death (and not simply as the end of existence), that is, as simultaneously impossible in the horizon of Being and presence and making this very horizon possible. At once impossible and making (the) possible, death

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<sup>245</sup> Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, tr. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights, 1990), 11.

opens up another experience of both finitude and simultaneity, of the “at the same time” that is always doubled by its other time. To elaborate a concept that would not be transcendental (in the Kantian sense of the conditions of possibility of experience, which are at the same time conditions of possibility of the experience of objects) but also lead to an aporia (since the conditions of impossibility of experience also make it possible), to elaborate such a concept in the end amounts to experiencing the limits of the very concept of experience. Put differently, it amounts to making a concept of the experiencing of the aporia of the concept of concept. Every concept is always hollowed out from the inside not only by its other, its double (represented metaphysical as its negative trace, its shadow, which always inscribes itself in the integrity of the concept “proper”), but by that infinite and yet in-existent interval that inhibits the concept from sticking to itself and closing its identity upon “itself,” including upon the concept of identity, which always presupposes a difference that cannot be expressed as such.

How, then, are we to think the title of this study, Heidegger's Poetics? What does that title have to say or to say again? But first, we should recite the title, that is to say, crop it and put it between quotation marks, and thus put it into question as well: “Poetics”? “Heidegger's Poetics”? Who would have known Heidegger was a great poet? A philosopher, perhaps, although some doubt even that; but a poet, no! We find something like poems in his oeuvre, brief texts, but these are only exceptions, hors d'oeuvres (outside the oeuvre), we might say, compared to the main dish – an austere thought, rigorously philosophical through and through, even (or especially) if it refuses this description and evokes the “end of philosophy.” But perhaps “poetics” signifies a theory of poetry, like Aristotle's poetics. Heidegger in fact wrote a great deal about poetry, or rather (the restriction is considerable) about the essence of

poetry. It is with the essence that he began, in his lecture on “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry.” But it is also with the question of the essence that he remained. Does that mean that beyond Hölderlin there is no recognition of any poet, to the point that for Heidegger Hölderlin represented the only poet worthy of the name (or rather of that even more worthy name *Dichter*)? Heidegger also wrote on Trakl and Rilke,<sup>246</sup> and I would be the last to ignore that. But whatever the greatness of these poets, they never achieve Hölderlin’s stature. They are expressly not the “poet of the poets.” We must therefore ask if Hölderlin is not but a pseudonym, and must ask how it happens that he represents the sole example of a genre without precedent (nor successor, for that matter), in short, without exemplarity, a true hapax (hapax legomenon, or something said only once) in history. He represents a genre outside genre. Such a genre would situate *Dichtung* (poetry) less as literary genre outside of any recognized site, outside literature and the law of genres. The simple thought of this poetry, then, would have nothing to do with a “poetics” in the traditional sense, even though Hölderlin himself speaks explicitly of regaining the technical level of the Ancients.

Perhaps it makes no sense to want to explain a privilege. A privilege cannot be justified, is not even an exception tolerated by the rule, because it puts itself forward, purely, as being in itself the law, divine law. This is what

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<sup>246</sup> For Trakl, I will refer to his *Autumn Sonata*, a collection of his poetry, tr. D. Simko (Wakefield, Rhode Island: Moyer Bell, 1998). As for Rilke, we must read the passage from the lecture course on Parmenides (GA 54, 225-40), where, with an unheard-of violence, Heidegger throws the poet of the “Open” into the hell of the jumble: the metaphysics of subjectivity, psychoanalysis, secularized Christianity, irrationalism, simple-minded Nietzscheism, et cetera. Why this obvious injustice? It is, Heidegger would say, because it was necessary to preserve the purity of the Open as the heart of *aletheia* from all contamination by the virus of “creatures.” But in reserving the path of truth for *Dasein* alone and thus forbidding all access to Being to the living and to the world of life, does Heidegger not, despite everything, reintroduce the privileging of the human being at the heart of creation? Is not he more “metaphysical” than Rilke?

seems to have taken place: we cannot even say that Heidegger interpreted Hölderlin. No, he encountered him as his Law, his destiny, and we argue neither with destiny nor with God. We listen to their Word, transcribe it, as Mohammed did. We might concede, perhaps, that for the others who have not yet experienced the Revelation, enlightenment is necessary. I caricature, but barely. I have already spoken of a cannibalism of interpretation, but I must revise my terms, for it is not a matter of devouring the other but of appropriating the same; and moreover, it is not the living body that serves as food but the bones: names, or the part belonging to the dead. In a sense, to speak of "Heidegger's Poetics" is to build a tomb of poetics. Let us be clear about this: all interpretation is violence, unless it is but a paraphrastic rephrasing. And yet, even in this case there is violence, the worst kind of violence, that violence that believes it makes the other speak of and from himself, believes it lets what he carried in himself without knowing it be born "naturally."

This is something of the Socratic method, but also of the naïveté of a Heidegger who, while putting in other words what the poet could only have said poetically, at the end of this interminable explication pretends to "efface himself before the pure presence" of the poem, as though he lacked nothing but speech (as we say of certain animals).

I would not linger over this strange method (that refuses this name and prefers the name of "path," which is in all respects more poetic) if it only arose from bad faith or from "philosophic" superiority. What is decisive is always the relation to the other as such. In the past, philosophy sought to reduce the other to its mercy through nothing other than the force of universalizing discourse, of which the philosopher held himself to be the sole representative, the only one empowered to speak, or, in another version of the discourse of the master, in

making the other a simple moment of the One, not yet and nonetheless already beforehand passed over and appropriated.

We could say that Heidegger escapes this shortcoming (though not always) in positing the other as the irreducibly other under the name of *Dichten* (to poetize). This obliges him to posit the One with which the other is in relation as other than it was in “metaphysical” relations. It is thus that he will speak of *Denken* and even of an “other thought,” instead of philosophy, reason, discourse, et cetera. This is an audacious and virtuous approach, but if it does not come down to the same (thing), it leads back to the philosophical attitude in relation to its (here, “poetic”) other by presupposing that there is a common element between them, and that this element is one: here, saying. The presiding unity in the relation is always the one (the first), which will say what the other is, even if it is in the name of the other. Thus it is the one and it alone that will master alterity, precisely in positing it as such, in the element of Being, of the one, of meaning.

Let us read, for example, these sentences taken from *The Experience of Thought*:

The poetic character of thought is still veiled.

Where it discloses itself, it usually resembles the utopia of a half-poetic understanding.

But a thinking Poetics (*denkende Dichten*) is in truth the topology of Being. It assigns to Being the place of its essence. (GA 13, 84).

Heidegger first accords to the “poetic” a power that the philosophical tradition has refused it since the exclusion of the poets from the (ideal) City by Plato. But to defend himself against the philosophic accusation that would not fail to be addressed to him (the accusation of irrationalism, of “half poetic” ramblings... was not lacking, in fact), Heidegger raises the stakes in a sense by makes “thinking Poetics” a “topology of Being,” as though Being were necessarily the first and last poetic word, the word of poetics in its “essence.” In this way, it is assigned to the poet to become the founder (Stifter) of Being, no more, no less! But what if Being has nothing to do with the matter, the “thing itself” of poetry? That is impossible, since Being always goes hand in hand with saying, just as eternity is the sea in harmony with the sun.<sup>247</sup> It is this going-with, this harmony, perhaps, in which it is a question of the status of poetry, of poetry’s place, its topos, that we will have occasion to put into question once again. Who assigns that status?

“What remains, the poets found.” Hölderlin’s statement (from “Remembrance” [Andenken], recurs often in Heidegger’s writing as a sort of ordering principle, a guiding word (Leitwort). And yet, it puts thought in a critical position: what are thinkers good for if they always come after the poetic word? How are they to reach the level of this inaugural founding, by interpreting it? Does interpretation not always come second in relation to the gift of speech? But speech must be received, heard. Would an unheard speech remain? Would it not be lost? And does not the addressee therefore become more essential than the sender, especially if we realize that the sender creates nothing, does not fabricate this given speech, but contents himself with transmitting it, more or less faithfully, like a simple copyist to whom one

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<sup>247</sup> See Arthur Rimbaud, *Complete Works*, tr. Paul Schmidt (New York: HarperTrade, 2000), 79.



dictates a message that he does not necessarily have to understand? But who is this “one” who dictates? No one, and this is why this situation applies to all speech to the extent that it is not we who speak, in the first place, but speech... or language (*Sprache* – we will return to this word). We content ourselves with hearing it speak, and our speaking is but a resaying of the first Saying, which Heidegger will name *die Sage*, though this too might very be a resaying. But there is hearing and there is understanding. There is acoustic hearing and there is understanding in the sense of grasping meaning. For the latter, a poet is not sufficient. Even if, according to an ancient tradition, poets are the messengers of the gods, yet another person is necessary to hear (understand) this divine speech, especially if, in the meantime, the gods have withdrawn, without this withdrawal meaning nothing. Perhaps it is even this withdrawal that calls for the poet through its “distress” (Not), just as the withdrawal or the forgetting of Being is what properly makes sense for the thinker. Not only is this forgetting not nothing; it “is” the only trace of a liberation of Being – for what destines it. In a text entitled “The Lack of Sacred Names,” we read:

Upon first view, the “forgetting of Being” names a lack, an omission. In truth, the name is a name for the destiny of the clearing of Being inasmuch as Being as presence cannot but become manifest and determine every being, when/if the clearing of Being retains itself and preserves for thought what came to pass at the beginning of occidental thought and what ever since characterizes the epochs of the history of Being up until the current age of technology, without knowing anything of this forgetting of Being as its principle. (GA 13, 234)

The forgetting of Being is Heidegger’s only “thesis,” even though this is not a thesis about Being. Being came as presence: this is Heidegger’s first thesis, the thesis marking his point of departure. But it is also the departure from any thesis on Being, from any philosophical position, from any epoch of

the history of Being. This thesis concerning Being, its coming-into-presence as presence, is also the forgetting of Being, the forgetting of what sending Being. Being forgets itself in presence, and when this presence in turn withdraws, we are free to think the sending of Being. Forgetting is thus not a lack so much as an open possibility, in this end of epochs (the epochs of presence), to return to the source of the destination of Being as presence, a source that nonetheless is itself never present (otherwise it would be but a figure of Being) and thus is not, without, however, simply being absent.

To common understanding, the meaning of Being (its “truth”) makes no sense, is nothing but a hallucination. Let us not talk about it any more and move on to something else, as Hegel says about death. But what could we move on to if there is nothing outside of Being, or if there is nothing but the beings who, deprived of the light of Being, flounder in the shadow of their insignificance? In order to certify a death, there must be a body. But if Being “is” indeed dead, has gone missing, we can say nothing more about it. Nor can we file it away: it threatens to return, deviously, one of these days. And we know even less about its mode of disappearance, which could we be a supreme form of Being, what I will call Being-in-disappearing.

Once again, this is not a privileged path, not a path at all, but a sending. It is that sending that determines the very aporia known by the name of “Being.” It is from within the experience of this aporia that we will read Heidegger’s gesture – and his saga. The question (of Being) is not asked, and it is even in that – not being asked – that it is a question – of taking an other step. This is what cannot be understood immediately, what is not understandable in itself but always through the other, which “properly” makes sense. It makes sense in that it makes a sign. There is no sense or meaning residing in itself. Put differently,

sense can only ek-sist, that is to say, inexist. From the very name of the Occident, nightfall, but perhaps tomb as well, we know that Being got lost along the way without properly being able to know this. In its very disorientation, this name calls for another orientation, an other orientation, not the same one, and thus not that of a lost, legendary Orient. We can say nothing about a source or a mythic origin, even a pre-Socratic one, nothing that would not already be fiction, a projection into the future of an invented past in order to mask the lack of a present that is nonetheless our only present, and our only chance. It is here that I part with Heidegger. And yet this separation is not simple, does not simply lead back to a return (to the things themselves, to take one example of a return). Return to whom? To sender? But he has left, one might say, without a forwarding address, or leaving only the address that always comes back to us, that is, reading. But what is reading?

“Reading properly speaking is the gathering together upon what, without our knowing, has already reclaimed our Being so that we might wish to respond or conceal ourselves before this demand. (GA 13, 111)

This demand (Anspruch) is a promise that is addressed so that we can answer to and for the demand, that is, give it free course (liberate it, co-respond to it: ent-sprechen) or on the contrary refuse to let it speak (ver-sagen). We will always already be exceeded by a demand that gets us into debt, makes us indebted to a response, makes us fail to keep our word. This excess marks the irresistible overdraft of sense, which will always have a large advance. Before even being present, if it ever is, there is sense, and it is this structure that I call “pre-sense.” But this “there is” never makes sense (at least not immediately), nor simply non-sense, this latter being the opposite of what it negates. To read, then, is to leave the demand, the Anspruch, suspended, suspended by this “step”

that, before being, passes sense in ever sense of the word: surpasses sense and passes it on, like a password that will never be given except in being passed from hand to hand. I give this “step” a name that itself can barely be heard (understood), that suspends all reduction to a one-way meaning: passer.<sup>248</sup> If only the poem dwells, it dwells in this suspension, almost in levitation in a space it does not create but that it nonetheless makes come, that it calls to come. There is nothing to say about this call, nothing that is sensible or senseless, insane (complete un/non-sense). The poem is made, woven from this coalescence of virtualities of sense that are immediately de-posed, and there will be no other way to understand the poem except in undoing this veil. But this deposition will always also be an exposition. To finish, we will never arrive at a pure nudity that is not itself but a supplementary veil. There is no transparency for sense, not that it is like a mirage, always farther away; on the contrary, the close it is the more it burns. Even as clearly as it incessantly enlightens, this flame still delivers no final text behind it. It burns in order to burn, no more and no less, and thus it always conceals itself. Perhaps we should even call it the Concealed. But how do we know if it “is” concealed? Must there not have been a day, distant but that we can remember, when it was given, delivered into the proper hands? Must we situate this moment in a language of the origin? Will there finally be a moment when we find the access to it again, finally separated from its forgetting (as religious asceticism was in another era)? And would this poetry be “the future life inside requalified man”?<sup>249</sup>

But poetry does not save anyone, Georg Trakl will say, and especially not someone who is requalified. If the Occident has indeed come (or is welcomed)

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<sup>248</sup> Although not a word in English, this word form brings forth all the implications of passing, passing by, passing over, passing from one place to another, and so on. In this context, it most strongly refers to this sense of passing.

<sup>249</sup> René Char, “A la santé de serpent” (To the serpent’s health), in *Œuvres complètes*, 267.

to the light of day like that “deleterious” nostalgia (Rimbaud) of an Orient or of a lost origin, what must be confronted at present is this “loss” of sense, this loss that is singular for being the loss of nothing, and that therefore is not truly a loss. What qualifies poetics is precisely that it disqualifies all appropriation in terms of gains and losses, but also disqualifies any definition of a capital one would possess, of an “essence” or goods it would represent. One cannot have it, only be it. But this is a being that does have itself, does not belong to itself. Concealed thus, it remains all the more (still) to be in that it refuses to belong to itself, and even therein lies its manner of being – differing/deferring all self-presence. Its place of being is this step that defers the coming into presence, into the proper, to which it does not come except in coming as event.<sup>250</sup> There is no place for an understanding of a place proper in the word place; rather, this dying-in-dwelling always differs/defers presence in deferring to its event-uality or, if you prefer, its happening.

“Poetry happens where, against all expectation, language gives up.... Poetry is the spasm or the syncope of language.”<sup>251</sup> We can never properly say what poetry is, and thus no more so could we say that it is the unspeakable or the “spasm of language”: with what language would we say this, since language ceases, de-ceases when poetry comes or gains access? However, this improper language will still be the most just, witnessing the deposition of common language, the only language to implement poetic speech – if the very name of “poetry” is not already a mark of this infrangible impropriety. We cannot say

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<sup>250</sup> The eventing, or the event, is what escapes Being, in other words, what does not arrive at Being.

<sup>251</sup> Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poetry as Experience*, tr. Andrea Tarnowski (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 74.

what poetry is, what its essence is, for it exceeds the category of essence. But if this is so, this is not to say that poetry is sublime or sacred, the domain of the beyond-language. We cannot say what poetry is because it and it alone says that, but says it in being it and not in saying it. Poetry says this like the blow of suspended language (always taking our breath away), of language cut off and thus coming – not to itself, not to language, but to its event. The poetic event is not what happens but rather that it so happens that something happens in no language and thus cuts language (off), cutting out its mark there, its trace. The meaning of the trace is never in itself, nor is it elsewhere (in some transcendent realm). The meaning of the trace is to be on the trace of meaning, if I can put it thus. The poem springs forth from the call to speak what demands and refuses a language, demands it as “pure” language, and refuses it as “simple” language. The poem is thus doomed to be missing from its word. Be even in that, it is doomed to keep its word, like a promise.

A promise announces. But poetry cannot be announced from the outside. It alone can promise itself. At the same time, it announces nothing, nothing else, nothing that could be extracted from it like its meaning or its essence. The promise announces neither the realm of God nor that of Being, but only the promise. Nothing other than the promise is promised. “Only” and “nothing else” seem put there to disappoint. Perhaps. Poetic experience, to take up Lacoue-Labarthe again, differs from the philosophical concept in that it relates to the “decept,” the deposition, and is not a matter of enunciations. Nothing awaits us there, neither fortune nor glory. There is no gain, but a step is won – and held onto, and said, if saying is always also holding, although there is nothing to hold onto, nothing but the promise, only the promise. That is the generosity of this untenable, ungraspable, solitude. There is nothing else, and that is nonetheless what poetic experience holds onto tightest and what

constitutes the singularity of its dwelling: it holds to this there, will go no further. For now, we will leave it at the (point), taking the place of a ground: groundlessness, again.

Poetic experience is to hold, to say – but how? Poetic experience here touches upon the limits of language, that trembling place in which the cutting between sense and the insane parts. It touches precisely upon this between that is less something between two people than an interview, a holding(-forth)-between: not the one relates to the other, who is not the other except for the one, yet for all that without being reduced to him. Therein lies all the difference from “philosophic” reappropriation. I have said that there is no sense of sense, but because of this sense, here (always here), makes no sense except in exceeding itself, except in relation to the insane, the without-sense, to name it improperly (but since it is without name, it can only be named improperly). That completely-other approaches, and yet this is nothing other than the same coming from the other border of its limit. That the other approaches (to the point of burning) does not mean that it presents itself. On the contrary, it withdraws and, as though it were empty, therefore shows the “thing itself,” which is always about to be touched, on the verge of being.... But it remains differed, deferred, delaying, dying-in-dwelling.

“The path is never a method” (GA 13, 233). A path, Heidegger repeats, is not only there for the love of taking a walk through the forest, is never a means of arriving somewhere, by which we understand someplace other than there (and it is a question of this very “there,” of what there is, there). The path is already the thing itself, what we keep going on (about). Thus, Heidegger’s poetics opens up onto nothing else, not even a new “interpretation” of Heidegger. It opens onto nothing, for even if we took this poetics from

Heidegger's own "mouth," it will never be able to return to him. In the beginning was the Word (or Being): the impossibility of a perfect presentation is exposed in the form of this past tense. In the beginning the beginning will have been lacking and this lack will have given the beginning: words, languages, everything that ruins unity and self-identity. Therefore, neither a plan nor a method is appropriate for this poetics. In fact, this poetics will begin with and leave off from Heidegger. But I emphasize "leave" because it is a question of leaving.

What is at stake in this departure is simply leaving, not going someplace else. However, by the very fact that there is no point of departure, that this point is anything but a point, the step already runs against its impossibility. It cannot leave from itself but only begin from the other, who is not the self but who, nonetheless, gives the self its departure. Just as there is no concept-point, not only as pure (of all alterity) but as concept (which implies the self-identity of the concept and its name), so too, if we must begin, leave off from, a point, we will have to begin to say it, and that saying (saying itself) will always be excessive.

In this sense, we could maintain that Heideggerian language (a construction that appears to me at once legitimate and problematic) constitutes an impossible point of departure to the extent that is simultaneously identifies itself with the essence of language and an absolutely singular idiom. It is all Greek to us, an idiolect Heidegger coined for himself in order to block all immediate comprehension.<sup>252</sup> We might understand this in a more enlightening

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<sup>252</sup> This is George Steiner's thesis in his *Martin Heidegger*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 16. His thesis rests upon the unquestioned evidence of common sense, who universal claim is maintained only by the fiction of a "natural language." From another point of view, this fiction also feeds Richard Rorty's considerations on the "final Heidegger" (Derrida), who is said to propose only fantasies for "private use."



way by taking this manner of speaking literally (which is already more Heideggerian). Thus Beda Allemann, taking up an indication by Lohmann, asks “if a language like the Chinese language, which is characterized by an isolative linguistics because of its nominal nature, would not be more appropriate for Heidegger’s language, because it anticipates its tendency to isolate words.”<sup>253</sup> This is also why we will have to deconstruct the privilege of the name, particularly of the name as the sacred name.

If the sacred names have become unpronounceable, including the name “sacred” (Heilig, saved or holy, unharmed or intact), that implies that an enormous part of Heidegger is ruined. We will have to take his side, mourn him, which will not be a mourning. Not only will nothing save onto-theology, not even the negative path, but the very care to “save” (even to “save the phenomena”) takes part in the very thing that has given way, around an event that is unspeakable, even “as such” (and that thus cannot be said even under the name “Auschwitz”). It is the very bond that relates the sacred (or the saved) to the “as such” that is at stake in the attempt for an arche-phenomeno-logy and that unbinds (and delivers) itself the moment that, and in the very place in which, the impossibility of an “appropriation” of Being (even in the most originary instance of an *Es gibt*) and the withdrawal of its saying are experienced. Impropriety is at the departure; it is general and generative precisely for translating itself, always differently, into the untranslatable singularity – that calls for translation, or retranslation.

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<sup>253</sup> Beda Allemann, *Heidegger and Hölderlin*, (Zurich: Atlantis, 1954), 114-15. The indifference as regards the distinction *general/particular* or *subject/object* (and even the deconstruction of that difference) is equally a “Chinese” characteristic in Heidegger. However, can we say that Lao-Tzu was “already” familiar with ontological difference, especially since ontological difference can only be said in the language of ontology?

The name liberates the thing inasmuch as it at the same time redresses it in a skin with which the thing can make a body in order to have figure, countenance, allure, dress. However, the bestowed name disfigures the thing as well, not to give it a figure other than its own, but simply because it figures it and thus disfigures it. Perhaps the only way to play out this play of veiling by unveiling that exposes itself in every work of figuration or of imagination (and every work is a work of these) will be to de-posit, to set down, names, at least to undo their property and propriety as substantives. To lay bare this play, however, is nothing other than to play it once again without delivering the ultimate content, "truth." Except in no longer playing the game, it is no longer possible to escape the disillusion that always delivers us over to the other instead of to the One. There is no way to avoid the game, if only because the game alone makes sense. Heidegger will not be able to escape it either: it is in the nature of things, these things that are not things any more than there is a "true" nature. The game is all there is. But the there is is not a thing, a new substance; in not showing itself, it shows only what is. There are names, things, but these are only inasmuch as they show themselves to each other, show themselves in each other. Made for this fold, intersecting each other in the interview, the hold(-forth)-between of that is to say, they deploy what we can therefore call a thinking poetics. And if we must say this of Heidegger, then this signature will have to be countersigned by an other. Heidegger, perhaps, will have been but a pseudonym for what must remain without name: "they are lacking, the sacred names."

No mistake about it, we will have to submit a (written) deposition of this lack. To finish, we must begin to speak it. Or begin again.

Chapter 9

THE GIFT OF THE GODS

Hermes, the proper name of a god of paths, of passages (*passance*), of accesses granted or refused, takes his name from a simple pile of stones, the significance of which we do not know. A passerby threw a stone there to win his favor. Hermes brings luck. He is the god of chance and of encounters, both good and bad, the god of highway robbers. In our time, he is known as the name of several satellite and telecommunications programs throughout the world, signifying a path to communication even in our own time. In a play of thought he declares more binding and more compelling than the rigor of science, Heidegger says that he is also the guardian angel of hermeneutics.<sup>254</sup> This bond passes by way of the message. Hermes is the postal carrier of the gods. He is there messenger, and in Greek the messenger was said to be an angel. He carries their word, their dict, and is also called “the radiant lookout,” for he has wings and (like a satellite) in a single bound can traverse the immensity of the bitter waves to the island of the End-of-the-World, where Calypso keeps the shipwrecked survivor of Troy and of the furors of Poseidon hostage. Without Hermes, there would be no adventures of Ulysses, no Odyssey. But Ulysses himself, wherever he lands, relates his own adventures. He is his own speaker, even if he disguises himself in the coat of a poor bard.

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<sup>254</sup> Cf. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, tr. P.D. Hertz (San Francisco: Harper, 1971), 29-30; 121-22. Heidegger relates the “hermeneut” to the god Hermes but also recalls Plato’s statement in the *Ion* describing the poets as the “messengers of the gods.” *Complete Works of Plato*, J.M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson, eds. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 534.

The poets, Plato will therefore say, are the messengers of the gods. But without these winged messengers, who would speak of the gods? The gods are the inventions of the poets, and thus their own, proper messengers. Thus, the messenger finds on his path (and this is the sense inventing or creating it) what it was his mission to announce. In other words, the only god here is the path. It is the path that sends everything: the messenger, the message, and the addressee (us). On the path, there is the hermes. A passerby threw a stone there, a white stone, a milestone, a mark(er). A passerby finds the hermes on his path. He knows he is on the right path, gives thanks, throws another stone in the same direction. Sense and the sense of direction precede. The sense or direction of the path is to be a path. It is pre-sense, which has already been given even before being “interpreted,” explained, shown – hermeneutized. Thus, it is before the word. Sense, meaning, speaks in that it gives hearing, understanding.

Like so many other philosophical words, like the word “philosophy” itself, the word hermeneutics is Greek. At the beginning of *What Is That – Philosophy?*, Heidegger writes:

We have already pronounced the word “philosophy” enough.  
But if we no longer employ it like a hackneyed term, if, on the  
contrary, we hear it from its origin, then it resonates:  
Ὁεῖοῖ Ὁβᾶ. Now the word “philosophy” speaks Greek. The  
Greek word, as *Greek*, is a path. (*What*, 6)

From where does the privilege of the Greek come? From a proximity to the origin. But this proximity is not given by the antique character of Greek, Greek being by no means the most ancient of languages. At a decisive moment in his course *What Is Called Thinking?*, of which the second part is devoted to the interpretation (and thus translation) of the first eight words of fragment VI of Parmenides’ Poem, Heidegger held that it was in fact superfluous to translate

them into Latin or German. But it is necessary finally to translate these words into Greek” (*What Is Called Thinking?*, 140). Translate the Greek words into Greek? Does that make sense? Or rather would there be no philosophy except in speaking Greek? We might believe so from reading the “first” philosopher (at least the first to be named as such). Socrates was preparing to demonstrate that all knowledge is anamnesis (recollection) – another Greek word. The experience therefore had to be conducted on someone ignorant, and Socrates asked Menon to show him one of his slaves. However, the ignorant slave had to know at least one thing: “Is he Greek or does he speak Greek?” All this is expressed in a single word in the text, as though it were enough to speak Greek to be Greek.

Why is Greek a condition sine qua non of philosophy, although philosophy is at the same time initiated upon its declarations of universality? Even Heidegger (at least the “early” Heidegger) subscribes to the credo, repeated from Plato to Kant and beyond, that to philosophize is proper to the human species, is what signs the human as such, and is inscribed for all time as its “nature.” Must we deduce from this that in order to be human, one must be Greek? It would be absurd to pretend that geometry, under the pretext that it is a Greek word, is a Greek science and nothing but. In the same way, the word “poetry” has Greek origins, but it is possible that in translating it into Greek we transport it onto completely different ground: poiesis names technique [facture] and the production in general, and in no way a poetic specificity. Perhaps the specificity of poetry has very little to do with matters of production, even if we interpret that specificity philosophically. In any case, whether or not this word is proper, the thing did not wait for the Greeks to show itself, and did not stop with Homer or Pindar, who, moreover, were not yet called poets. Why would it not be the same for philosophy? Must philosophy be assigned a Greek origin in

order to be authenticated? Or is this concern for assigning an origin not already a Greek characteristic? If every myth is the myth of the origin, then we can call this trait mythic. But we must reserve the privilege of the invention of mythic thought to the Greeks alone, even though philosophy is characterized (too summarily, in my view) as a rupture with myth and the dawn of “reason” or logos?

Upon first sight, Heidegger seems to repeat the schemes that bring back bad memories. To be sure, every isolated human group thinks of itself mythically, in the first place, as the only humanity worthy of the name. It is a question of cohesion. The Cashinahuas call themselves (and names are always at issue) “the true men.” In the same way, one could say that the Greeks, although less isolated, divided the human species in two: humanity properly speaking, composed of Greeks and of all those who speak Greek, and the others, the barbarians, those who talk gibberish, since there is but one language worthy of the name – Greek. Philosophy would thus be born from an exacerbated but also singular ethnocentrism, since the Greeks will have been the only people to tie the idea of humanity to language, to a language elevated to a universal status because it alone would be more than a language: logos. Oddly, this word has never signified “language,” and there is not even a word in Greek to name that. At least not one word.

If saying, like Being, “is said” in many ways, these different modes dwell, like Being in its ana-logy, in the unity of the word that designates “the Word,” das Wort. Heidegger would undoubtedly have refuted this translation. The singularity of this “word,” in German, is to split itself into two plurals: Worte are “statements,” and Wörter simple words. “The Greeks had several words (Wörter) for the ‘Word’ (für das ‘Wort’): several words for a single word, that

is, for the Word in the proper sense of the word.... But what is this proper sense? To determine it, the proper sense must first be distinguished from already the other, improper, senses.

The ability to make this distinction constitutes the privilege of the human being and is conferred upon humans by their determination as the “living beings endowed with logos” (that is, with the “word” in the proper sense). Is this a circular argument? If logos gives the human this proper and distinctive trait, it is because logos is itself the ability to differentiate, to classify, to give order – what we call “reason.” Differentiation functions like a language system in which each word is given in relation to the others as not being the others, but also in referring to them, in always being capable of being substituted for by another or of itself substituting for another: logos, that is to say “word”; “word,” that is to say... et cetera. Et cetera is again a translation for all the others, all those that remain. It implies the innumerability of the plural and as such might well be the word par excellence for language. It might be this word, yet it cannot be it any more than logos or word can, because there is no Word par excellence, no pure word that contains its meaning in itself, separate from the others, without necessarily taking part in them. The pure or proper Word is not a word; it is a barbarism.

By its very exclusion, the word “barbarian” gives the trait proper to the definition of the proper word. We could even say that it is the absolutely proper word. Unarticulated (if articulation is the pivotal point of language as an infinite and living speech), it precedes and makes possible the appearance of a language as articulation and the putting into relation of differences, as the specific and “proper” (relatively proper) community of a determinate language (and thus of a people). The word barbarian precedes the appearance of such a language

exactly inasmuch as it can never appear except in a language (here Greek) that thus defines itself by the exclusion of its other, the unarticulated. Greek defines itself and appears as such solely in tearing itself from the undifferentiated non-appearing of the “barbarian,” at least of what is named by those who “have” the word, properly. For the word barbarian is still a Greek word. The so-called barbarians never called themselves this. Or, to put it differently, the barbarian is always the name of the other: there are not self-named barbarians, and perhaps no self-naming plain and simple. The name always comes from the other. The other is excluded or, on the contrary, appropriated: the movement is the same, assimilation being no less a form of exclusion.

Heidegger would like to efface this impure origin in positing a sort of self-appearance of language to itself. That is supposed to have taken place, mythically, with the Greeks, the first to define themselves in relation to others (people and animals) according to the privilege of the “Word,” that is, of the Word proper. But the definition to which Heidegger has recourse (man is the living being who has, holds onto, possesses “language,” or rather logos) presupposes, first, that language is structured like logos in order to formulate that definition, and, second, historically comes after the plural (though always unitary) structure mythos-epos-logos. If logos comes last, this is not by chance: it is a philosophical and thus belated definition. Heidegger uses the definition shamelessly here, even though elsewhere he will put it into question in order to overturn the inevitable ethno-anthropocentrism it implies. What is most astonishing is the justification of logos by its irreplaceable character. We cannot replace logos by “language” [“tongue,” langue]. All animals have a tongue, even cattle. But they do not a tongue, language, properly speaking. It is a “simple” tongue, less than language, a tongue cut off from its meaning, without logos, that is to say, without saying. A cow, and by extension (in a relation only



“sensible” humans, that is, those endowed with logos, can establish) an infant or a barbarian does not have (access to) language, because they have only a tongue.... They are lacking this decisive supplement: the meaning of the tongue, language, that ensures that language, properly speaking (logos, and not tongue), makes sense, that is to say, that it says, each time saying its sense, that of saying itself.

The dream is of a self that is purely self-productive, but there is no pure (sense) unless it is purified of its other. Non-sense, however, cannot appear as such except through the sense that has appeared. But sense itself does not appear as such (as so-called/self-named “proper”) except in demarcating itself from what precedes it or from what it rejects at the same time – cutting all impure descendance – as not being sense. The word must affirm itself in saying itself as such, that is, as not another (or the other), although it cannot be said except in taking the place of another (an other), and of another that could always, according to the law of the that is to say, take its place in turn.

The ethnic purification that Heidegger practices is all the more astonishing for its concern for a “milieu” or medium that authorizes no purity, at least no absolute purity. The worst exclusion concerns animals. Even in the “Greek” (Aristotelian) definition, man is, before anything else, a living being. There again, a tour de force is necessary to re-translate the so-called meaning of “living” into Greek. First of all, to call for the translation of *zōon* as “animal” is just as erroneous and perverse as the translation of logos as ratio. Then, or at the same time, to carry “life” over the side of physis, which is itself related back to *aletheia*? If we in this way avoid any biological or zoological connotations, this carrying over settles nothing, or rather settles its account with the “purely” living being (by which we understand the being that is nothing but living).

Not having access to the “truth,” to the Open, since he has no way to say it (to manifest that it is there, or is the “there”), how could this being give the human its proper characteristic? And, by the same token, does this being not become cut off from life? Endowed with sense (with this supplementary sense, that is, the ability to speak sense), must it also be deprived of all access to “pure” life, so that it would be the de-natured living being, in other words, meta-physical? Would he (perhaps she... if we push it) alone be able to have access to death (as such)? Pushing this logic to the extreme, we must remove the ability to die from animals, from “simple” living beings. They can only perish: is this a difference between words? No, it is the difference of Being, that is to say (this comes back to the same thing, if you will), a difference of saying, again. How, then, are we to conceive of this “pure” life without that which delimits it: death? And how are we to think death without life? The Heideggerian concept of death must itself be pure, without a trace of life. But perhaps therein lies the “being” of the concept: in-born death?

What is presupposed is that through language, traversing it bit by bit without, however, itself lodging there, Being already speaks, already sends its pre-sense. Is there a presupposition? Perhaps not, or only from the point of view of a preliminary recollection. Let us take as an example the Greek word *ousia*. In everyday language (we would again need to know if this is not already a philosophy distinction), *ousia* signifies possessions, property/propriety, what one has, and by no means what one “is.”<sup>255</sup> It is only with Plato that the word takes on a completely different sense (which obliges Seneca to invent the word

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<sup>255</sup> “Just as the Greek word *ousia* is used in everyday language and means there ‘capital,’ ‘possessions,’ ‘goods and chattels,’ ‘estates’ (*Answesen*), and just as at the same time the everyday *ousia* is elevated to a word of thoughtful speech and then comes to mean the presence of everything present...” (GA 54, 95). Heidegger is hardly talkative about the “everyday” meaning of “capital.”

essentia). For the philosopher finds in the word a supplementary propriety, presence, and even the presence of the most-proper, that of the very to be through its present participle. That Greek grammar speaks is just as much a privilege as an obstacle for us. The properly-proper becomes generality par excellence, what is most common. It is this loss of "Being" in the very name of Being that Heidegger marks at the beginning of ontotheology. Theology is added in order to make up for the defect of ontology, incapable of presenting what is proper to presence. Its rights [its propriety] must therefore be restored to it. All of philosophy can be read as a repeated combat against the usury of language, a usury that philosophy believes it is reducing even though it produces it as the language of generality, of essence. To that, Heidegger will say, it must be objected that "essence" is not a good (i.e., proper) translation. In the same way, *veritas* alters the "original" (or literal) purity of truth. Perhaps. But if a word is not translatable by another, it is no longer a word at all. A word, whatever it may be, is what it is only referring to... and this structure of referral excludes all propriety from the beginning. But Heidegger's entire development aims to further "propriate" language, for example, to make the common word *Ereignis* say, in the word itself, appropriation. But this "event" would be so proper, so idiomatic, that nothing comparable could properly be named an *Ereignis*.

Logocentrism constitutes the essence of *logos*. Inborn Being, neither proceeding from nor produced by anything, is nothing but the self-manifestation to the self of self-saying, archetautology (it being understood that tautology is not in the first place saying the same thing in just the same way, but saying itself). To deconstruct archetautology is not to call upon the illogical or the barbarian. On the contrary, there is no other logic than that of identity to self(-saying). But this logic has itself come from the other of all selves. It is violent

because it presupposes this other in the form of the excluded, of the “other” (or the barbarian). But the other is never the other. To put it in another way, the barbarian is not an other; no, it is the same. A barbarian is a human being “just the same” (a human being is an animal “just the same,” et cetera). But a barbarian is not a human being in the proper sense of Being. All that adheres to an impeccable, cutting logic, a logic that cuts into the same. “Just the same” is not absolutely the same (a human being), and thus is not the same at all (as regards the ground, i.e., Being). But what does Being mean, what does it want to say: Logos? Is this to say that aside from speaking (being) Greek, there is nothing but the barbarian? It must be admitted that certain of Heidegger’s propositions give this impression. Being would remain the first and last word, that is to say, the Greek “beginning.” Yet that is only true for us. And who are we? Heirs, yes, but also the disinherited. But the Greeks were also disinherited. They are (I wonder if I can use the present tense) those who ask themselves what happened to them, which Being was, those to whom it happened for the first time (perhaps) in this strange “history of Being” no longer to know what Being (and equally: being “Greek,” “philosophers,” “men,” and so on) might signify. The Occident is born of this nightfall, of this fall in which sense (that of Being, of being a “there” of Being) falls under sense, at once brilliant and void. Now passing over all authority and all authorization, without birth, now burying itself under itself, under its own skin, it never ceases to oscillate between being the in-born and the living-dead, self-deliverance (the absolutely modern) and the return of the innumerable specters that it has become to itself. The Occident, I might say, were it not a bit too simple to give it but a single name, is this old man crying like a baby, looking to cut his own umbilical cord even in making himself his own grave digger (or in writing his epithalamium in advance). It is the Republic giving itself as the year zero of a new age of the world, Hitler killing himself after the end of the world: a single figure with two heads, the

obsession to be Being itself, and, if that is impossible, if we must necessarily share with the other, to be, all alone, nothingness itself....

There is no point of departure because this point has already come, torn to itself in the coming that always exposes it as the other, so that it could not make itself appear except in the moment that it makes itself disappear. I will return to this. The structure of departure prevents all reappropriation, and that is why it must be called the departure from belonging: the departure that does not belong to itself, no more so than does the now. The Greek departure can appear only to us at the moment that it has already withdrawn. What appears, then, is disappearance, cutting, and this is what unremittingly dis-orients the Occident. There are not "pure" Greeks; there were already withdrawing at the moment they came (were thrown) into the world. The translation of Greek into Greek (arche-Greek) that Heidegger dreamed of aims to overcome the gap in the so-called "origin" and to restore its mythic purity. Because the Greek that appears significant always impure from the point of view of what has not appeared preceding it and throwing it toward itself, to fill this gap we must climb back beyond the Greek to what escaped it in its very springing forth (its departure: its cutting, its divorce from itself, which is its only possibility of being born). But that would also imply a supplementary ascending turn, surpassing us, since; fundamentally, we are taken up in the Greek decline. The other departure (der andere Anfang) invents another sense (direction) of (and from) the beginning. It says goodbye to itself as if, in this ultimate and probably impossible gesture, it could finally say itself at the point of departure of the departure.

Let us return to hermeneutics, a name for this departure that seeks to place itself at the very point of departure. Philosophy parts from what is given to it, Being or language, but will never recognize this. I take as an example the

Hegelian “itinerary.” First, only the Absolute is, is pure departure. But this purity must show itself as such, showing or manifestation being the very telos of the Absolute. But self-manifestation demands passing by way of the other, but not just any other. No, an other proper to the self is necessary, an other that abolishes itself in itself and does not remain other (a remainder would destroy the absoluteness of the Self Same). A same-other that effaces itself in its alterity is necessary to serve as liaison, as a point of passage, as a milieu for the production of self. This ideal milieu (that of identity itself) is language, which alone is capable of serving as a pure mirror of reflection. For example (we know that it is the example Hegel says manifests the “naturally” speculative character of the German language) *aufheben* is a speculative word, not only because it at once signifies as the mirror of the spirit of language itself. All language is performatively speculative, as the examination of the speculative proposition through the operation of the “sublation” of the copula attempts to demonstrate. The word posits itself, effaces itself, and maintains itself in ideality. It shows through, trans-appears the absolute. Thus, no matter how hard it tries to disguise its real “nature,” it always returns to that nature, or rather, it comes back to us, with increased capital, an excess of meaning, probably because the so-called “natural” is already an invention of speculative thought for which “natives” will suffer the consequences. Thought must make itself appear and thus must alienate itself in the medium of language, from which it can always extricate itself in sublating this medium to its own absolute light: language thinks “despite itself.”

This classic itinerary had to be set out (see Derrida in *Glas*<sup>256</sup>) summarily to bring out, in contrast, the Heideggerian procedure, which could be presented

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<sup>256</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, tr. J.P. Leavey, Jr., and R. Rand (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

as the reverse. Far from meaning preexisting language, which would be but a mirror of meaning, it is language that presides over the birth of meaning, on the condition, of course, that we know which language is in question. It certainly cannot be the “ordinary” language we use and abuse more or less like a tool that is appropriated to express what we believe to be “our” thoughts. This is so not only because this dominant conception of language as a means of expression is, in Heidegger’s eyes, a monstrosity against nature, a true Unwesen, but also because it supposes that language is in some way a being. But language, if it is the “depository” (the “house”) of Being, cannot in turn be a being, otherwise it would lead us to a sort of ontotheology literally speaking, in the manner of an absolute tautology in which the logos “is” the same. In the same way that simply ontotheology is the system that folds Being back into a being, the Supreme Being (God), absolute ontotheology, that of logos as Being, would make logos the folding of Being upon itself(-saying). I propose completing George’s line, “Where the word is lacking, no thing may be,” with the following: “Where the thing is lacking, no word may be.” This disconcerting proposition throws us off the path and demands a thinking of the thing that would be completely other than that of ontotheology. We would, for example, have to return to the piles of pebbles on the path.<sup>257</sup>

Heidegger himself corrected George’s line as follows: “An ‘is’ arises where the word breaks off” (*OWL*, 108). Saying (Sage) gives the “is” to the thing. This Saying is not the property/propriety of the human subject. rather, it

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<sup>257</sup> This would be the place to introduce the engagement with things (see Franis Ponge, *Parti Pris DES Choses*, (Cambridge, MA: Schoenhof’s Foreign Press, 1966). But I intentionally prefer the singular, *the* thing. Elsewhere, I hope to be able to demonstrate that Heidegger ventured quite far in a thinking of the thing that was not limited to the “simple” thing (of the type of the jug) and that surpasses even the (to my mind very formal and still ontotheological) structure of the *Geviert*. The thing is a party to the fold, to difference, so that it is in no way simply a question of either Being or “more than Being.”

appropriates the human subject as subject to the word, and yet even there it seems that this power is refused to animals, exactly as, even more radically, it is refused to the thing, which could not even be mute. Heidegger then clarifies: “The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us but it still remains unthought” (*OWL*, 107). Only those who are capable of speaking are capable of dying. We should even say that only those capable of speaking are capable of being... if it is true that Dasein is above all the capacity for Being. This is a may-be, but also a relation to being and to saying, to the world and to death. This possibility is thus not a simple eventuality; even less is it a faculty. It is more a matter of duty, of a debt. We must speak, simply because speaking is a matter of a failing or a lapse that is not a ham failing; but already in the structure of speech itself, the step (not) of Being for which a “there,” a place in which to take place, is necessary marks itself.

This lapse is not reducible to a simply negativity, since it is a call to.... But it cannot be evacuated in the name of a superior “positivity” of Being either. As such, everything having to do with a “foundation” by speech (even poetic speech) precisely cannot be sublated or reappropriated, but always remains in debt – as it the translator faced with the original to be translated. Consequently, we would even have to revise the canonical definition of poiesis as making-being. Language makes absolutely nothing be that was not there before, simply because Being is not made. It gives itself or refuses itself, comes or does not come; but even when it is lacking, and perhaps precisely then, it is always already sent, not as a being, but as what is to be, to be said.

Translation was spoken of as an example. Yet we must also understand that there is nothing but translation as soon as it is a matter of “rendering” what is to be said. Everything, to begin with the very event of a first time, is



translation [traduction] or, better, trans-lation.<sup>258</sup> So saying means translating. What is going on here... is precisely going, going to-ward, to – as one goes to the sea or to war? In that case, saying would be a goal, an end, a *telos*. But there is essentially no end to this advancing, no final word. We could even say that what approaches (but can only approach, even though this is no “reservation”: to approach is already to touch) the thing itself (to be said) most closely is also what remains, in the said itself, to be said, to be resaid, that is to say, in an other way, to be exposed to the other.

Translation as trans-lation toward the to-be-said is in no way a simply technical question. We might even say that it is not a matter for professional translators. It is a question of nothing less than finding a language, as Rimbaud writes, a that also always means finding more than one. It seems that in Heidegger's eyes there was but one language worthy of the name, Greek at the exclusion of all other (“barbarian”) languages, but at the same time we must at that this name (“language”) is improper or “unworthy” of the Greek. Greek is not one language among others because it carries the mark of the first time it sent itself Being, be this interpretation the form of this small, empty word “is.” But this first can appear only for us others, “moderns,” and consequently in the original repetition that is precisely translation as the “ordeal of the foreigner.” Thus, only the “literal” translation of what was the master-word of Greek experience, *aletheia*, will permit not only to open us to what is proper to this specific “foreigner” (not just any foreigner, since he is our source but also our future), but to open to the other what was at his heart, but occulted from him.

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<sup>258</sup> *Translation* here signifies a transport or transfer: “The transfer of documents to the library collection was completed.” The translation of the word from one language to another (in English, *translation* cannot be simply translated as “translation”) performatively illustrates the process of the generation of languages from one another. But the “original” word originally appeared in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and signified “translation,” so that here the foreign language (English) is more “proper.”

The strange thing is not to have called what we name “truth” by such a name, but never to have thought what is said there, literally. Even in dwelling in then Open of this “clearing,” not a single Greek heard [or understood] what his own language said, not one perceived in the word itself what Pindar named the “signless cloud of concealment,” the *lethe* that *a-letheia* suspends.<sup>259</sup>

Whether the etymology proposed by Heidegger is “true” or not is not the question. What is the truth of our word “truth”? According to Heidegger, it is but a Roman falsity. Latin translation is a complete catastrophe, perhaps even the major catastrophe in history for Heidegger. It re-covers precisely what is the very heart (though already occulted from the Greeks) of *aletheia*, that is, what Heidegger dis-covered: the precedence of the withdrawal, the retrait, of all “presence” (that is true, effective, has appeared, and so on). *Veritas* is a defensive and even obstructive word.<sup>260</sup> It is therefore an *arche-false* word, so to speak, not only because it makes of “truth” a compact organization, an impermeable block, like a bunker in the place that the Greeks experienced everything in the lightness of bestowed grace, of dispersing fog, of the “clearing,” but because it forbids all access to what, in the event of the coming to light, is also the secret hidden from view – say, what denotes the privative, and not “positive,” structure of the word *aletheia*. Once again, the question is not to know if the Heideggerian translation is “true” or not (which perhaps no longer even makes sense: what truth can one authorize oneself when it is a

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<sup>259</sup> Heidegger translated Pindaris’s seventh *Olympic*, 1:45 as *der Verbergung zeichenlose Wolke*, “the signless cloud of concealment” (GA 54, 110). Pindar, Homer, and other indeed experienced forgetting as what conceals everything and forbids appearance, but they never related *aletheia* to this forgetting, not even as its “opposite.” This is Heidegger’s whole difficulty; in the beginning, he finds only pseudo-essences as counter-essences to *aletheia*.

<sup>260</sup> I am referring to the Indo-European root *ver-* that appears in numerous German words: to begin with, *wahr* (true), but also *wehren*, *die Wehr*, *das Wehr*, all of which indicate guarding, as in the word “to bolt.”

question of its essence?). The question is to understand how, thanks to this translation (a reconstruction that passes by way of a deconstruction of the Roman translation, according to the very principle of “destruction” posited at the threshold of Being and Time), the original appears more original, so to speak, even more Greek than the first time. We could almost say that the “true” Greek word is only possible by passing through the translation into that language called German (Unverborgenheit is henceforth the proper name of aletheia), or at least that German reinvented for the cause of translation. This German, therefore, far from coming second, as a simple “servant” (ancilla was long its title of nobility), commands absolutely the access to the thing itself. The translator is then that creator Heidegger defined as he who “advances toward the un-said and pierces toward the un-thought, drives out what has not come to pass and makes the un-heard emerge” (*IM*, 123).

Differing from the “true” creator, however, does the translator not have something that has been said at his disposal, a model under his eyes that he should content himself with resaying, putting differently, rendering “differently” and yet in the same way – simply in another language? This is what we normally call translation: establishing the equation between one situation and another in a theoretically reversible equivalence. Brot is bread, and vice versa. Just the same, we might say, aletheia, that is, “truth,” and not Unverborgenheit or non-occultation (if we can agree that this word might be the “good” translation of the Heideggerian word). The test is to replace aletheia by “non-occultation” in any non-philosophical Greek text (and yet what is a non-philosophical text?), and that produces gibberish.... A translation is “good” (just, adequate, true) when we can return from the riverbank we have arrived at to the one from which we departed, from the translation to the original, with a minimum of loss or degradation in both understanding and meaning. There will

always be loss – something untranslatable, we say, without thinking too much about it. But if we limit this damage to the minimum, we will obtain, at the most, an approximation, a more or less faithful copy. Such is the most frequent result, and such is the normative, “scientific” conception of translation. A copy supposes a model. But where does the model come from?

The theory of translation follows that of imitation, of mimesis, which in turn determines every theory of Occidental (Western) art. Without entering into a debate with a long tradition that has its grounding in Plato's (and Aristotle's) metaphysics, let us recall the aporia constitutive of mimesis: it presupposes a first, inimitable term that nonetheless makes possible and to a certain point even demands imitation. This will be “nature” for art, and the original text for translation. To be capable of being imitated, the one like the other must begin by withdrawing itself from the imitation even in authorizing it. An entirely untranslatable text is quite simply not a text at all; but a text that entirely untranslatable, without remainder, is no more of a text. This means that translation exists from the beginning, and it is precisely this original translation that constitutes the untranslatability of the original. “From the beginning” means that there is translation in the original itself and that is why translation does not simply move from one language to another; it begins in language “proper,” or the “mother” tongue. Translation begins precisely as soon as it is to be said, and that is never entirely sayable.

To speak and to say is in itself translation, the essence of which can by no means be divided without remainder into those situations where translating and translated words belong to different languages. In ever dialogue and in ever soliloquy an original translation holds sway. We do not here have in mind primarily the operation of substituting one turn of phrase for another in the same language or the use of “paraphrase” (*Umschreibung*). Such a change in the choice of words is a consequence deriving from the fact that what is to be said has already been transported for us into another truth and clarity – perhaps obscurity. This transporting can occur without a change in linguistic expression. The poetry of a poet or the treatise of a thinker stands within its own proper unique word. It compels us to perceive this word again and again as if we were hearing it for the first time. These newborn words transpose us in every case to a new shore. (GA 54, 17-18)

To translate is to displace sense, and this is what Heidegger demonstrate performatively in translating the word for “translate.” He displaces the accent from *übersetzen* to *übersetzen*, and makes translation a movement of passing over and nearly vertiginous ascension. The ordinary translation from one language to another to the linguist Jakobson renders as translation “properly speaking,” “interlingual” translation, is at the lowest level. Then there is that translation Jakobson names “intralingual,” rewording, the reformulation of turns of phrase by others in the same language, which supposes, as Derrida, from whom I borrow these scientific references, writes, “that one can know in the final analysis how to determine rigorously the unity and identity of a language, the decidable form of its limits.”<sup>261</sup>

Heidegger calls this second translation *Umschreibung*, but leaves the word in quotation marks, which makes one think he finds it improper (in effect,

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<sup>261</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel.” *Difference in Translation*, ed. and tr. J.F. Graham, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 173.

there is rewriting around the word). At the same time, he concedes a certain “originality” (*ein ursprüngliches Übersetzen*) to it, but an originality that is inferior to the *absolute* originality proper to translation properly speaking, reserved for the heights of the couple *Dichten-Denken*. Only there is Word characterized by a first time, an absolute first (“man walked on the moon”), so that not only is this first not altered in repeating itself, it in a certain way demands a constant virginal repetition (“the act is virginal, even when repeated” [René Char]). But it demands that of *us*, the readers. Each time, we must hear this absolutely unheard of Word as though it were always the first time it was re-sonating, which is impossible in the case of intralingual translation, a simple re-formulation, replacement (*ersetzen*). With the translation (*übersetzen*) of the to-be-said into a unique and first Said there is no possibility of replacement, of substitution, or of *Ersatz* – thus of “translation” in the common sense of the word. For the very first word, the word is first, always already unique, irreplaceable, as though it belonged to no language, to the point that we might well ask if it is still really a *word*.<sup>262</sup>

Translation does not have, as its essential destination, to communicate, and that is so even if Heidegger speaks of a “message.” But this word must be retranslated into Greek, must pass over via satellite to the angel Hermes. We do not even have to resort to the Greek. If we closely reread Walter Benjamin’s text, “The Task of the Translator,” we will see a strange collusion (which does not exclude some essential gaps in the translation) taking shape between Heidegger and Benjamin. Both take as a “model” of the to-translate the “sacred” (or poetic) text. Heidegger explicitly declares many a time that (“essential”) poetry expresses nothing, does not aim to communicate a *content*.

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<sup>262</sup> “...a total word, new. Foreign to language,” wrote Mallarmé (*Collected Poems*, ix).

It is not communication as such that is aimed at (even though it is made problematic in Hölderlin as in Trakl), but the difference between the content to be communicated and the linguistic act of communication. In other words, (an illicit rewording), the difference between a signified (which could be outside-language) and the very act of *saying it* – which is itself already the whole sense – effaces itself.

Derrida told Benjamin,

If there is indeed between the translated text and the translating text a relation of “original” to version, it could not be *representative* or *reproductive*. Translation is neither an image nor a copy.<sup>263</sup>

But we must also be able to say that of Heidegger, all the more so since he always destroyed the essence of truth as adequation. That does not mean that the very notion of the original loses its rights, even if the original can no longer lay claim to the slightest right. We have left the sphere of the law, like that of representation. Derrida devotes numerous developments to dissecting (ironically) juridical manuals concerning the “rights” of translators (to make original, though “derived,” works). He remains perplexed faces with this claim of an originality, despite everything, of the text to be translated. If there is no longer a model, why could the translation not be called *more* original than the original itself? Why stop at a first time, when the original is itself already nothing but a translation? But this formulation already betrays the secondary role traditionally attributed to translation: “to be but a” (translation) is to occult the “cardinal” word – to be *already* (in advance) a translation. Heidegger names

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<sup>263</sup> Derrida, “Tours,” 201.

the irrecoverable advance of that *jump* the “origin.” Or rather, to retranslate, the *Ur-Spring* is found in this “already.”

In Benjamin as in Heidegger, the advance of the original is translated as “presence” (or rather by pre-sense, for the origin is never present *to itself*) of what could be taken for a “fiction,” and even a myth: “pure language” (*die reine Sprache*, for Benjamin) or “arche-language” (*Ursprache* for Heidegger). As Derrida again indicates, this originary language is not a theoretical construction like a universal language in the Leibnizian sense; it is not even a poetic dream like that of Rimbaud (“soul for the soul”), but is “the being-language of the language, tongue or language *as such*, that unity without self-identity, which makes for the fact that there are languages and that they are languages.”<sup>264</sup> It is to that mysterious preliminary unity that Heidegger’s three essays, entitled *The Essence of Language*, are devoted. The central formulation, the guiding or translating word that implements the reversal of *The Essence of Language* into *The Language of Essence* gives, Heidegger writes (*OWL*, 94), *die Ur-Kunde vom Sprachwesen*; not the “original document” of being-language, as this is translated in English, the original being in no way an archive (or, in that case, in the literal sense – the origin is in need of the archive) but the promise, the announcement of the original, and of the original as pure promise, the announcement of the original, and of the original as pure promise. For Benjamin, translation’s *mission* is to announce, almost messianically, the reign of pure language in the reconciliation of divided languages, this language being nothing other than *the promise of language itself*. (This formulation, in turn, is in no way a restriction: not only is a promise not nothing, but the “Being” of language, or better, its *may be(ing)*, maybe, is given in the promise.) Just the

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 201.



same, for Heidegger whatever the diversity of languages (which are secondary, as regards the to-be-said), the *task* of thought (*die Aufgabe*: its debt, but also the gift that there is promise in this lapse) consists in letting this announcement before all message be said, this “before-saying” in an absolutely *literal* sense, even in re-nouncing, as the poet in the poem “The Word” renounces the gem to find the word for the Word itself to the extent that it is *by* (through and thanks to) this renunciation that it is announced as promised *and* forbidden. Thus, for Benjamin there is a kinship between languages, a kinship that in no way implies resemblance or imitation, but only a common filiation *leaving* from a “point of departure,” which is nevertheless never present (or past, which comes down to the same thing), a point that could be defined as parting itself, or derivation as such; in the same way, for Heidegger there is, this time, an affinity not of resemblance but of cohabitation in the original neighborhood of *Saying*, an affinity not between languages but between thought and poetry, a proximity in the always unique manner of being *toward* this saying. The relation of Being *to* saying, however, can itself never be present to itself, but can only be capable of being shown beginning with the demand (that is, always differently).<sup>265</sup>

This saying must be understood *literally*, without changing the slightest comma. The task of the hermeneut (or the translator), be he thinker or poet, is not to lend a meaning to what does not immediately have one, but to make a sign toward what properly signs the *original*. An original *remarks* itself in that

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<sup>265</sup> The analogy between Benjamin and Heidegger stops there. For Heidegger, it would be impossible to postulate a unity of *all languages*, since Greek is immediately marked by an original difference in that it is not *one* language among others but is already the announcement of the language of Being. It would without doubt be appropriate to note the nuances of this privilege. When Heidegger proposes translating *Tao* as *Weg* (“path”), he thinks of climbing back to a source that is even more original than “meaning” or even “logos.” “Perhaps the secret of secrets of thoughtful saying conceals itself in the word *Weg*, *Tao*, if only we will let these names return to what they leave unspoken” (*OWL*, 92). The arche-word does not truly become that unless it is silenced or, better, unless it is sent back to its silent source, the *non-word*

it can, and even must, be *resaid*, in that it calls for replication, although it makes no sense to copy a copy (just as one does not translate a translation). Precisely because the original does not make itself understood (by itself), but always *through the other*, through this other that will be its unique and yet always repeated translation, and because, taken to the extreme, it therefore makes no sense *in itself*, each time it opens, in its own way, the *path* of sense, “sensibility,” if we can understand this word literally: the pure possibility of sense. It is thus that Derrida, in the guise of a conclusion, writes of this limit: “*Pas-de-sens* – that does not signify poverty of meaning but no meaning [*pas de sens*] that would be itself, meaning, beyond any ‘literality.’ And right there is the sacred.”<sup>266</sup> “Literality” is in quotation marks: this is not and will never be the proper word, and will never revert to a simple matter of literality. For the letter, *obviously*, has no sense in itself, does not “make” sense but in referring to the other.

The “not-sense” is the opening of sense before all signification. It is *passage*.

Thus the *path* returns. Heidegger comes back, in the third essay on “The Being of Language,” to the privilege of the path, thanks to or by way of the very word for “path,” *Weg*, as though it were necessary to open the word “path” to find the path *of* the word: a properly hermeneutic circularity that, nonetheless, far from taking us to the same point, deports us to the far away (*weg*, adverbially, signifies “far from...”), from the far away toward the near. It is thus that, by way of the bias of the most near (the Alemanic dialect of the verb *wëgen*), Heidegger renders the ordinary self-limitation *bewegen* (“to move”) strange. He sends it away to the point of making it signify a sending that sends

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<sup>266</sup> Derrida, “Tours,” 235.

everything, by parodying (but also subverting) a celebrated word: what is essential in a sending is not what is sent (the “message”) but the sending itself, since the sending is already *in* the sent (the word). *Weg* becomes an arche-word of language that belongs to the same domain “of source and of river” as the verbs *wiegen* (“to rock”) *wagen* (“to dare”), and *wogen* (“to sail/drift”). In English, the kinship is lost. Is this to say that an uncrossable limit marks itself there? But there is no limit to the crossing. Crossing leads by way of and beyond languages to this “Being”-language that belongs to no language inasmuch as it puts them all *on the way to Being*. On the way to saying the Word, but only on the way, *only* in the promise of Being on the way toward.

What has been *said*, nonetheless remains *to be said*.

## Chapter 10

### A GLANCE AT THE WORD

Since it is a question of speech, it is best to begin with what *Being and Time* has to say on the subject. Only one paragraph is devoted explicitly to “speech”: paragraph 34, entitled *Da-sein and Speech. Language*.

But before taking up this paragraph, two words. (They will always be more than *two* words.) *Being and Time* is conceptualized according to an academic model in effect at the time of its writing. This model has a thoroughly Germanic rigor or rigidity that, in other fields and in other camps, have proven their validity (a nod to Germany's military history). There are therefore “parts” divided into sections, chapters, and finally paragraphs. These divisions recall the dialectical method advocated by Plato to fish for the fisherman.<sup>267</sup> The problem of analysis (and it is really an analytic, even an “existential” analytic) is to arrive at the smallest possible indivisible unit. But the atom – *Da-sein*, with a hyphen, or perhaps *DasEin*? – finds itself always already divided, is never where it should be, in the One, but has already passed into the Other. Thus *Sein* is found in *Dasein*, but this latter is *not* Being, only its “there,” and yet, never *in the first place*, never immediately: *Dasein* has to be it (Being).<sup>268</sup> *Dasein* is the “indication” of Being in the sense that only it is capable of questioning the

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<sup>267</sup> See Plato's *Sophist*. Socrates indeed fishes for the fisherman in that he tries to give an accurate definition of the sophist and – to do so in a methodical way, moving from the general to the specific – demonstrates how one might arrive at or fish out a definition of the fisherman.

<sup>268</sup> *Dasein* is not currently Being but *has yet* to be it, in the future. This is why the future is the primary dimension of time in *Being and Time*, and this also begins to explain the importance of “being toward death.”

meaning of Being, which is at once there and not there, or there only in the trace, in the very word *Dasein*.

I now come to the place of paragraph 34 in the economy of *Being and Time*. It is part of an essential whole in which the three existentials composing the tripartite structure of *Dasein* take their place, and announces *Dasein*'s tripartite temporality as state-of-mind, understanding, and speech. The situation of speech is not as clear as that of the other two parts: we can see this in the very title of the paragraph. Whereas, in the previous chapters, Heidegger wrote, "*Da-sein* as state-of-mind" or "*Da-sein* as understanding," the "as" is now replaced by an "and," a conjunction that ties together in a manner much less strict than *als*, "as...", which properly identifies what is in question. Moreover, where does this isolated addition come from, this supplement ("language") that, this time seems to connect with nothing? We might think that it comes as an example, just as each of the preceding existentials was illustrated by concrete modes (fear and anxiety for state-of-mind; explication and exposition for understanding). But each time these examples constituted entire separate chapters. Here, "language" appears in the very title of the paragraph, literally as its *para-graph*: written off to the side, more juxtaposed than connected. What, then, is the *place* of language? Can this place be shown, experience *inside* "the constitution of the Being of *Dasein*" (*BT*, 209)? Can language be led back to the site, to the There of Being-there? And what speech could show (say) the place of this "phenomenon" without which no phenomeno-*logy* is possible?

We find the same paradoxes that rule in the very word *Da-sein* again in the relation between Being and the human being. Language is a paragraph written beside speech, a paragraph without which there is neither speech nor a "speaking" Being-there. It is juxtaposed beside what it nevertheless makes

possible, just as without *Dasein* no *Sein* can be shown, even as “not there,” which is still the only manner, or at least the *primary* manner, of being there: we recall that the situation of *Dasein* is *not* to be there, is to be *improperly* (*Uneigentlichkeit*). This gap, which at once crosses out *Dasein* and gives it as being what *takes the place of Being*, is itself the *paraph* of Being, its signature *in absentia*. “Paraph” is the same word as “paragraph”; the written form is just altered, the *gra* of *graph* lost (“paraph: a flourish at the end of a signature”).

Add *Da* to *Sein* and you will have distinguished the signature – countersigned what could never have signed except with the hand of the Other. For its beauty, I add the citation given by the dictionary, a quote from Jules Renard: “At the bottom of the page, he improvises a signature. The tail of the paraph loses itself in the paraph itself.”<sup>269</sup> Being loses itself in its signature, in this double that it nonetheless has *incited*, that should have been but a lieutenant, a placeholder, a substitute, but that has played its role so well, has held the place of Being so well, that it has become Being, literally exempting Being from being *present* – as Being.

This is the end of my two opening words (words of paraphrase?). No, one more word, which will take on the appearance of a footnote. In the concern to return to the original (Greek) acceptance of the word, Heidegger begins by translating *logos* “literally” as *Rede*, clarifying that this “literal translation can only receive its validity from the determination of what *Rede* means” (*BT*, 55). And what does it mean? For that, *Rede* must be *retranslated* into Greek, this time by a word borrowed from Aristotle: ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ or ὑφ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ, to manifest, make seen. But what will be named “apophantic,” according to a literal

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<sup>269</sup> Jules Renard, *Œuvres*, ed. Marie-Therese Guichard (Cambridge, MA: Schoenhof's Foreign Press, 1994), 54.

translation of the Greek, is a derivative mode of explication and thus of understanding, and not of *Rede*. Things are complicated if we recall that “the Greeks had no word for *Sprache* (language); they understood this word ‘in the first place’ as *Rede*” (*BT*, 209). Did the Greeks speak German *in the first place*? But a German purified, it goes without saying, of the word *Sprache*, among other things.

And us? How are we going to translate? For example, the central sentence: *Das existential-ontologische Fundament der Sprache ist die Rede* (*BT*, 203)?; “The existential-ontological foundation of speech is speaking”? This is a ridiculous and precious tautology.... If we write, “The foundation of language is speaking,” we obtain a formulation that is barely less hollow. Do we say, “The foundation (and why not add existential-ontological) of sleep is sleeping”? We say nothing as long as we do not know what speaking and meaning *mean*. To speak does not necessarily mean speaking or even meaning, but – *apophainesthai*?

And language? *Does it mean*? The text is clear on this point: *Sprache* is language and only language. The reference to Wilhelm von Humboldt at the end of the paragraph suffices to assure this univocal sense. But to understand it correctly, we ought to “forget” what Heidegger will say later when he has “turned” in *On the Way to Language*. For the moment, it is not to say that “language speaks.” No, only *Dasein* speaks – but another *word*: it speaks in a *Rede*, which is not a language, but a manner of being “there.” And as for language, the whole question is to arrive at situating it, *there*.

In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger returns to hermeneutics, a word that, along with the word phenomenology, had almost disappeared from his language. On this occasion, the Japanese man expresses his regret that the

“discussion” (or “situation,” if you prefer: *Erörterung*) of language remained “quite sparse,” to which Heidegger responds that he should read paragraph 34 more closely (*OWL*, 41-42; 137). But his interlocutor does not allow himself to be sent back to his studies so easily, and does nothing but express his regrets about the brevity of the text. The fact is that Heidegger is not very talkative [*bavard*] about speech (although he is more talkative about... chattering [*bavardage*]). *Being and Time* is not entitled *Being and Speech* of course; but speech is implied in it from the beginning, that is, from the exposition of the pre-concept of phenomenology (paragraph 7), a problematic concept in the literal sense of the Greek word: that which is thrown before and thus responds to the project of *Dasein*. Discovering from the beginning that the very word phenomenology already projects phenomenology “as such,” the analysis operates according to the hermeneutic path: meaning is anticipated in the word. It is always a question of the concept of *logos*. Heidegger does not stop after having retranslated *logos* into Greek, or rather ἀλήθεια as ἡ ἀλήθεια. This “original” meaning, he says, is always already second and derived: “*Logos* precisely would *not* be taken for the primary ‘place’ of truth” (*BT*, 57).

Let us recall the difficulty in assigning a *place* to language. One could take language for the “natural” place of *logos*, and this latter, in turn, for the place of truth. But Heidegger, inverting that, first thinks *logos* as the place of language, at least as its ground, its “base,” and, second thinks truth as the place of *logos*, which from then on becomes second. In the meantime, “truth” must have changed meaning, or place, and emigrated from the spoken to... what? The thing itself? Is that what we should say?



*Aisthesis*, perception pure and simple, sensible of something, is “true” in the Greek sense, and indeed more originally than the *logos* in question [“judgment”]. Inasmuch as *aisthesis* aims at its *idia*, or the being who is not properly accessible except *by* it and *for* it, for example the sight of colors, then perception is always true. Sight always discovers colors, hearing always discovers sounds. The pure *noein* is “true” in the most pure and original sense (that is, doing nothing but discovering, so that it can never cover over), is perception which looks purely and simply, takes in the simplest determinations of the Being of beings as such. This *noein* can never cover over, never be false, it can at the very most remain *non-perceiving*, an *agnoein*, insufficient to give access pure, simple, and appropriate. (*BT*, 57)

What is a “pure and simple” perception? If perception, be it sensible or non-sensible, suffices to give access to a being (“as such”), to phenomena, what is the need, *in addition*, of a phenomenology or of a *logos*? Are they not but supplements? Can we say just as simply that there is a “phenomenon pure and simple”? Since it is a question of seeing colors, one thinks of Wittgenstein’s aporias: how can we see blue if not as blue? But this “as” introduces a distance into the relation *to* the self, the very difference of Being, like that difference of saying-as.

It is not a matter of privileging seeing for itself, for each sense, in its proper domain, carries out a discovering of beings, and thus hearing discovers (is “true”) no less than does sight. The philosophic tradition from the beginning (Plato and even Heraclitus) has simply privileged seeing as the “mode of access to the being *and to Being*” (*BT*, 187). Being can be seen (according to Aristotle, it can even be touched), but it is important to see that “to see,” here, is to understand (touch, grasp). Moreover, this is what everyday language says when we say, “I see that...” Heidegger cites Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*, where it

is a question of *concupiscientia* as the “desire of the eyes.” Even though, rigorously speaking, it is a matter of the eye, seeing applies to all the senses as soon as the knowledge of things as they appear is at stake. To see is to know (ἀβᾶῖᾱέ) – to have *already seen*. And yet this “sight” of Being is by no means evident, even when it is expressed as evidence itself: the *idea*, that which one always already has “in” view. To see is to see *as* (this or that). The seen being *returns* to us from that “as” which it is seen; it *concerns* us only in this form.

Let us imagine for an instant that the seen thing is *not* discovered. Heidegger would say that this, by nature, is an impossible experience, for in this case nothing would be seen and there would be nothing *nameable*. There is not “blue” unless it can be said *as such*. Of course, it is not speech that produces blue materially in its blueness, but without it, that is also to say, without *seeing* it, which is never seeing *blue* but seeing *as blue*, there is not blue. The priority of seeing *in this sense* comes from the absolute precedence of *Dasein* in that it has the *sense of sense*. *Dasein* is always already thrown into a world that makes (or does not make) sense; it always already *understands*, even if in *not* understanding. We could even say that not understanding is already a possibility of *Dasein*, and of it alone. An animal [*bête*] can never be stupid [*bête*] in the sense of the stupidity [*bêtise*] that, paradoxically, would constitute the sad privilege of the human. Of course, we would have to question again this “evidence” that removes all sense from animality as a result of the elevation of *aisthesis* to the height of truth. We could almost say, and this is what Heidegger will say in his course on Parmenides, that the animal does not see. We do not see because we have eyes, but, as in the old evangelical saying, we have eyes with which to see.

Just as an eye without the capacity to see is nothing, so too the capacity to see remains for its part an incapacity if it does not already bathe in a relation of man to the discoverable being of the look. But how can a being appear to man, if the latter does not in its essence already relate to beings as such? But how can this relation be established if man does not establish himself in relation to Being? If man did not already have Being in view (*im Blick*), he could not think the nothing even once, not to mention an experience of beings. (GA 54, 217)

The privilege of the human is that of the relation *to...* in general (and even with the most general – Being – but also the most empty – nothingness). Before being this or that, the human is already in view of Being, in that the human is in relation *to...* There is no intellectual tension in “grasping” the sense of this or that about understanding. Rather, understanding has *to see* what *already* addresses itself *to* us, even before we have expressly paid attention. Understanding can usually do without words; that goes, as we say, *without saying*. I walk down the street and I have already understood everything without having to say anything – without saying “sidewalk,” “road,” “cat,” and so on. I have already seen all that, and *thus* have explained and understood it, without having had the need to articulate it.

To translate this phenomenologically (which should not be necessary either, it goes without saying): “A pre-predicative seeing pure and simple of that toward which we are oriented understands and explicates” *BT*, 189). This signifies that understanding is anterior to enunciation, but also that there is not seeing “pure and simple,” if by that we understand a mechanical operation. The eye is, as simple eye, blind. For example, how could it see the *absence* of anything whatsoever? To see an absence (a thing or a person *as* absent), we must already have what hides itself from optical “vision” *in* view. But this thing

that hides itself, even inasmuch as it does *not* appear, nevertheless appears *as such* – as “lacking” or having disappeared. This “as,” writes Jean-Luc Nancy,

...is not second, derived, added in an ulterior step to the first grasp of the being. In particular, it does not depend upon linguistic enunciation. It is rather it that makes this enunciation possible.... Language as articulation is not first, here; a sort of beyond-language that is no other than the articulation of the *Auslegung in* comprehension is first.<sup>270</sup>

This coming of sense to its anticipation defines the very structure of *Dasein* as *Being toward* ... (“I follow”: I understand). We should not believe that sense exists outside of this coming, that it subsists somewhere as something waiting to be captured. But sense is also not the effect, the production, of a *Dasein* that would have sense in itself the way it carries something in a pocket. Neither transcendent nor immanent, sense comes, gives itself in announcing itself “as,” but gives only its announcing. There is not sense except in *pre-sense*. Yet we must ask how this announcing can be anterior to language and even “beyond-language.” That it precedes enunciation and makes it possible, perhaps; all of paragraph 33 demonstrates a second a derivative mode of making explicit in what is enunciated. To enunciate is to make seen; then, in relation to what is already shown, it is to communicate what is said to others, that is, to make it seen in common (*Mitsehenlassen*). If we examine this triptych closely, we see that speaking always arrives *after* – sense. We might say that the word remains, in all this matter (of seeing, making seen, taking into view, understanding), in the position of a supplement. Sense always already arrives *before* the word and does nothing but express itself in it. It expresses itself there, signifies: speech always signifies, even when it is “insignificant.” (On

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<sup>270</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le Partage des voix* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 32.

this point, Heidegger agrees with Freud: the insignificant already signifies, sometimes is even what is most significant.) There is no word (provided that it be a word) that is not, in advance, traversed by sense. Even when we do not articulate well, or when the language spoken to us is foreign, “we first of all hear *incomprehensible* words and not a sonorous babbling” (*BT*, 207). Sense has always already arrived ahead of speech. Only that being with the structure of Being to..., *Dasein*, and it alone, can make (or *not* make) sense.

If this strictly existential conception of speech does not confirm absolutely the canonical definition of language as the *property/propriety* of the human being (especially if thought as subject), it leads back to its major prejudice (its pre-judgment) in that it denies all access to language to other living, and *a fortiori* inanimate, beings, and does so in the name of sense. In view of language itself, this conception refuses language all autonomy, all “identity” proper, contrary to what the same Heidegger will affirm later. This can be seen in the choice of the very word for “speech,” *die Rede*. It can indeed be said that language (*die Sprache*) “speaks” (*spricht*), not that it “chatters” (*redet*).<sup>271</sup> “One” always chatters, and this permanent chattering defines the everyday state of spoken existence: *Gerede*, the “one-says,” chattering. But chattering [*causer*] does not take place by itself; it has a “cause,” even if it is not necessarily causal, a cause in the sense of the cause to be debated. To speak is always to relate oneself *to* something; it is to speak “about” something (“let’s talk about it”), even if this subject does not need to be pronounced expressly, as such. It is enough that it be *in view*, and we always take it up from a certain point of view (*Hinsicht*). It makes up part of the common world *to* which we relate. That is why speech always takes the form of a communication. Being to... is always a

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<sup>271</sup> Is not *mimesis* the first step of articulate speech, a step that always manifests itself as a jump, a tearing of the “sonorous babbling” of the infant who does not yet have speech?

Being-with, Being-there is always a “common place.” Even when it is impossible for me to communicate with the other because I do not know his language, for example, I communicate with him in advance, being of the (same) world, while with a seal or an oyster I could not complain of not being understood. This shows once more that it is a question of meaning.

This communication can do without words. We understand each other better in half-words or even in silence. Thus, the strange praise of silence that breaks out in the middle of a paragraph devoted to speech. Those who remain silent in the presence of the other not only do not say anything, they say more than those who are never short of words. Their silence *speaks*. But how are we to distinguish the silence laden with sense from the silence that simply has nothing to say, especially when we hear [or understand] that the mute absolutely cannot remain silent. (Does he remain a *Dasein* then? Has he not fallen to the status of a stone? And what are we to think of this “powerful” silence that reigns in the stone, as Trakl says? So many questions remained unanswered at the time of *Being and Time*.)

To speak (or to remain silent) is, properly speaking, to have something *to say*. Even when we have nothing to say, and thus speak “to say nothing,” we *say that*. Speaking, or remaining silent, *spricht das Dasein aus* (BT, 205). We translate this as “*Dasein* expresses itself.” But *Dasein* does not express itself like a lemon that ex-presses its own juice from itself. *Dasein* has no juice, no interior; it is always already *aus* (expressed; out of), outside. It is *toward* ... and it is as such that it is (exposed) to speaking. *Dasein* is disposed to speech because speech is a disposition (*Stimmung*) to which one always already feels oneself disposed – even when not “in the mood to talk.” Expression is not a matter of the exteriorization of internal feelings that could otherwise remain

unexpressed without damage. There are no feelings “in themselves”; all feeling is *affected*, a feeling “oneself” in which the “self” designates nothing other than the harmony (or the touching) of he or she who feels and of the felt according to a certain *sense*.

This is what intonation (and in *Stimmung* there is *Stimme*, the voice), the modulation, and the tempo of a speech manifest, Heidegger writes. Nothing except extreme artifice can speak in an absolutely neutral manner. The voice always *betrays*. It always allows sense to pass through, but in another way, as though it flowed back from the pure throw to the being-thrown. Understanding, then, is not excluded. On the contrary, every disposition, joy or melancholy, and even the “neutral” disposition of those who have “nothing to say” indeed gives something to be understood, something of existence itself. But we should rather say that every disposition gives something to be *heard/understood* [*entendre*], and this is not exactly the same thing. This inflection of sense could well be the place of poetic speech that Heidegger curiously mentions in a short sentence, to my knowledge the only one in the entire treatise to define the poetic mission: “The communication of the existential possibilities of state-of-mind, that is, the disclosing of existence, can become the specific goal of ‘poetic’ speech” (*BT*, 205). That poetry be associated with the reign of affections is nothing new; but that as such it be a revelation of the possibilities (*existential*, and not simply *existentiell*) of *Dasein* is not evident in the context of *Being and Time*, a treatise that pretends to be scientific and whose “style” is nothing less than poetic. *Dasein* is its own *Erschlossenheit*, its own illumination: it illuminates itself, is its own torch, if I can put it thus. Poetry is one of the flashes that opens the “fundamental mood” (*Grundstimmung*). And yet this flash no longer appeals primarily to *sight*. It even seems lost from sight. One page later, Heidegger writes:

Hearing (*Hören*) constitutes even the primary and proper opening of *Dasein* for its most proper capacity for Being as the understanding of the voice of the friend that every *Dasein* carries with it. (*BT*, 206)

The “voice of a friend”? This is not yet the still more secret voice of Being (*Stimme des Seins*). *Der Freund* remains masculine, not feminine and not neutral, or neuter. Is this voice the call (the silent cry that each time does not say a word)<sup>272</sup> of conscience, of that “knowledge” that wants to call us back to our radical “nothingness” (*Nichtigkeit*) in order to awaken us to our most proper capacity for Being – the ability to die? No doubt the topos of the interior voice will recall the voice of the *daimon* that haunts Socrates, stopping him every time he goes too far: a voice that says nothing, or rather that says nothing unless it is to *prohibit*, and that accordingly, like silence, always has more to say than the voice of the one-says. In any case, should we identify the friend? Because *Dasein* is always a Being-with, a being haunted by its *other*, we change registers with this voice. It is not only that that strange but all the more insistent e-vocation stands out against the preceding expositions that gave preference to seeing at the expense of hearing, but that with the indissoluble conjunction (true fold) of speaking and hearing [or understanding], Heidegger approaches the dark continent of speech. At the same time, he insists upon solidly fastening this hidden face to the privilege of sense (evidence itself) and thus insists upon making hearing depend upon understanding. *Das Dasein hört, weil es versteht*

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<sup>272</sup> This gives the lie to the proverb “He who says nothing consents,” at least if we understand the word *consent* literally.... What is more, for the word *mot* [word], the dictionary or “book of words” (*Wörterbuch*) gives an “obscure” origin: “to say *mu*.” Is this an original mutism? The motif [*mot(if)*, motive word] of silence as the origin of the word is omnipresent in Heidegger. Take this passage from the *Contributions to Philosophy*: “Language founds itself in silence. Silence is to take measure, to keep it in the most profound” (GA 65, 510). Silence, the seal of language, seals language in its most profound interior and in the extreme generosity of a “measure” that is nothing other than the *Ereignis*. On the “voice of the friend,” I refer to what Derrida has to say in *The Politics of Friendship*, tr. G. Collins (New York: Verso, 1997).



("Dasein hears because it understands"): *Dasein* does not hear because it has ears, otherwise every living being endowed with ears would be a *Dasein* (the same reasoning follows for sight). The metaphor is more real than the *actual* organ. *Dasein* hears because it knows what it is listening to, because it is *there*, because it understands. Hearing is thus always already *more* than hearing; it is to be (thrown) in(to) a world, next to things, a world that always already makes sense. It is almost not necessary to have ears to hear [understand]. A deaf person can obey – listen (*hören, oboedire*) – in lipreading the "sense" that must be followed. Words are always, as simple substitutes for the thing itself, subsidiary. One can understand by the sight of a simple gesture, a hand sign, for example.

If to hear is to understand, then we can "understand" better Heidegger's statement about Mozart in *Der Satz vom Grund (The Principle of Reason)*: "To hear is to see" (118). It is not to have eyes for the invisible, but to have regard and eyes for what addresses itself *in advance*, in an "instant" (*Augenblick*) that is the flash of vision, the flash of the coming of sense. This instant has already preceded itself: sense must have gotten ahead of itself. In that it is analogous to being "to" death as that getting ahead of the repetition upon "itself." This explains that most of the time we understand only which is *already* "seen," understood, come. To understand, in this case, is nothing other than collecting what is lying around, as it were, "under" our eyes. On the other hand, authentic und in no way appeals to something *present*, but announces itself as what has already *passed* itself (over) in an "absolute" past. In the same way, *Dasein* does not understand "itself" except in getting ahead of its end, in understanding it as *already* come, which alone permits it properly to repeat its end.

Speech should be the medium par excellence of sense, even more so than music, which always makes us hear... sounds. Unfortunately, speech also makes us hear something other than *pure* sense: it makes a noise of words, and so is often deafening. It can no longer hear itself... speak; or rather, *we* do nothing but speak. This is the phenomenon analyzed by Heidegger under the name *Gerede*. We chatter and chatter, which composes idle talk... about what? Well, about nothing – nothing special, we say. It is already enough just to chatter, because, most often, there is nothing to say, and even for that reason we chatter on. Most media is inundated with idle chatter. If not, if we always had to “think before speaking” to find meaning or sense... very quickly no one would open their mouth. But the average being does not need to rediscover this sense all the time. He has always already expressed and understood himself. This self-understanding is his very existence as evidence, as what is self-evident and *goes without saying*. Moreover, that “we” do not know, and do not want to know, about such “evidence” can only reinforce this evidence in its so-called [self-named] legitimacy: it does not need to be elucidated, being clear as day already. (It follows just the same for Being, whose “sense” is lost in unquestionable evidence.)

Just as evidence is the perversion of seeing, language alters speech: far from making the thing itself seen directly, it becomes a screen. Just as there are no pure sounds, but always-sonorous things, there is no pure word, ever word being always already signifying (referring to...). Even though a sound (almost always) refers immediately to the thing that produces it (the wind, a truck, and so on),<sup>273</sup> a word is far from being this transparent. Not only does it refer to

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<sup>273</sup> There are no “pure” sounds: “We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling” (*BT*, 207). What, then, do we hear when we go to a concert – distractions?

more than one thing; it begins by referring to other words, which themselves refer to more than one thing (and to more than one word), so that the “thing itself” ends up being dissolved in an infinity of references. The worst thing is that in the end the very distinction between the “thing” and the “word” is obscured, the word unduly taking the place of, and in turn functioning like, a thing itself (which constitutes a fetish). In these conditions, how could the word act as transparency, as a sign showing a “pure” sense and effacing itself in this showing? For Saying, there always remain too many words. In other words, no words should (should have) remained. Does the eye, instead of making the phenomenon seen, show the “optic nerves”? The eye must not make *itself* seen, just as hearing must not make *itself* heard (otherwise one has, as we say, “visions” – or voices). The principle of *Dasein* is the transparency of the self, *Durchsichtigkeit* (in which sight still has something to say).

The struggle against what we call the “misuse” of words in order to reestablish their (so-called) purity in fact ends by resembling a struggle *against* words themselves. To tear “live” speech from language, we must rid it of all parasites, of all those innumerable deposits that ruin its claims to transparency. This leads to a paradoxical result: the “purest” word is the *silent* without, the word that no longer allows any other resonance to murmur in itself except that of the extinction of every “other,” of all alterity to its proper self. It is the arche-word that resembles the most used up and *extinguished* word like two peas in a pod.... Forcing this somewhat, I would say that (at least in the reading of *Being and Time*) language is a major obstacle to the transparency of the analysis, that in certain respects it is even the *tomb of sense*. Sense is perhaps maintained in language, but it is buried there just as well. Words are like the successive shrouds of the thing itself: they conserve it even in veiling and enveloping it in a fold that is so intricate that the thing itself becomes indiscernible, never entirely

able to be laid bare without remainder. At the end of a phenomenological dance of Salome, there will never be the ecstasy of finally “seeing” – the naked truth. But that is inscribed in the very structure of revealing, which is at the same time always (and perhaps even *first of all*) re-veiling.

If speech is an existential, language has no clear ontological status. On the one hand, it appears on the side of the thing as the “depository” of words that seem to subsist there. On the other hand, a language lives and can evolve or even die. *Dasein*, even, or especially, because it is in relation to death as such, is not in the first instance a living being; it cannot *be* dead. And finally, does not language, as a natural process analogous to a forest or a river escape the existential project of sense? Are the noises and chatter any less words than those we pronounce in public speech? Do the oracles rendered by the leaves of the oaks of Dodona have less or more meaning than a treatise on ontology? If we focus everything on the side of sense (and if we reduce sense to simple signification), do we not evacuate everything terrestrial (though not necessarily human) from speech: sonority, musicality, but also the geographic and even geological character of everyday language as “speaking” of the land?

Paragraph 34 of *Being and Time* closes with an admission of failure: “We possess a science of language and yet the Being of beings that it takes as its them remains obscure; better yet: the horizon of a possible questioning of its subject remains veiled” (*BT*, 209). When we speak of the “Being” of language, we presuppose that it *is* a being. The question of the Being of beings is the question of ontology. Every *logos* presupposes language, even if this is not in the form of *a* determinate language. With language and the question of its Being, the whole enterprise, whether it calls itself phenomenology or ontology, finds itself shaken – put into motion at the same time that its foundation is hit.

Heidegger knew this, and near the beginning of *Being and Time* writes: “For this task [grasping beings in their Being], it is not only words that are lacking, but most of all ‘grammar’...” (BT, 63). In paragraph 34, he evokes the necessity of “*liberating* grammar from logic” (BT, 209). This liberation passes by way of a deconstruction of the entire ontology underlying Greek logic, which served as the guiding thread for the elaboration of the “fundamental structures of the forms and elements of speech” – the doctrine of the categories and of predication. This deconstruction calls for the construction of a more fundamental ontology in which the preeminence of *logos* over Being is reversed. Following this path, we arrive at the *foundation* of the phenomenon of sense (as the anticipating structure of *Dasein*); but we also and in advance find language, *already* constituted, before sense (as making-explicit and understanding). If speech as existential is withdrawn from the ontology of the subsisting being, language remains and dwells a being whose kind of being is not clear, to say the least. *Sense* does not show through there. It seems to escape all control in words themselves and make a, *one*, body with the “flesh” of the word, to the point that to say *Brot* and *bread*, even if one *wants* to say the same thing, is still to say two irreducibly different things. This holds true to the point that meaning, wanting to say, is never assured of itself, never certain that it is not betrayed by what it *says*. The letter can always betray, even when it is (according to an ancient tradition going back to Greek grammar) most reliable:

Essent (*Seiend*) is that which is permanent and presents itself as such: appearing, phenomenon. The latter manifests itself primarily to view. The Greeks considered language optically, in a certain broad sense, that is, from the point of view of writing. It is there that what is spoken acquires appearance. Language is, that is to say that it maintains itself in the image of writing (*im Schriftbild*; “*l’oeil du mot*”; “the eye of the word”), in the signs of writing, in letters, *grammata*. This is why grammar represents language as being, while through the flux of speaking, language loses itself in the impermanent. (*IM*, 64)

In English, *Schriftbild* is translated as “the eye of the word,” literally the image of writing. It is not a question of an eye proper, at least if we understand by that the physical organ of seeing, which Heidegger would challenge. Earlier, he described the decadence of the eye when it passes from the original vision that “for the *first* time intuited (*hineinschaute*)” what ruled a preliminary sense, and considering the eye *in this manner* (as seeing), puts it to work – as work. The eye is decadent, then, when it passes from this original vision to the degraded view that is nothing more than “pure and simple contemplation or looking over or *gaping* at.”<sup>274</sup> To see is not to contemplate, mouth hanging open, wide-eyed (the eye of Cyclops, which, because it does nothing but see, is blind). To see is to project, in a flash, the very thing that gives sight.

Language takes on consistency, appearance and stability, in short, a body, in writing and only there. There, it *sets itself down*, but also remarks itself. This

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<sup>274</sup> “Schopenhauer’s ‘world eye’ – pure cognition” (*IM*, 63). The blinding of the Cyclops by Ulysses can be read as the triumph of sense over pure animality. It is Ulysses’ ruse that allows him to leave the cave a few centuries before Plato, above all through the invention of the *ideal* proper name, “Nobody,” the absolute pseudonym that Polyphemus, in his pre-phenomenological naïveté, takes absolutely literally. In contrast to the single eye of the Cyclops is Ulysses’ duplicity, that is, the eye of the word, always more and less than it, its trans-parency as the difference of the letter from Being. Logically speaking, it is Ulysses, as the being who “speaks (of) himself in multiple ways,” who should have called himself poly-phemos (even before being polymorphous).

indifferent remark that permits every word to be similar to itself and thus to differ from every other word is the *letter*, the typographical character. It is *seen*; it is the eye of the word. This eye remains at the same time absolutely blind: the letter sees nothing for itself. Yet it permits recognition; it is this very mark that gives consistency to a speech that, otherwise, constantly risks taking flight (*verba volent, scripta manent*). Thus, the consideration of the “letter” corresponds to the metaphysical tradition. If writing seems rehabilitated here, it is in the name of Being as a stable presence, and not in the name of difference that is unassignable as such.<sup>275</sup> Everything remains in the horizon of the “as such.” Good grammar, the “grammar of Being,” therefore fails to say its meaning. The word is not sufficiently *visionary*, including the word “Being” itself, which says (and does) nothing *remarkable* – that is the word or mark for it. We would have to invent another glance, another trait inscribed in the very body of language and that would be different from this blind and indifferent vision that is the letter. We would have to surpass the letter and finally touch the *spirit* (of language). But is that itself not already a blind word? Hölderlin reminds us so perfectly, “King Oedipus has *one eye too many*, perhaps”... the eye for what is not to be seen (See Appendix, “*In lovely blueness...*”).

But if it is only in light that what appears can allow itself to be seen, “light itself remains in a dimension of opening and of *liberty*” that Heidegger will name *die Lichtung* or *das Ereignis*: the flash that makes come (but also the coming-as-event). In *Ereignis*, in the “eye” of this word, there would be (though as a distant trace, already become *tain*) the *Aug*, the eye. The word gives us the

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<sup>275</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), where the same citation from *An Introduction to Metaphysics* is found, with the following commentary: “This does not contradict but confirms, paradoxically, the disdain of writing which ... saves metaphorical writing as the initial inscription of truth upon the soul” (184).

eye at the very moment in which it no longer gives anything to be seen, nothing but the in-visible that is *in* the visible without residing there, *in* the letter, just as silence always returns to (re)sound in every word when it is left to go on its way, returns to haunt it in its *body*: the dead body of a live language, ready to be reanimated every time a fresh breath is lent it, as though we (those “endowed with speech”) were but the puppets of a theater of shadows. This is the moment in which *language speaks*. At this moment, everything is reversed. But has philosophy not always carried out this reversal of the glance? From beings to Being – and now, from Being to what?



## Chapter 11

### THE PATH TO LANGUAGE

The phrase “the path to language” sounds like “the route to Compostela”: a pilgrimage with a precise goal. But if we can arrive at Compostela sooner or later, we cannot arrive at language. We, the beings “endowed with speech,” are already there. Yet are we there properly *speaking*? Are we the There of speech, or do we rather still have to be it (this There)?

The path to language does not lead toward us. On the contrary, we must travel *far* to find this “near,” this There, that we have to be. The path of the most near is also the longest path. Those who wish to follow it are from the beginning caught in an interlacing of knots that are peculiar in that they spiral upon one another more and more tightly, as Heidegger’s formulation shows: *Die Sprache als die Sprache zur Sprache bringen* (“To bring language as language to language” [OWL, 112]). It is a question of language; language is what must be “brought to language” (*zur Sprache bringen*). We cannot consider anything but in speaking. But speaking supposes the capacity to speak and thus *already* supposes language. The entire question turns around this “already,” the gift and the possibility of speaking this gift, which is itself the gift of speaking. The path resembles a serpent biting its tail: it is a hermeneutic circle, or what I call the advance of pre-sense. As Heidegger writes, “the circle is a particular case of interlacing”<sup>276</sup> The figure of the circle is the kind of metaphor proper for

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<sup>276</sup> *Der Zirkel ist ein besonderer Fall des genannten Geflechtes* (The circle is a special case of our web of language) OWL, 113). In a note in the *Gesamtausgabe* (GA 12, 230), Heidegger indicates that the name *Geflecht* is “bad,” while “circle” is good. Nonetheless, he continues as follows: *flechten: plectere, ὄϊ δ᾽εἶ ἐπ*, and we remember that *symploke* is the

the kind of trans-lation and relation that takes place in language – it always *returns* to the Same. But in the returning there in the formulation, it necessarily complicates itself. The same to which language returns is not exactly the same, since it must be repeated *textually* by the conjunction *als*, “as,” the marker or distinctive sign of meaning. To carry language *as* language to language is not simply to speak of language as one thing among others. This is so not only because what is aimed at and thematized is the same, but also because to carry to language, here, is to speak as such, because what is *proper* to language is to say *as*; it is *to appropriate* (*eignen*).

But to appropriate as what? As *die Sprache*. We did translate *die Sprache* as “language,” but language is no longer the same, no longer the original, the *German* language. Here we are once again stopped short by a problem of translation. Can we not leave the difference between languages aside, especially if there is nothing but language? The English reader risks being completely lost, for he will almost never find the word “language” in the translation published under the title *the path to language*. Why? Because in translating *Sprache* as “language,” we would lose the play that recurs everywhere in Heidegger’s language: *die Sprache spricht*. Translating this as “speech speaks” brings out the tautology implicit in the German more clearly. Still, this translation will only be provisional, for *Sprache* is language. The translator adds, in the form of an “it goes without saying that *no* linguistic notion, definition, or distinction *whatsoever* has its place here.” True, Heidegger has *displaced* just about everything, so that linguistics will find its offspring, notably the famous distinction between *speech* and *language*, in his work. But does mimetically

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art of a royal weaving, or dialectics, for Plato. From that, we have *falten* (“to fold”) and *das Gefalt*, a word “invented” to express the unity of the Fold [*Pli*] gathered upon itself, enfolded, made its own accomplice [*complice*].

renewing this *ignorance* (in the sense of the verb *to ignore*) of linguistics not risk proving right all those who critique “Heideggerianism” for its lack of rigor? Thus, Meschonnic writes:

Heideggerianism, which is a cult of language, cannot, however, say “language” for *Sprache*. Instead of “*tongue*” it says “*speech*” or the relatively neutral “*language*.” It says the opposite of what would be necessary. It says exactly the word that language hides. For the entire conceptual organization of *Sprache* is turned toward the elimination of *speech* in Saussure’s sense and of discourse in Benvéniste’s sense.<sup>277</sup>

On the one hand, Meschonnic is right to denounce an “absence of technical rigor” that comes from a will to dissimulate in the translation of *Sprache* as “speech, because this translation in effect masks the turning from *Being and Time* to *On the Way to Language*. This turning is characterized by the disappearance of discourse (*Rede*) and the gathering together of the reflection on language in the single word *Sprache*. Speech as *Rede* remains an existential of *Dasein*, while *Sprache* (of which we have seen how little its *place* is assured) overflows the framework of the existential analytic on all sides. On the other hand, it is always a question of speech, except that speech does not in the first place return to those who speak it (even if they are *Daseins* and not subjects) but to itself. We might well regret the absence of all consideration for linguistics, and notably for the distinction *tongue* / *language*, by Heidegger, but this position is just as deficient in rigor as the incriminated translation. We forget what foundations linguistics (and grammar) rest upon and act as though this distinction were self-evident (without even questioning the “language”

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<sup>277</sup> Henri Meschonnic, *Le Langage Heidegger*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 282.

spoken by linguistics, for example). This distinction cannot work, however, unless we presuppose *tongue* as an activity emanating from a human subject.

Nonetheless, in saying *language*, does Heidegger not essentialize the “thing,” and does he not do so through *a* language (German, itself originally linked to Greek), as though this language were the only language, but most of all, as though that *went without saying*? This essentialization even seems to be made absolute, since it is a question of the language of *essence*, though of an other essence, it is true, of an other *Wesen* than that named “essence,” *quidditas*, by ontology. Language “has” no essence because it is not a *being*, and *a fortiori*, not an enunciator. In this sense, it does not “speak,” pronounces nothing. And when we say (or utter), “language speaks,” we utter nothing either. This is not a valid utterance because *no one* utters it, no one is at the base of this utterance to support it. But then again, who said that in order to speak a subject was necessary *underneath* what is said?

Let us be sure to understand this: it is not a question of withdrawing speech from us to transfer it magically to an other – here, “language.” No, it is always we who speak, and even who speak *all the time*, “even when we do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, or even when we are not particularly listening or reading, but attending to some work or taking a rest” (*PLT*, 189). Not to (be able to) speak, for the human being, would be like not (being capable of) being. Man is subject to speech precisely because it furnishes him with the ideal element of presence, the constant support that permits him to relate *to* everything. But speech is not language. In a sense, language never speaks, at least not in the way we speak; it *alone* speaks, in an other, though differently. This gap must be maintained to understand what speaking is *as such*. This “as such” signs the speaking “of” language as the place of a gap, a

gap in language, an unassignable place in speech as utterance, a place essentially *not* phenomenolizable – and that is why *Being and Time* cannot “situate” it in the structure of *Dasein*. A “phenomenology of language” will be, if not a square circle, at least a monstrous construction: where is the phenomenon in language? And yet, offering itself to *no* present intuition, but no longer being hidden, language becomes *the* supreme phenomenon, a *monstrous Showing* [*Mon(s)tre*]: theratology before ontology.... (A monstrous, but also simple, phenomenon, there is nothing *external* to language. If something remains “outside” speech, it is not as a domain foreign to language but remains withdrawn from speaking in speech itself – “un-said.” What is withdrawn remains of the same “ingredient” of language; or more precisely, there is no material, nothing but language. Language and language alone can speak – not the stuff, not the sound of language, not even its mouth.)<sup>278</sup>

A *unique* and solitary phenomenon, language speaks, does *nothing but speak*. It *alone* speaks (properly), speaks *for the sake of speaking*. This monologue, however, must not be thought, as Novalis (who is cited at the beginning of “The Way to Language” [*OWL*, 111]) thinks it, according to the model of human speech. This is not an internal monologue or the voiceless dialogue of the soul with itself that defines the discourse of thought since Plato. Language does not hold a monologue for lack of an interlocutor or in doubling itself to become its own interlocutor, for it is not a speaker at all. But it needs to be spoken, and thus needs interlocutors, *others*. Or rather, it needs *an* other who

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<sup>278</sup> It is on this point that Heideggerian thought stumbles. It does not seem to give sonority and the vocal their due and aggravates the semantic domination prevalent in the philosophical determination of language even further inasmuch as it accords presence to meaning. Heidegger attempts to correct this inflection by criticizing traditional (“phonetic, acoustic, and physiological”) representations, but he cannot show how sonority can gain access to a place other than that of its subordinate role in its own “autological” conception. He would need, in fact, to postulate sonority or the phonetic as having a *showing* role that is at least as essential as meaning, which would drag him into a dangerous Cratylism.

would be ap-propriate to it, who becomes properly himself by way of this speech that language gives him, that he will only *resay*, in hearing it speak. There is no speaking proper to this other (the speaker in general); there is only the resaid. Paradoxically, the purer the resaid, the *closer* the (pronounced, human) speech to speaking properly, without adding anything of its “own.” It is thus that language, this non-subject without presence, alone speaks properly: speaking, properly, comes from it as (ap)propriation.

This interlacing of relations that makes human speaking a relation *to* speech is at the same time extremely simple: to speak is to hear [or understand] the *voiceless* speaking of language spoken, a speaking that cannot *resonate* except in the *resaid* returning to “itself.” Therefore, “at its origin” all speech would be *tautology*. But here we stumble upon the inability properly to thing “the Same” that characterizes philosophy from the beginning. If, for example, we define the Same as its “other,” nothing will say the Same in its *propriety/property*, if, that is, it *has* property/propriety and *is* not rather that *propriety/property*. But then is the Same not the same as the Proper? Is the Same tautological, and logical? *Is* it even? Must we renounce saying anything whatsoever about it, except in *resaying* it (“language *as* language,” “Being as Being,” et cetera)? Is it in this original resaid that an unassignable *difference* opens itself in terms of identity *to* self, in terms of the “same” or the “other”? This difference would even precede “Being” and thus could no longer be qualified as ontological, no more than, in all rigor, we could speak of a *Being* of language. If, as an annotation in the margin of the integral edition puts it (GA 12, 230), “the language of all languages” is the *is* (of the *that is to say*), whether “uttered or on the contrary mute,” can we still say of a language *without* the verb “to be” that it *is* a language? Does not all speech come down to (re)saying, “It is”? “Such is the question,” Derrida writes:

...the alliance of speech and Being in the unique word, in the finally proper name. And such is the question inscribed in the simulated affirmation of *différance*. It bears (on) each member of this sentence: "Being / speaks / always and everywhere / throughout / language."<sup>279</sup>

The generalization of the "is" to the structure of *every* language reflects the becoming-planetary of the logocentric Occident. But at the same time can we forget what Heidegger was the first to name "the forgetting of Being," that is, that Being speaks neither everywhere nor always, that it speaks only with a mute voice, in a silence that nevertheless *resonates* through and *as* the *reseat* speech? To hear [or understand] this silence would already be a first step. For that, we would have to renounce the enunciation, including that utterance that says that Being speaks "through" every language. Renouncing the enunciation does not amount to remaining silent, as Wittgenstein believed. This renunciation must still be a *reply*, must already be language's announcement *to* itself, its resaying of the "finally proper" name – *die Sage*. Saying what? That is to say, Saying. There is no need to linger over the meaning of the name *Sage*, not that it is insignificant that in spoken language it means legend, but because we go astray in looking for the meaning of this or that proper name in Heidegger's language, like in ever language, of that matter. A proper name is not proper except in showing, designating, and not in meaning. That is also why it is untranslatable, or translatable only by the same, since it is the very name for saying the Same. One of the particularities of the German language, which did not fail to overdetermine Heidegger's own language, is that *all* nouns are endowed with capitals and thus are readable as proper names. The capital initializes the word according to a paradoxical trop of originality, since nothing

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<sup>279</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass. (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1982), 27.

is more common and essentially reproducible than the letter. But it is also on this double scene that Heidegger plays: *die Sage*, the proper name of language which says even more properly than *die Sprache* what speaking properly speaking is, is also, in common use, a legend.

If Heidegger makes an issue of this, it is because this name is the name of the verb that *says* what saying wants to say: *sagen*, “to say.” For us, a legend is but a manner of saying, and is precisely not the most proper one: it is only an “it is said,” a story, a rumor (*fabrication*). But the proper trait of a legend is that it has no author proper, a lack that we ordinarily interpret as an effect on community. “It is said” [*On dit*]. . . . This *on* [we, one] is the *vox populi*, and the legend is always popular. However, the people, far from only producing the legend, is itself legendary in the sense that it says “itself” and thus makes itself appear as people through and by the legend. The Greek people (along with its resultant culture) is born of the Homeric myths; it recognizes itself and reads its “proper” Being, its *genius*, there, even though Homer’s existence remains legendary. Myth is without author because, like language, it is not a speaker. A myth comes *before* being said; it is only resaid. It comes before the separation of discourse into two antithetical poles: the transmitter (active, producing) and receiver (passive, accepting the said that has become simple information). Those who speak the legend, far from being inventors, always already *receive* it (and yet, receiving it, invent or reinvent it), not only from another, himself having received it from an other in a chain that loses itself in the darkness of the ages, a chain that we call oral transmission. The very act of reception is at the origin of legend: it is the *originary resaid*. Even though information is always exterior in a discourse, what *forms* itself, in myth, is nothing other than the language for saying it, *that is to say, for resaying (it)*. Language precedes all content as self-formation, if the fatal categories of “form” and “content” still



apply. Saying itself as coming *from* the Greek language, which itself (re)says itself in myths, the Greek “people” takes form *as* Greek. Every myth is the myth of an origin, that is, a process of identification.

We must also emphasize that in Heidegger’s particular (almost idiomatic) usage of *Sage* to designate what is “proper” to language nothing refers to *a* myth in particular (or even to myth in general, if there is such a thing as myth “in general”). It is more a matter of a structural analogy: every word, whatever it be and whatever we undertake to make it mean, is a word *of* language, including that word chosen to designate language “itself.” That language *says* is never in our power, and it is in this that language says *before* meaning [or wanting to say]; or rather, we can only want-to-say, *beginning with* this saying “of” language. But what does saying mean to say? Saying, that is to say, showing. This is said and shown in the very word – in Greek (*dicere* comes from ἀπαγγέλλειν) as in German (the old *sagan*). And to show is to make seen, to let appear. But is this not already indicated in the “apophantic” function of discourse? Is there a difference, phenomenologically speaking, between the “showing” speech of *Being and Time* and what is named “Showing” (*die Zeige*) in *On the Way to Language*? In what way does “showing” constitute the arche-original ground of saying, that is, of language?

To respond, let us examine the way in which Heidegger treats the canonical representation of language, the one that is put in place from the beginning of Aristotle’s *Peri Hermeneias*, “On Interpretation,” and that, nearly unchanged, remains the theoretical matrix for every Occidental philosophy of language. Heidegger writes, “only a careful exegesis would permit an adequate translation of this text” (OWL, 114). To translate, we must interpret. And reciprocally – to begin with the title – *hermeneia* names translation as much as

it does interpretation. After having translated the passage in his own way, Heidegger emphasizes that each of the words used by Aristotle to name the complex and differentiated relations of voice to the passions of the soul, of writing to the voice, and finally of the passions of the soul to things, each of these words, different in Aristotle's text, is here translated by *a single* German term, because they are understood *through* it. This means that "our translation disregards the different ways of showing (*Zeigen*) that are mentioned in the text" (OWL, 115). With one word and only one – *Zeigen*, "showing" – Heidegger destroys the entire structure of relations that lays out the conceptual architectonics of language for philosophy as well as for occidental linguistics. And he does so, according to his custom, in the name of the origin, returning the "sign" (*Zeichen*) to showing (*Zeigen*), first, then returning showing to *aletheia* (the first and ultimate point), which permits him in turn to discredit, in the name of this source, all that is downstream, that is to say, the *whole* tradition, as a same and single decadence:

Designation is no longer a showing in the sense of bringing something to light. The transformation of the sign from something that shows to something that designates has its roots in the change of the nature of truth. (OWL, 115)

In a note, Heidegger refers to his 1942 work, *Plato's Teaching on Truth*, which clearly exposes this mutation as a degeneration of "original" truth. But if already with Plato truth was no longer the *aletheia* of Parmenides, then it seems difficult to maintain that Aristotle, who comes after Plato, was closer to the origin than his master. What is more, Heidegger was later compelled to

recognize that his thesis of a mutation in the essence of the truth could not be defended.<sup>280</sup>

The sign, in the sense of what signifies, designates, is thus derived from the sign that shows directly, in other words, makes enter into presence. What happens, in history and as history, is that what is derived, the offspring, far from *showing* the origin, the father, takes its [his] place. Out of the inability to present him directly, it *re*-presents him. But that is the very definition of the sign in classical rhetoric: that which holds the place of something else, takes its place because this thing is absent and because it must therefore be re-presented. But this question remains: in what way is representing less a presenting than showing? In what way does the “signifying” (linguistic) sign show less than a direct sign – a pointing finger, “for example”? Heidegger does not respond and would even seem to take the question as not having been posed since it is self-evident that metaphysics (in the – decadent – species of grammar and rhetoric) has lost view of the “thing itself,” even though the sign (whether written or not) is entirely oriented toward the latter – *ta pragmata*, in Aristotle’s text. Most commentators follow Heidegger blindly in this penchant (for declining the question). For example, François Fédier, who devotes about a hundred pages to the “interpretation” of the first lines of *Peri Hermeneias*, attempts very courageously, but also very imprudently, to return to a mythically “pure” and purely phenomenological source. Inevitably he stumbles on the taboo word, “sign,” since we read  $\sigma\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\nu$  in the text. The contortions he goes through in

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<sup>280</sup> “...we must recognize that from the beginning *aletheia* in the sense of the non-withdrawal of presence has been experienced exclusively as the exactitude of representations and the accuracy of statements. From that point on, even the thesis of a mutation of the essence of truth that would have led from the non-withdrawal at the heart of the Open to the accuracy of the enunciation cannot be maintained” (Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic,”* tr. André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 135.

order to avoid the word “sign” coming to signify “sign” and thus signification, in short, to *purify* the sign of any conventional and arbitrary representative element are sufficiently symptomatic (or amusing) to be cited:

In a sense, this is very much our word sign – but as it is employed in everyday language, not as it has been taken up by linguistic science. We know that linguistics distinguishes the “signifier” from the “signified” in a “sign” (we could even naïvely believe that it is a question of a phenomenological type of distinction). But when I hear said, “These clouds are a sign of rain,” there is no means whatsoever of applying the above scheme. In effect, a certain type of cloudy sky does not signify; it does not *make* a “sign”; even less is rain thus “signified.” We say on the contrary: “These clouds announce rain,” which simply means that when the sky looks like this, rain is not far off.<sup>281</sup>

But there is *no* pure sign; there can only be signs *of...*, and that is rigorously inscribed in the Being of phenomenology, so that a sign that does not signify would quite simply not be a sign. To want to eliminate the signification of the sign is to try to reduce the gap between the sign and what it “shows.” In the example cited (in everyday speech), clouds are not a *sign* of rain, they are *already* the rain. They are, at any rate, made of the same “ingredient/stuff,” if I can put it this way. Thus, the signifier and the signified are conceived as “two sides of the same coin.” But the signified as *referent* remains, in the Aristotelian tradition, irreducibly heterogeneous, and without this *leap* from one to the other, there is no signifying relation (or else signs are conceived as “reproductions” of things, imitations that must nevertheless be produced by the things themselves, though we do not really know why or how). What we always try to reject is the sign of the sign, which does not refer directly to the thing itself in its simple and

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<sup>281</sup> François Fédier, *Interpretations* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 49-50.

immediate presence to itself, but “only” to another sign, exactly as the letter refers to voice, which refers to states of the soul, these being the only direct signs of things. (But are they not also already *inscriptions*?) This structure makes all of language (voice, like writing) a supplement, a simple convention for re-presenting the thing *affecting* the soul. And if voice seems more immediate than the letter, it is because we can imagine a voice being affected more easily than a letter.

Nonetheless, it must be reaffirmed that the sign does not come *after* the thing. *Everything is a sign*, just as everything is sensible to us. Contrary to what we hear taken abusively from Heidegger's considerations on the forgetting of Being (that is, of difference), the thinking of the sign remains faithful to the “original” phenomenology. The quotation marks impose themselves as soon as the origin is seen as precisely nothing but an effect of a time-lag, as soon as phenomenology is seen as never original, but always derived, without, for all that, it being possible to *show* from what it is derived: *that* is its point (not) of origin. The “old” difference (between signifier and signified, between beings and Being, et cetera) does not exist in general unless it *appears*, and it does not appear unless it is shown, said – though always *in the name of the other*. Thus, the sensible is not named except by its other, the sense that gives it the power to be sensed/sensing, but that *itself* is never sensible except through that to which it gives sense – we can never sense “pure” sense. We cannot even show it; for that it would have to coincide entirely and without remainder with what it shows, the sign, to the point that there would no longer be any *difference* precisely at the origin of sense and yet never showable as such (neither as origin nor even as sense). It is nevertheless toward this supreme identification that all of metaphysics tends, in a hyperbolic process that rejects, with the same stroke, all “artificial” signs (letters or even voice) in the in-significant exteriority that,

according to a “pharmaceutical” turn we are now familiar with, returns to affect and infect the purportedly pure interiority of the “thing itself.” Is this not what Heidegger attempts in postulating an “intact” origin of saying as showing delivered from all supplementarity of the sign?

Let us return, however, to what Heidegger said about the *sign* in *Being and Time* (paragraph 17, “Reference and the Sign”). Signs, we read, “are themselves first of all tools whose specific character as tool consists in *showing*” (*BT*, 108). (The fact that signification comes last is certainly not insignificant.) the example is of course exemplary: “Recently [during the ‘20s], motor cars have been equipped with an adjustable red arrow whose position, at an intersection, for example, shows the direction the car is going to take” (*BT*, 108-09). Heidegger speaks of the indicator that was still moved by the driver himself. It is a tool that has a certain utility, but this utility does not characterize the sign itself. One can, in fact, always replace the indicator by an arm stuck out the window. Even in this case, the arm alone does not suffice to indicate direction. A code is still necessary; the *meaning* of the gesture must be *understood*, and thus the sign already *signifies*. That it signifies means that it is never immediately accessible: an arm might be stuck out the window to hang one’s hand outside, to wave to a friend, or... to indicate direction. Thus, it cannot be seized “properly,” as the sign *of the sign*, as a sign showing direction [*sens*], except by a being who *already* understands what it refers to, a being who has a “sense” [*sens*] of direction [*sens*] – to put it thus – which is spatial in the sense of the spatiality of *Dasein*: being endowed with de-distancing (placed at a distance that draws near) and of the “sense” of orientation. “The sign,” Heidegger writes, “is *not* properly ‘grasped’ if we just stare at it and identify it as a showing-thing that occurs” (*BT*, 110). The “arrow” does not show itself (it is not the arrow we must look at, as in the story of the idiot who looked at the

pointing finger and not the moon that it showed), no more than it shows a determinate thing (something odd, or a beautiful person), but it shows its own sense or direction [*sens*], that is, “going toward.” Oddly, this is *nowhere* readable, neither in the “tool” itself, whether artificial or human, nor in the “thing” shown. In this sense, this sign comes very close to the *word* that delivers its sense neither according to the signifier nor the signified, but only in what is called, very vaguely, “context” (in the language of *Being and Time*, one would say “the world”).

A sign must be *instituted*. Why? Because things, in their ordinary use, tools in the broad sense (and anything *can* serve as a tool, even the sun), are not noticed, not remarked. The intention of the sign is to bring out the *Zuhanden* (ready-to-hand), which is ordinarily unapparent. The sign remarks the *Zuhanden*, makes it appear as such or such a thing. That is also why *anything* can become a sign. There is no “pure” phenomenon that is non-signifying from the beginning and to which the value of being a sign would be added later. The question, then, is to understand what could be there *before* the institution of signs (as such).<sup>282</sup> If, on the one hand, there is no non-signifying phenomenon, signification, on the other hand, never comes from the thing: there is no necessary and intrinsic link between them. The example of tying a string around one’s finger demonstrates this. A well-known mnemonic sign, it seeks to remind us that we must not forget; but since it does not say *what* we must not forget, it is by itself incapable of presenting what it is the sign of, so that a *second* string is often necessary to signify what the first “means.” And yet the second knot might very well signify something completely different, or even signify nothing at all (if it was tied mechanically). But the string, whatever its

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<sup>282</sup> Heidegger later takes up the question of the fetish as the “primitive” sign in which the difference between the “signifier” and the “signified” is still entirely covered up.

signification, which is not *attached* to it materially, and which it can therefore lose, nevertheless does not lose its status as sign. A sign without sense or having lost its sense (of direction) is called an enigma. We will return to that.

If we understand the word as a sign *par excellence*, as what refers to... but that, considered in itself, is incapable of presenting the thing to which it refers, then the institution of signs is essentially nothing but the institution of language, with all the aporias that that institution does not fail to raise at its origin. A language is necessary to institute a language, just as one must know the sense of the sign in advance to institute it as such. And since there is no sign except *as such*, we must conceive of a self-institution that, nevertheless, has nothing natural about it rigorously speaking. The privilege of the sign, then, comes from what I have called *pre-sense*.

But there is still another type of “sign.” This time, the word is not *Zeichen* but *Wink*. It appears, for example, in the dialogue with the Japanese friend, when he says that the turn of phrase “language is the house of Being” “makes a sign.” The translator once again regrets the very word *sign*; he even sees it as “the most patent failure of his translation,” because *On the Way to Language* “literally leaves behind the notion of *sign* (that notion that, throughout the history of metaphysics, is key for understanding speech).” According to him, the “sign” in question is infinitely more *immediate*: “*Winken* means saying without words, but rather ‘directly’ with the body.”<sup>283</sup> But in what follows in the interview, Heidegger expresses his reservations as to the use of this word as the key concept (*Leitbegriff*) for language. How to prevent this conceptual drift? To prevent it in the sense of excluding it is impossible, Heidegger insists. We cannot get around the concept (as Heidegger himself attempts to do), because

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<sup>283</sup> Fédier, *Interpretations*, 109.



the concept is part of experience, or because all experience is conceptual, beginning with the concept of experience (and thus of the “path”). The return of the “sign” in the translation of *Wink* is a sign of this closure. It is also why the *Wink* does not leave behind the notion of sign. It is always a sign, since it leads from one place to another, but not in the same sense; far from being rendered more present, the other place, what would be called the “signified,” on the contrary remains essentially distant and concealed, and it is as such, in its “absence,” that it makes a sign.

Therein lies its difference from the traditional sign, and this has nothing to do with what is visible and does without words, and thus would be “closer” and also more proper. On the contrary, there is nothing less immediate than the *Wink*. Thus, the phrase “the house of Being” that is used to qualify language is not comprehensible in an obvious way; it presents nothing self-evident. But it makes a *sign* toward what *signs* language, that is, precisely a dwelling that is always more enigmatic inasmuch as we consider that Being *resides* nowhere. It does nothing but *haunt*.... It haunts or “inhabits” (these are the same word) language. Every word carries a (half-effaced) *trace* of its “passage” or *passance*, which is ungraspable in itself. This “sign” is of the same order as the oracle of Delphi, of whether Heraclitus says that it “neither shows (unveils, says clearly) nor hides, but *makes a sign*.” The oracle calls for interpretation but refuses it as well, at the risk of appearing as nothing but gibberish. But the *sign* it gives – in the way one gives “signs of life” – precedes signification. Hegel, who summarized all of Western thought, would say that it is impossible for a sign not to end up by signifying, even if it has no determinate signification. It is in this way that metaphysics will always be right, having by definition “reason” in advance. But that does not rule out envisaging a sign that would not have its “sense” in the signified but only interpretation the fact of *making* a sign, in

calling. To what? Not a what, but rather a “where,” a precisely that “where” *from where* it makes a sign. This place is not an origin (not a single point), is neither sense nor foundation, and perhaps does not even exist. But it so happens that it makes a sign, or *gives its word*, in the manner of a promise. Language has all the traits of a promise: it calls, makes eyes at us, says, “*Come!*” but with an “obscure mouth” (nod to Trakl). But it says this inasmuch as it comes even in this calling and maintains itself in it, going no further. In this sense, it is not the sign of something else, and thus is not completely a sign. But no more is it something else. It is a *cut off* sign, cut off from its other half, always calling it, but from its absence, from this very cut. The word is not, properly speaking, because it would signify totally, present its transparent sense without obstacles, but because, cut off, it remains open to... (The ellipses mark what remains to be said.) The word is dedicated, promised, and yet, in this promise, *nothing else* promises itself, neither the kingdom of Being nor that of God – nothing but the promise.

We will return to the promise, or rather it will return to us, ungraspable and yet *thus* to be held onto. For the moment, let us defer the promise (which will be still another way of holding onto it) and return upon the path of language that we will never have left (how could we, if we are always already there?). Let us return there to retrace the path. The second moment of the text begins with a return to language as language, to the “as” that marks its return, properly speaking. Language alone speaks properly, or *as*. This experience (of the return to the self that defines experience as such) is not a simple “return,” not a flashback. It would not be a question of gathering together the diverse traits after the fact in order to arrange them syntactically; it is rather a matter of an *a priori* synthesis in language itself. This synthesis links language indissociably to our speaking so that our speaking is taken in advance and

initiated in the speaking of language. Speaking thus enters into presence *as* that to which presumably “speaks,” that with which presence is concerned. “That includes fellow men and things, namely, everything that conditions things and determines men” (*OWL*, 120). Language is this common place, an “open house,” Rimbaud will say, and is open onto the mode of pre-sense *to...*, or more precisely of the *loan*. The rules of the loan characterize presence just as well as speech. “To lend” comes from the Latin *praestare*, to “furnish.” This verb is constructed in the same way as *praesentare*, with the prefix *prae*, “next to.” Presence or speech are only ever loaned. But in general a loan is subject to recall. But to whom is speech (or presence) to be refunded? It cannot even be returned to *itself* if it is not a responsible person. This failing is nonetheless the structure of the promise. Because it cannot answer for itself but requires an *other* to do so, to respond to this loan, a response, then, that pays into appropriation without return to sender, to the forwarding party, speech does not let itself be gathered up in a single unifying trait. It will only ever be able to let itself be resaid, named, that is to say, *renamed*.

The nature of language exhibits a great diversity of elements and relations. We enumerated them but did not string them together in a series. In going through them, that is, in the original count (*Zählen*), Which does not yet reckon with numbers (*Zahlen*), some kind of belonging together became manifest. The count is a recounting that anticipates the unifying element in the belonging together, yet cannot bring it out and make it appear. (*OWL*, 121)

Why cannot this unifying trait appear? Is it because of an incapacity in thought? Thought does not succeed in producing the experience of unity, but this failure is nothing new; it *stems from the beginning* and that is why this unity remained “unnamed.” All names for what is aimed at under the title *Sprache*

fail, are missing *from* the name and lack *a* name. This unity, however, is not a number. As we know, Heidegger considers everything marked by the sign of calculating, if not worthless, at least *secondary* in relation to the original, which alone *counts*. But in this evaluation of the principle, there is already a(n) (ac)count. It counts “without numerals.” How is this possible? The numeral is taken as secondary, in the same way as the letter in the composition of words: but what would a word be *without letters*? How, above all, could it remain present and identical to itself?

*Chiffre* [numeral] is a word that comes from the Arabic *sifr*, zero. The zero is unknown to Antiquity, but also to Heidegger, it seems. The zero is like the sign: it can be anything because it has *nothing proper* to itself. For Heidegger, counting begins with unity and not before, a unity that *already* gathers diversity together onto itself. Before, there is nothing – or there is the zero, which, however, is neither known nor named. From this point on, we understand why Heidegger considers numerals to be harmful to thought. Not only do they reduce all unity to the indifference of number, but they threaten the closure of the One, its *a priori* operation of synthesizing the diverse. The diverse can always be gathered together in the fold (of the) One (*Einfalt*), even though the zero escapes it. Gathering nothing together, neither unifying nor initiating, neither closing nor totalizing, the zero puts the privilege of *logos* into danger. (This privilege is always an “account” as well, but moreover a *gathering together* upon the self: *theology*, even “negative” theology.)

Heidegger dictates that the unity he seeks be called *Aufriss*. This is indeed a dictation: in our inability to find the One of being-language, we give it a name, acting as though it too were not one name among others in language, conferring upon it a governing status when, like all words, it is ruled by what it

is charged with saying. I will translate *Aufriß*<sup>284</sup> as cutting-up” or simply “cut,” thinking of the cut in a fabric or a verse (“...virgin verse / Indicating only the cut”), or, still more precisely, the cutting of woods, a “clear cut” that is more severe than the “thinning” of a forest that gestures in the direction of “clearing” (*Lichtung*). But the word for the One of the cut of this fabric or this forest that is language must itself be cut to make the woods of which it is made appear: *Riss*, the tearing or breach that can be a crevice but that always follows a layout. *Riss*, Heidegger writes, is the same word as *ritzen*, “to make lines” (or to cross out), for example, to score a line on a wall. But this example (which has made so many artists dream, from Leonardo da Vinci to Rauschenberg) is immediately described as a “devalued form.” That tracing (a sign or the word) be in effect *crossing out*, that deletion or the effacement of the trace be at the beginning of literature, cannot but disturb the scheme of a *full* unity that is dear to Heidegger.

This unity of the being of language for which we are looking we shall call the design.... The “sign” in design is related to *secare*, to cut – as in saw, sector, segment. To design is to cut a trace.... The design is the drawing of the being of language, the structure of a show in which are joined the speakers and the speaking: what is spoken and what of it is unspoken in all that is given in the speaking. (*OWL*, 121)

The gathering together is carried out through what is addressed or called for, *assigned*. This definition of the cutting-up (or design) of language thus repeats exactly that of the sign, the only difference being that what orients, guides, and gives sense is here reintegrated *into* the structure. Ordinarily we think what is to be said as external to saying itself, which becomes indifferent to

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<sup>284</sup> The word commonly designates a “cross-section” – of a building, for example. It is not a simple sketch or diagram, since it represents the *entire* building from its foundation to its top, but it gives a sense of volume in only two dimensions.

the former. Any manner of speaking will be good as long as it serves its objective: to make seen, to manifest, to present what is at issue, what is to be said. The signature of Being-language, on the contrary, is to gather together everything (what is said and what is not; those who speak and their speaking) upon this assigning. If this assigning comes from language, if as a consequence it “appropriates” everything, folds every element (even what is not put into speech but remains maintained in itself) into the fold of the proper that it puts to work, the demand does not remain any less enigmatic, almost the effect of a magic trick.

How can we say that it is language itself that carries out this assigning? With what speech? Is it language or us lending this goldsmith's hand? Does the wall mark its own lines, the earth trace its own furrows? Even if this were the case, an other would always be necessary to *remark* it. And it is there that everything vacillates. It is possible that without the re-mark or the re-said there is no mark, even no original mark, at least no mark *as such*. The mark will always have remarked itself and thus appeared; but it only appears on the basis of the non-mark, of a non-mark not even speakable as such (and especially not under the improper name of a “nothing”), on an *asemic* space that at once makes the first mark possible and impossible. Remarking itself, the mark crosses itself out in its originality. It is always already repeated, the mark's double, the sign of the sign. At the origin, there is the crossing out of the origin, the line on the wall, the tain of the mirror. Propriation happens (as event) on a ground (improperly named *as* ground) of general and *generative* impropriety. To say, to show, to sign: these verbs are all in agreement, but never return to themselves. They leave toward... the departure from belonging that is at the point of departure of all *assigning*. In the beginning was neither the word nor even Being, but the departure, the *not-to-itself* of departure. We will have to

cross this departure out, however, in order to imagine what will have presented itself and been lent to presence only as a departure and not as a return to (the) self. No one will come to reclaim his goods; the to-say belongs neither to one (he who says) nor the other (the saying "itself"); it *departs belonging* from the self. Neither language (which has no address and is not in a position to receive) nor anyone will again find their "(ac)count" there.

But Heidegger will not loosen his grip. He does not want to abandon language to its *wandering*, which never renders its appropriated and even thereby renders it "speaking." Let us read a brief passage from the end of "The Way to Language." At question is the transformation of language into information under the influence of the mechanisms of technical equipment. On this path, that language said to be "natural" is threatened by a growing formulization that is a putting into arrangement, putting it *under arrest*. The *Gestell*, its "fable" (*Sage*), is the final word of the sending of Being; but since it is still a word breathed into language by Heidegger, it is not the end (of the word and of language). The introduction of this (proper, that is, also strange) name immediately follows this invocation of silence: "Thus even remaining silent, willingly reattached to speaking as being its origin, is from the beginning a response" (*OWL*, 121). There are thus nothing but responses, responses to the "silent" assigning of the to-be-said. Our speech is this silence of language in that it makes language resound (*läuten*) without, however, making it signify (*lauten*) anything. The difference is that of an *Umlaut*: as such, *Gestell*, as noun coming from language, returns to language again, is reappropriated there. It is in this way that language "has" us (but also dupes us): every word returns to language, even though we think we are its initiators. We need language to speak, even though it gives nothing in giving itself. If it requires us, this is not

because it ceases to be the only one to speak, but because it remains the only that *properly* speaks. Language always has the last word.

At least, Heidegger says so. Or resays it? Resays what? Something resaid?



## Chapter 12

### POETIC ESSENCE

The first lecture Heidegger gave with the intention of “clarifying” Hölderlin’s poetry is entitled “Hölderlin and the Essence (*Wesen*) of Poetry.” As often happens in Heidegger (above all in *Being and Time*), the “and,” far from juxtaposing one thing with another, is an “is”: Hölderlin, *is*, the essence of poetry. Thus, if we cut this title off so that it says nothing but “the essence of poetry,” we mutilate the explication at its heart, as if we wanted to understand nothing of the specificity of this choice, this election, in which the name of a singular, albeit quite remarkable, poet finds itself associated with the *essence* of poetry. This association is a suturing that demands rethinking the essence as other than a generality that is valid for everything and thus for nothing. If *Wesen* designates something other than an abstraction, it is only thanks to what precedes it. Without Hölderlin, we remain riveted to universal discourse and “criticism.”

And yet, let us ask what role Hölderlin plays in this “interpretation.” His role is that of a guide: he leads from one place to another. He is a bridge. What is proper to an artist, we read in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” is to be that passage that destroys itself, or almost, in the passage itself. Nothing more than a “something” remains (*etwas*: not even a human being), a something that is indifferent in relation to the work, which alone *counts*. We must therefore acknowledge, with Heidegger, that it cannot be Hölderlin *himself*, any more than any other poet, who is at issue. Not a few consider Hölderlin to be the Cézanne of poetry. We can pass him over, since we do nothing but pass by way

of him; he is there only to give place to his poem. The poet effaces himself before the poem, which alone remains, alone rises up there, in its abrupt presence, like a temple. The name of its architect, which marks a false origin, can be passed over in silence. And thus we must say simply, "the essence of poetry."

And yet, a name such as that of Hölderlin is not so easily effaced. There will always be something left over from it. Take, for example, Heidegger's text entitled, "...Poetically Man Dwells..." This title is a citation taken from by Hölderlin's poem, "*In Lovely Blueness...*" The poem is sometimes attributed to Hölderlin, which holds little controversy, since scholars have all but agreed that given the arguments in favor of his authorship, it is unarguably from Hölderlin's hand. We find just a trace of the debate among Heidegger's commentary (*OWL*, 111-136). Must we say that it is a matter of literary history and that, as such, it is not essential? It could be then explained that the transmission of the poem is a simple avatar. The poem is attributed to Hölderlin by the person who has "transcribed" it, cited it, and given it as a citation, exactly as though it were a poem by Empedocles transmitted by a late scholastic. The scribe was called Waiblinger, and he never claimed the poem as his own. At any rate, he would have been incapable of writing it. Everything, we are told, carries the mark and signature of Hölderlin, and no one would contest this seriously. We can thus suppose that Waiblinger was but a copyist who took *dictation* of the "very" words of the poet, that he was a simple scribe or clerk. Perhaps, but on two conditions. One is that Hölderlin was really "himself." But the unfortunate man was already, if not completely "insane," at least sufficiently "other" to sign most of his poems with another name ("Scardinelli" for example). The other condition is that this poem be a poem. But it has been transmitted to us *in prose* and, whatever the efforts of the editors

to attempt to restore it to its “original” (or supposedly original) poetic form, it remains in prose. But what remains, then, of this pseudo “poem by Hölderlin”?

What remains is... the interpretation, Heidegger's commentary, which properly identifies the “contents” of the poem as being *by* Hölderlin. After borrowing the phrase from this “poem,” the interpreter immediately moves on to what it *means*. The expression of meaning will in effect be all the easier for the fact that nothing else remains. To be sure, Heidegger specifies that it will be necessary to “restore [the phrase] to the poem with caution,” but on what grounds can we restore a statement to what will never have been a poem except by attribution? What is this restitution that seems to proceed from a pure and simple *institution*? In the same spirit, if I borrow a fake Van Gogh, how am I going to restore it to the “true” Van Gogh who never painted it?<sup>285</sup>

But, before even know to whom the writing of this poem falls, whether Waiblinger or Hölderlin, the poem must first return *to itself*. It is for having heard this *internal echo* that Heidegger will be able to identify and authenticate the poem, not only this poem as being *the same* (poem), but, absolutely speaking, as being *the* poem, the poem of the poem.

Let us therefore read the text entitled “The Poem,” which begins by explaining that it is not possible to speak “about the poem” from a superior and external position. We are only permitted to articulate the poem's specificity *as poem* through the poem. But such a speaking is reserved for the poet alone. He does not speak about his poetry, even to say the same thing about it in another form. Rather, he poetizes *through* what give the poem its specificity, its

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<sup>285</sup> Or when Heidegger attributes the shoes “by” Van Gogh to “the peasant woman”... (cf. Derrida, “Restitutions,” *The Truth in Painting*, tr. Ian McLeod [Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1990], 259.)

“voice.” In other times, poets attributed this voice to the Muses, and this is also why we can speak of the *vocation* of a poet. But to speak through such a voice as a poet is another, and is rare, even impossible. This would be more than hearing oneself speak. It would be to hear the *source* of poetic speech; it would be being at this very source. However, Heidegger affirms in the form of three brief sentences that crack like bolts of lightning that there is a poet to whom that has happened: “A singular, and even enigmatic, poet. There is one. His name is Hölderlin” (GA 4, 182). We might ask how Heidegger can know this. Has he heard voices? Yet that is not the strangest thing. That there was such a poet or not, the “poet of the poet,” is less remarkable than the fact that he *keeps* his name: “His name is Hölderlin.” We should not be able to name him other than as himself, *the* poet, the only one, since he identifies himself completely with that voice that makes him what he is (supposing that one could be a poet, that this were a “state”). This is an absolute identification analogous to the one Heidegger has already made with language. The identification surprises here in that Hölderlin is a notable name but all the same is only one name among all the other names of poets. if we can envisage a “pure” language and therefore a pure poem, how can the name Hölderlin be hoisted to such heights?

We must begin by agreeing on the meaning of the word “the poem” (or the “poet”) by separating the two meaning at its essence. The scalpel passed into the duplicity of the definite article, which can signify either the universal or the demonstrative:

“The poem” can signify the poem in general, the concept of the poem, which is valid for all poems in world literature. But “the poem” can also signify the poem that is notable (*ausgezeichnete*), that is, signed (*gezeichnete*) in that it alone suits us in being assigned to us, because it dictates affinity from itself, the destiny in which we stand, whether we know it or not, whether or not we are ready to submit ourselves to it. (GA 4, 182-83)

What is excluded from this division is nothing less (we will have to take its side) than the “concept” of the poem; such as it is valid for the entire history of “world literature.” (This is not small matter, the inventor of the notion of *Weltliteratur* being none other than Goethe.) But the universal, being what is valid [*vaut*] for everything, is worthless [*vaut rien*]; it leads “the poem” back into the horizon of comparisons and values, or of literature (for Heidegger, an abusive term associated with cosmopolitanism, the dissolution of the Proper in the troubled waters of “culture,” that is, of the market’s entropy to a lower denominator). But it is not *just any* poem that is in question, but *this* unique poem, notable because it is signed by a drawing, a line that delimits an arche-proper figure. Its particularity is (in two words) that it is destined *for us*. But why it and not another poem? Is not every poem addressed to us? But it, the poem “by” Hölderlin, and it alone, says, and says in the form of a poem, as its own poem, this destiny itself, to begin with its proper destiny, but also with ours. It is the very suitability or affinity that it would be suitable for us to consider first. This affinity precedes *us*; just as “the poet never invented” the voice that dictates the poem, he only submits himself to this *assigning* (GA 4, 183). By the same token, we are nothing before this affinity; there is no “we” unless we belong and respond to the poem thus addressed and addressing. But how do we belong to it? In hearing or reading it? Is that sufficient if, “whether

we know it or not,” accept it or not, this destiny assigned in advance? And why would reading Hölderlin – and him alone – be a destiny?

Part of our difficulty comes from restricting ourselves to the horizon of reading “in general,” to the concept of universality, instead of following the sense *this* poem manifests literally. Max Kommerell understood this, reuniting the two lessons of Heideggerian “interpretation”:

What we must learn from you [Heidegger] is that Hölderlin is a destiny: equally in the sense that it is in him, or better, in his language, that our destiny, the dissolution and institution of a world that concerns us, takes place. And we must also learn that Hölderlin is a destiny for those who encounter him: like Empedocles, he leaves nothing without metamorphosis.<sup>286</sup>

It is also a question of the hermeneutic relation to a language that can give itself only if it is received, and that can only be received if in advance the possibility is open that it come to *speak* to us. As Kommerell put it, it would thus be “pedantic” to agree with any particular part of Heidegger’s interpretation. In a sense, it is all or nothing: either everything is unacceptable or nothing is. But, *before* everything, “to accept” will have changed meaning. It is not simply a matter of accepting this poem as what gives itself as “a” poem in order eventually to measure it against a kind of preexisting essence (“poetry”) and thus judge, pronounce something about this poem. This poem will always come to tell us what *poetry* is, but only on the condition of opening the space for this coming, that is, of thinking that space.

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<sup>286</sup> Max Kommerell, *Le chemin poétique de Hölderlin*, tr. D. Le Buhun and E. de Rubercy (Paris, Aubier, 1989), 113.

Heidegger affirms quite plainly that what the phrase “poetically man dwells,” which has been *attributed* to Hölderlin, says “does not speak our thought. Despite this, we are thinking the same thing that Hölderlin is saying poetically” (*PLT*, 218). In his response to Kommerell, who described his essay on “As on the Day of Celebration” as a “disaster,” Heidegger will say:

Unlike that of poets, all direct thought is a disastrous accident in its immediate effect. From that, you see that I *cannot* identify myself with Hölderlin in any way. An exposition goes even so far as to posit what is opposed to it. Is this arbitrary or is it supreme liberty?<sup>287</sup>

In a sense, we could respond that it is *both*. But this response would short-circuit the Heideggerian notion of “liberty,” which excludes the arbitrary. So, if there is no identification with the poet, there is an identification, that is, of what poetry is, of its “essence,” a destining identification, insofar as the poem is not only destined for “us” but *destines* us. Let us emphasize, however, that this “destiny” of the poem (to be readable as destiny) comes from its *own* possibilities. As a poem addressed to us, it calls for our con-sent [*con-venance*], a division, and thus a sometimes-violent taking of sides. Liberty is not the abstention from all bias, and the “objectivity,” or at least what criticism presents as such, of a neutral reading that would not engage itself is nothing but cowardice disguised as method. We could then speak, as Nietzsche does, of a “factualism of facts,” if “texts” are too often taken as intangible golden calves.

One example among others of an *oriented* reading is the text entitled “Hölderlin’s Earth and Sky.” It takes as its point of departure Hölderlin’s late

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<sup>287</sup> “Heidegger to Kommerell,” tr. M. Crépon, in *Philosophie* 16 (Autumn 1987). [Retranslated from the French.]

poem "Greece" (see appendix 2). Along the way, Heidegger makes much of the following lines:

A great beginning can come  
Even to the humble.

The lines are largely undetermined; there is no indication of the nature of this "humble" (also translated "Lesser" [*Geringem*]), any more than there is of the "great beginning" (*Grosser Anfang*). To be sure, the outline carries the title "Greece" and begins with the evocation of the "voices of destiny." It would be simply puerile to deny the poet's mediation on destiny. This meditation passes by way of a reflection on the relations between "Greece" and the "Hesperides." We find these relations explained in the *Remarks* on Sophocles' tragedies, of which Hölderlin undertook a translation that was his final work before his collapse. Heidegger lingers over this at the beginning of his commentary, even going so far as to indicate in a long note that,

Hölderlin's meditation on the "return to the homeland" and on the "*national*" will not be the object of our attention here [not only because] many things remain difficult to interpret and because the whole is not univocally assured as to its meaning (...) but because Hölderlin finished by leaving this stage of the path behind him, having gotten over it. (GA 4, 159)

But in the name of what can he affirm this with so much assurance, since "Hölderlin's poetic path," to take up Kommerell, is interrupted at precisely that point? There are the late poems, of course, those said to be written in his madness. And it is even because "Greece" is one of these, and because it is *named* thus, that Heidegger can predict the sense of a path that is hidden in obscurity. It is only in the name of the title ("Greece") that he can identify the



“site” of the poem. But he does not question the legitimacy of having recourse to such a proper name that perhaps designates nothing identifiable, at least nothing that could lead back to the thematics of the return to the homeland, as Heidegger comes to admit, moreover. And yet, seeing everything through the “philosophic window,” he does not stop calling upon the context of the *Remarks* to explain what Greece is for Hölderlin.

“Where is the humble [Lesser]? We must look for it in the place for which Hölderlin calls, looking outside through the philosophical window” (GA 4, 171). This expression refers to a passage from the letter to Böhlendorff (cf. GA 4, 157-58). But there it is a question of “*all* the sacred places on earth” and not only of the Greek places. Or must we assume that, for Hölderlin, Greece was the only sacred place? But then how could one sing the “angels” of the native country, how could one “begin anew” in liberating oneself from the shadows of the past?

Greece then, is given as “the oriental” or the non-Greek but *original* element that Hölderlin sought to accentuate in his translation of *Antigone*, as he wrote in his letter to Wilmanns of 28 September 1803:

I hope to show Greek art, which is foreign to us by national conformism and the faults to which it has always known to adapt itself, to the public in a more lively manner than is habitual by accenting the oriental that is renounced and in correcting its artistic faults when they take place. (SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 434)

This correction must be an “improvement” of the *original* text that through translation will become *even more* original. This is madness, if we follow Goethe and all those who are learned and “objective”.... But as Reinhardt writes, Hölderlin in no way acts thus from a taste for “orientalism, to

say nothing of the exotic.”<sup>288</sup> It is a question of correcting the Greek cultural tendency (become “second nature”), which consisted in a struggle for differentiation, and thus against the Asian (the Dionysian, the “aorgic”), and, thus, of restoring the natal Greek that was, as a poem puts it, “lamentably idle.”

Once the “great beginning” is identified with Greece as orient(ation), it is no longer difficult to situate the other pole toward which it tends: “The Lesser [humble] one is the occidental. But Greece, the oriental, is the great beginning whose coming still takes place in the mode of the possible” (GA 4, 176). It is true that Heidegger does not understand the occident as a cultural or geographic notion, and especially not as reduced to Europe, this “little point on the Asian continent” that Valéry described, but as what is *called* to become the “country of the evening” (*Abendland*) in the meeting with the Greek “great beginning,” itself less past than fallen into the future or the possible. And we could follow Heidegger here in his meditation on the *origin* (“*Herkunft ist Zukunft*,” “origin is future”) of what reigns at present, the globalization of technique as *Gestell* [equipment] in which the enlightening trait of Being manifests, be it as *retrait*, withdrawal. In this *Besinnung* (a thought on the trail of sense, *Sinn*) always remains well beyond commentary, even the most “exact” commentary. At the same time, in this movement of the identification of *sense*, not only are the limits of the “explanatory” genre surpassed, but the text (in case we could still speak of a “text” when dealing with Hölderlin) is no longer anything but a pretext for a still more original text that is unwritten and to come, as is this “country of the evening” exposed in its re-turning origin. There is perhaps nothing to deplore here, except from the perspective of “literary” criticism; it is in fact a matter of a destiny, of a meeting, that is, again, of a trans-lation. As

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<sup>288</sup> Karl Reinhardt, “Hölderlin et Sophocle,” tr. P. David, *Poésie* 42 (1982): 22. [Retranslated from the French.]

Kommerell so precisely put it, Hölderlin – *that is to say, Heidegger as well* – leaves nothing without metamorphosis.

The poem has no need of translation into pseudo-common language since it is that translation that, miraculously, changes nothing in the original, or rather is that original as pure language. There is no loss in passion from one medium to the other, since the poem is this medium, but is it immediately an immediacy that does not exclude mediation, however, inasmuch as it carries it out, opens it. The poem makes a sign in the double sense that it gives the sign and remarks itself, *this* poem as *the* poem properly speaking, but also transmits the sign. Its making-sign (or sign-manifestation) is at once pure and common: pure inasmuch as it is suitable and cannot be changed, unlike the arbitrary signal, and common because it makes its reception come with its coming, and thus suits us, makes us its addresses. The sign is the double mark of poetic destiny; it is what Hölderlin's poem gives and what renders the poem, and with it his signature, notable: he is the poet of the poets because he bears witness that he has received the Sign, is – poet, *poet and nothing else*. This is an absolute vocation or calling, not to this or that, but to the calling itself. Every poem by Hölderlin will carry this sign and, by this very fact, no longer even needs to be signed. Yet the name *remains*.... Why? Because an other must remark it, an other who will be marked by this sign of election. An other is always necessary, but not just any other, not a reader in general, but one who would already be *elected* to read in himself the very sign. He cannot be this unless he is already inscribed in the poem, called by it to such a destiny. And yet, let us read the final to lines of *Homecoming*:

Cares like these, whether he likes it or not, a singer [poet]  
Must bear in his soul, and often, but the others not.

The poet disburdens the others of all worries, at least of “such” worries. Is this to say that he expects nothing of them? In “The Poet’s Vocation,” we read that a poet willingly associates himself with others, so that they help to understand. When it is a matter of understand, the poet willingly associates himself with others; but when it is a matter of his *mission* proper, he is alone with others; but when it is a matter of his *mission* proper, he is alone before his god, alone in being able to grasp his sign with a firm hand or letter. It is thus that the poet questions whether he must name the god:

Will I name the High? A god does not like the unseemly.  
To grasp him our joy is almost too small.  
Often we must remain silent. They are lacking, the sacred  
names.  
Hearts bet, and yet discourse remains behind?  
(SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 99)

“Will *I* name”: this task does not fall to another. Naming risks being unseemly, it being a matter of the Very-High. “He,” this god that “In lovely blueness...” declares “unknown” and yet “manifest like the sky,” has no name, or is named only by attribution, a name that always remains improper, because the “sacred names” are “lacking.” Or is it because a name is but a name? Joy has no need of naming and thus seems closer to being suitable, even if it is *too* close (“Close and difficult to seize, the god”). Joy makes us speak (in) “madness.” It is the supreme sign of that proximity that is incomprehensible in terms of distance, space, and even measurement.

Let us now read what Heidegger says of nomination. There is a double bind (*zweifach gebunden*) at the origin of the poetic vocation:

*Dichten* is the original naming of the gods. But its nominative force is conferred to the poetic word only when the gods bring us to speech. How do the gods speak?

“and since ancient times the Signs (*Winke*) are the language of the gods”.....

The saying of the poet is to take these signs by surprise in order to send them back in making a sign to his people. To thus surprise the signs is a receiving and yet at the same time a giving; for the poet already sees in a flash (*erblickt*) the Accomplished in the “first sign” (*Zeichen*) and hardily installs this perception in his language to predict what is as yet unaccomplished. (GA 4, 45-46)

The signs of the gods are neither signals nor significations. Far from presenting or representing, they have the property of making everything “foreign.” They must be discovered, taken by surprise, like a robbery, a pickpocket. But this taking must be a reception that allows the very thing that it must take to be given. The divine sign, in all rigor, does not make sense, and yet, if only to be taken *as sign*, it is *already received* and thus, if not “understood,” at least translated into a language, that is, a language of signs.

The poet divines not the “sense” of words actually pronounced by a god who would *already* speak a language similar to the common language of mortals, but the *sense of being a sign* of what is addressed: the flash *as* the sign of a god. Here the sacred tradition of the Greeks is found again: the poet, the “robber of fire,” the hermeneut of the gods. Situating himself between men and the gods, he can thus with right be described as a “demigod,” not half god and half man, like a mythological monster, but *in-between*, so that for the first time the dimension in which men and the gods turn toward (and against) each other

and thus inhabit the same region is opened. That is why Heidegger will say of the poet that his proper being is to take measure – but this is a “taking” that is itself *first of all* a gift. Just as the unknown god nonetheless manifests himself *as such* (as unknown) in the blueness of the sky, in the same way the god appears, in poetic speech, unknown *and* manifest, unknown and thus *all the more* manifest. This also means that the poem *measures up to* this “taking measure” in that what gives measure is itself what hides all possibility of measuring it. What gives (the “there is,” the *es gibt*) is precisely never a given. Taking measure is a *relation of in(ex)scription*. Just as the god “delegates” himself in the foreign or the invisible *in* the visible, so is the divine sign *in* the word of the poet. Poetic speech is the an *experience* in accordance with that ex(ap)propriation. It holds everything in a relation, as in this solitary phrase Heidegger cites as the *Leitwort*, the guiding word, for the reading of Hölderlin: *Alles ist innig*, “everything is intimate.” Heidegger comments upon the phrase as follows:

The one is appropriated in the other, but so that it remains properly itself, and only in this way does it achieve this proper: gods and men, earth and sky. This intimacy (*Innigkeit*) does not signify a mixture and a dissolution of differences. Intimacy names the co-habitation of what is foreign, the reign of estrangement, and the demand for a sense of modesty. (GA 4, 196)

That means that without an enduring poet no one can perceive the signs of the gods, but also that without an other who would perceive (*vernehmen*) the language of the poet, it would fall into the void. This other *must not* himself be a poet. And yet he must be sensitive to poetry, must say it *in* its difference. Thus, it is always difference that gathers together:

The equal always moves toward the absence of difference, so that everything may agree in it. The same, by contrast, is the belonging together of what differs through a gathering together by way of difference. We can say the same when we think difference. (GA 4, 218)

Despite the abrupt “not” (*nicht*) that closes *Homecoming*, Heidegger will be able to explain why others are nonetheless necessary to share the concerns proper to the poet. These others are not only a people, but exceptional (and chosen) individuals who are “meditative” and “patient,” who would be companions on the voyage, neighbors who are nonetheless different from the poet. And because the Germans are the “people of poetry *and* thought,” there must (*zuvor*) be thinkers “in order that the language of the poets become perceptible” (*vernehmbar*: takeable, receivable) (GA 4, 30). This fantastical operation that comes down to effacing the name of Hölderlin in enlightening (or purifying) it beforehand, that is to say, in renaming it with the stamp of thought: such is the *Zauberkraft*, the “magic force” that will have marked the reading signed Martin Heidegger, a sleight of hand from which we are not close to returning.

Nonetheless, we must do so in the very name of Hölderlin, though not to bring guarantees of his word and its exactitude. “In the name of Hölderlin” will always be *in the name of the other*, of the other he has become, urged on by a necessity he qualifies as “sacred.” If it is sacred, this necessity is such for always coming from the other, from what calls for a name and yet refuses it, calls *to saying*, but saying is not always naming. The “sacred” exceeds the name, even the proper name, by virtue of the very logic of the name, which identifies but at the same time substitutes itself for what it names and, taking its place in its name enslaves it, or at least reduces all its *proper* strangeness. In a

sense, all nomination is a burial in beauty. If we consider language from the point of view of the name, as Heidegger often seems to do, thereby remaining faithful to Occidental philosophy and grammar, we make a language a(n) (empty) tomb: the name is all that remains of the dead. Mourning is the celebration of the name, and that is why Heidegger (perhaps following Hölderlin) accords such importance to the “sacred mourning” that marks the *Grundstimmung* (basic mood) of the poet in a time of *Not* (need, crisis: a time of the lack of sacred names). We might even ask if he did not retain the name of Hölderlin only in order to crown it with a burial wreath.

We should remember that in the beginning Heidegger seems to recognize that no one has the right to speak in the name of the poet. It is the poet who makes experience, and he alone should be able to speak of that experience, if anyone can do so. But at the same time, it is an other who says that; it is Heidegger who gives this law of poetic experience. Not only does the poet take dictation of a poem breathed by the voice of another, not only is it yet another who says it, but this voice that dictates is no one's voice, but the voice of “the Poem.” This is a strange subject, difficult to recognize as a subject of (and to) the law. If the poem is really the “author,” rather than the poet, who is all the more faithful in that he will have effaced himself and added nothing of his own to the poem, then the poem should hold the copyright! What remains, then, of the part due to the poet? Only exactitude: the poet is *closer* to the “original,” as though he were but a more faithful or literal translator, as if, experience, this “Poem” had already been *written before having been written*.

Heidegger often invokes the neighborhood of thought and poetry. Both have a “common place,” the same element – language. Thinking does not take place without saying, and poetry also says. The country in which each of the



neighbors lives in its own way is language, since it is the dwelling par excellence, the “house of Being.” It remains to be known where difference, that from which the “same” carries out its gathering, is situated. Difference does not reside in the form (of saying), and thus does not reside in that ancient difference between poetry and prose. Hölderlin thought every bit as well as philosopher, perhaps even better, but he always thought “poetically.”<sup>289</sup> The difference is (roughly) that only the thinking can *say* it, the difference. The thinker will say, and even *assign*, poetry its place. But this assigning, the putting into dwelling or “situation” (*Erörterung*), so that poetry will not be the effect of the arbitrary, must always be carried out in the name of poetry itself. That the poet lives as neighbor in the same country does not suffice. The place from which he speaks must still be localized, identified exactly, which is not easy, because in general poets hardly concern themselves with exactitude and too often pass for vague spirits. Their words must therefore be taken from them and made into a fate, a fate that renders them “worthy” of being thought. Adding a hyphen to *Abendland* to make of the word a “country of the evening,” for example, signs the self-limitation with the princely stamp of thought.

Fortunately, there exists a poet – only *one* – whether concerns himself with exactitude, above all the exactitude for marking what is “his”: his name is Hölderlin.” With him, the neighborhood poses no difficulty. He in fact accomplishes the work reserved for thought: he wants to delimit *more closely* the specificity of poetry, what marks the “vocation of the poet” as such. At

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<sup>289</sup> At one point, Heidegger says that Hölderlin is not only “also” and occasionally a philosopher, whom he could place beside Hegel or Schelling in German Idealism, but that he is a more profound philosopher than all the other philosophers precisely because his thought is *purely* poetic. Therefore, he can be compared to no one, neither the philosophers who were nevertheless his friends, and with whom he shared the same world, not to the other poets of his time, since he is the first poet, the founder of a poetry that is still to come. In fact, Hölderlin could be compared only to Heidegger, the *first* person to whom Hölderlin was “destined,” and who is therefore himself incomparable.

least, this is what *Das Gedicht*, “The Poem”... by Heidegger affirms. This is not a poem signed “Heidegger,” since he never claimed this vocation, but is “the poem” in the name of which Heidegger will be able to remark the poetry determination. Poetic determination is made, first, in the name of the name, since the poet’s task is situated in nomination. But it is *in name of the poet* that the neighboring thinker can say this.

Of the name that it is the poet’s mission (this time Stefan George is being considered) to find, Heidegger writes,

We do not right away understand ‘name’ in the sense of a pure and simple designation. Perhaps the name and the meaning word are here understood rather in the sense of the expressions: ‘in the name of the king,’ or ‘in the name of God.’ ... ‘In the name of’ here signifies: ‘at the call, by the command...’. (OWL, 61)

The name gives authority; it has the force of law. He who acts or speaks “in the name of...” is discharged of all personal responsibility; he is no longer anything but an executor or a mouthpiece, a speaker carrying the word. But how could a poem make law? To be sure, the voice that commands the poet and gives his poem its authenticity is not purely transcendent, not the voice of God. Still less is it the voice of an institution, even a supreme institution. And yet this voice remains foreign to the poet *precisely as* his source. But this source not only is not given to the poet, it must still be instituted *as* what commands him, enjoins him to be a poet. Such is the double bind.

Why would the determination of what is proper to the poem in the name of the name not be faithful? One (provisional and almost personal) answer is that it does not render the “echo” that others believe they have perceived in the

flow of Hölderlin's language. Bettina von Arnim, for example, compares the poet with someone who would have been carried off by the current of a wild torrent, like the demigod of "The Rhein": "and this power is the language that has drowned his senses under its rapid, irresistible rush."<sup>290</sup> She then adds: "He says that it is language that informs all thought because it is larger than the human spirit, which is but a slave to language" (von Arnim, 246). We could easily seize upon a kinship with the Heideggerian thinking of language here. Only language speaks; man is neither owner nor master of language, simply the "respondent." Nonetheless, the ascendancy of language in Hölderlin is translated in its *poetic* form: rhythm, which is a flux, flow, flood, a quasi-demonic carrying away. The poet must not abandon himself purely and simply to this current that comes to "drown his senses." On the contrary, he must resist, like the Ister that "reluctantly" abandons its source and would almost like to flow against the current. Hölderlin calls the moment of this resistance that bears witness to the presence of "spirit" to the point of falling "toward the high" a *caesura*: a suspension of language, or, again in von Arnim's terms, "this living suspense of the human spirit upon which the divine ray rests" (von Arnim, 248). This is what gives the poems (especially the poems of the years preceding his madness) their striking character, their not only obscure but agonistic character, as if the poet had attempted, despairingly, to retain this stream, to maintain control of *his* speech. Heidegger again accentuates this tendency in cutting from the fabric of the poem only excerpts, fragments, but ones that, if possible, make sense in themselves. They are what appear most solid to him, most graspable, like the rocks emerging from a torrent, to take up that image again. These rocks are, precisely, names: more capable of being shown than the "rhythm" of the poem, they have the advantage of giving a grip, of being identifiable, since,

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<sup>290</sup> Bettina von Arnim, *Die Götterode*, (Leipzig: Insel, 1925), 246. Further references to this edition will be cited parenthetically in the text as "von Arnim."

resting below, they are those elements that always remain the same. For a long time now, grammar has called them *substantives*.<sup>291</sup> Let us take as an example the seven lines (the precision carries a certain weight: its value is that of an incision) without title, published for the first time in 1951. It is still a matter of the name of the gods:

But since they are so close, the present gods,  
I must be as though they were far away and obscure in the  
clouds  
Must to myself be their name; only, before the morning  
Dawns, before life blazes up in noon  
I will name them silently to myself, so that the poet has his  
part,  
But when / if the celestial light goes down  
I willingly have that light of the past in mind, and say -  
flower nonetheless.

(GA 4, 192)

“I will name them silently to myself, so that the poet has his part”: literally, this would simply be “has his.” The “his” is not clearly identified. It is the share or part reserved for the poet. But does that mean that the role of the poet is restricted to naming? And what does naming *oneself*, for oneself, “in silence” signify? Heidegger begins by emphasizing the repetition, with an interval of two lines, of a verb: *muss*, “must.” He moves on immediately to the “necessity” (*Not*) that will even become, at the end of a vertiginous ascension of the gods to the divine to finish at the sacred, the “sacred necessity.” This is the “unspoken demand that reigns everywhere and under which his poeticizing upholds itself” (GA 4, 187). The force of this sentence stems from the conjunction of

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<sup>291</sup> It would be somewhat unjust to assert that Heidegger reduces the poem to a chain of names. For example, the *Aber* [“but”] of *Andenken* plays a rhythmic punctuating role not only for the poem but for its commentary. I only want to demonstrate a general tendency here, and in no way am I trying to discuss a possible “exactitude” in the commentary. The “contents” do not interest me – if there are any.

*Anspruch*, a statement that has the force of law, an injunction (in the name of the sacred), and *ungesprochen*, unspoken. The statement uttered here does not breath a word; it commands in and to silence. In the name of the sacred, in the name of the sacred necessity, naming is an utter necessity, but naming in silence. Naming is necessary, and yet “they are lacking, the sacred names.” Or should we rather say that the name is necessary *because* it causes a lack or failure. A name, even a sacred one, will always only be a name, not the sacred itself. Unless [*Sauf*] – it is saved [*sauf*], passed over in silence, a silence that, even more than any name, would witness the “lot” of the poet.

This silence is here a mark of modesty toward the Greek gods, who have “fled”: they have had their time. It is silence that responds to the silence of oracles, of dances, of celebration, and that thus corresponds with what, departing in the distance, addresses a final greeting: “I willingly have in mind the light of the past.” Only a trace of the Greek gods remains – the name. And as for the name pronounced under the pressure of “sacred necessity,” it remains, sacred though it be, improper for presenting what came forward *under* the name of “Nature.” If this name is not entirely suitable, this is not so much by virtue of its Latin origin, improper for translating “true” *physis*, of which Hölderlin was not thinking anyway. “Nature” names birth. At birth, the newborn indeed receives a name, but it is not the name that gives birth to him. The name is even the part belonging to death and, most often, the name of the father, very rarely that of the mother. If the “illegitimate” child can be distinguished from the legitimate one, it is precisely in not having received the name of the father. In the natural state (a fiction Hölderlin borrowed from Rousseau) there is absolutely no need for names. The necessity of naming what comes to the world without a name comes from the father, who wants the law (always his own) to be respected. “Nature,” like the mother, always remains an improper name,

even in that, as name, the without-name submits to the regime of the institution and transmissibility of a heritage, a “property/propriety.” That does not mean that one could go without names in general. But what is naming in general?

Does “naming” consist of something being endowed with a name? And how does one come to a name? The name tells what something is called, how it is customarily named. Naming is assigned (*angewiesen*) to a name. And the name results from naming. We turn in circles with this explication. The verb *to name* derives from the substantive *name, onomen*, ὀνομα. (GA 4, 188)

This is an example of Heideggerian rhetoric: a vicious (and not even hermeneutic) circle responds to a false question. What is naming *in general*? Naming refers to a name and the name results from the act of naming! But this circle is only vicious if we are trying to determine an exact origin. At this point (of origin) there is no origin, neither verb nor noun. This circularity without origin (a name comes from the very thing it *calls*, makes come) is the very sign of an *other* originariness, say, of that birth or origination *from the other*. The name always comes from the other: it is received, but at the same time is irreducibly called by the very thing that has *no* name. But Heidegger does not understand it in this way. There must (in the name of what?) be a precise origin to nomination, and this origin is the name. Not the verb, which is said to be merely “derived,” including the verb “to name.” This derivation permits us to return to the origin of the name for “name,” in which the Greek *onoma*, the root *gn-*, the same as that of *gnosis*, “knowledge,” is embedded, driven like a stake into the soil of language. This entire process is, moreover, largely prepared for by German grammar, which permits the nominalization of verbs much more easily than English (which would never say “naming” as it says “dinner”).

Yet, phenomenologically speaking, there is no way to demonstrate that the noun produces knowledge, to say nothing of the unveiling opening (*aletheia*) as Heidegger understands it. Heidegger is, moreover, obliged to agree a bit later, when it is a matter of the nonetheless supreme name of "Nature." But he does not concede this except for this very specific name that "must" veil. In this exceptional case, in effect, the thing to be named is too close, and the name must allow us to gain some distance. The name of this naming that advances in the distance is *calling*. But is not all nomination a calling (before being a designation)? In a sense, the name does procure an "access" to what it names. It does "ac-knowledge" but only in the sense of a bringing nearer for the one giving the name. When, at a party, so-and-so is "introduced" to me by name, having been "introduced," he is henceforth more accessible: I will be able to recall him *as so-and-so*. In the same way, the newborn who receives a name at birth stops being a stranger to the world, but that does not mean that its *Being* is unveiled to me. It is simply "presentable" from that time on. *The name attributes an "its" but in no way a being*. It allows an entrance into the common dwelling place in which every thing and every being has its "place" (the name is primarily social). But it does not "communicate," and makes known only the most general character of what it "clothes," nothing of its proper being. It makes generality, and thus identification, possible. Everyone *must* have a name. It is the first sign of identity. (Let us imagine for a instant that no one had a name, or that our names changed from day to day: the entire State would collapse). Identity always comes from the other, like an attribution that, whether we like it or not, and whether we know it or not, is always arbitrary: there is no natural name, nor, therefore, is there any natural identity. Not only nationality, but also gender (and sex), "man" (or "woman"), are arbitrary signs. This is also what makes the name of "Nature" all the more strange – and more appropriate. It manifests language as this radical *generative* impropriety of all appropriation.

But Heidegger does not want to accommodate himself to the arbitrariness of the name. The name (especially for the most high) *must* itself be *geschickt*, suitable, naturally and almost magically appropriate. This constitutes a fetishism that is, moreover, the mark of the proper name: sacred! To tamper with the name is to tamper with Being.

A fragment by Heraclitus says that the One refuses and yet accepts to be named Zeus. The refusal comes first: in the beginning is not the name. But what *calls* for a name, a name that would be in accordance with this call and thus always remains lacking, is all the more lacking the stronger the call. Heidegger says that the supreme Name, that of the “unknown” (and yet manifest like the sky) god, *must* remain secret. Not that the poet could keep it for himself, otherwise he would fail in his mission, determined as that of calling the gods, giving them their *proper* names. Is this name secret, then, like the name of God in the Jewish tradition? Heidegger makes no mention of that whatsoever. However, he cites an excerpt of the eighth strophe of the hymn “The Rhine” (a proper name?) where it is said that, since the gods feel nothing by themselves, “is is necessary, if such a thing / May be said, that in the name of the gods / An other feel compassionately. / Of this they have need” (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 145). We should feel that these lines verge on sacrilege. The gods feel nothing; an other is needed (this is perhaps nothing other than the other side of “sacred necessity”) to feel in their place *and in their name*. In the name of the gods, an other is required. But not to name! No, to *feel*. The gods in fact feel nothing and, for example, neither suffer nor die. They *lack* that. It is to this experience (the experience of sense, of suffering, and of mortality) that men are *closer*.... For there to be sharing, “taking part,” and, primarily, giving this “part” or role to he who, if it is permitted to speak thus of the gods, is *deprived* of it, is necessary. It is to this deprivation that the poet bears witness, and this is also why he *must*



speak in the place and in the name of the gods. In a certain manner, he compensates for this “lack” with his divine (and divining) words.

With this evocation of the “need” of the gods, Heidegger recognizes that Hölderlin touches upon the fundamental experience of his *Dichtertum*. This experience goes well beyond the simple nomination of the gods or of the Sacred. Not only are the sacred names lacking, not only do they give no feeling and are improper for “presenting” what does not want to be known, but their lack bears witness to the essence of poetic experience: precisely that *the lapse is already the announcement of the sacred*. This also emerges from the final lines of “The Poet’s Vocation,” on which Heidegger comments at length in his 1935 lecture course.

How can the “lack of god” (*Gottes Fehl*) come to “help” the poet? This is a strange, almost impious, affirmation in the mouth of a poet whose mission was to name the Sacred. Heidegger indeed remarks upon the difficulty, increased by the fact that an earlier version says precisely the opposite: as long as the god is not lacking, the poet has need of nothing. But since this version bothers him, Heidegger relegates it to the title of a simple outline (cf. GA 39, 233). This also permits him to reject Hellingrath’s interpretation, which explains the about-face from the outline to the definitive text by means of a detour or a returning of the poet faced with the overly present divine, a return to natal “sobriety.” For Heidegger, the “lack” in question is in no way a simple absence, a lack to be regained. To understand that, it suffices to place the accent differently, not on *Fehl*, which nonetheless carries the nominal group, but on its determinant, *Gottes*. This lack is not nothing, since it is (the lack) *of God*, belonging to him like his proper mark. Far from signifying a deficiency, this divine lack is the sign of an “excess,” of the height or presence. But again, why

is presence associated with the divine? Why would it be unthinkable that, on the contrary, the “lack of god,” as lack, open something like another space for poetic language? This would be less a specifically atheistic language, even in the literal Greek sense, than another space of the sacred, another link of language to the divine in which the lapse would be the very place of a promise, of an other coming, of the coming of an *other* than he who, until now, has been named “god.” The Greek gods remain irreducibly distant, inaccessible to the senses; the Christian God made himself human but by the same token put himself to death as God. Hence, not only is “God... dead” (he has been for two millennia, and yet nothing has changed), but the name of God is extinguished. Something else is necessary, not another name, but the other of the name.

To arrive at that point, we must say *farewell* to the very name of “poetry.” The home – rather than the “essence” – of what is called poetry, *Dichtung*, is the call to come: “O Fire, come!” It is also what calls for calling what comes in the call to come by “its” name. But the name is lacking, and it is precisely because it fails to make come – to make enter into “presence” – that it calls for something else. For feeling? But the sensible is unspeakable, or the unspeakable is only sensible, not nameable or nameable only by improperly: in the name of names, of their rule of appropriation by the other. The sensible and the unspeakable will always be given in the name of the other of the name, and the very name of poetry is an exemplary sign of this. Not of a call for a more *proper* name that, finally, would ward off this lack that always haunts language, but of a call to bear witness, to witness what, beyond “essence” and presence, *speaks*: an “unspoken demand.”

### Chapter 13

#### THE WITNESS OF BEING (*Andenken*)

As the subtitle of this chapter indicates, I will be discussing “Andenken” (“Remembrance”). But which “Andenken”: Hölderlin’s poem, Heidegger’s exegesis, or both? Heidegger’s text dispenses with having recourse to the poem, since it includes that poem integrally, first, and then includes it in the form of citations, so that the poem is doubled but also cut up and finally also recited inasmuch as the clarification recounts it to itself, word for word, so to speak. Heidegger’s text is a true linear *explication de texte* that recalls the verse of verse exegeses of the Scriptures. This will come as no surprise if we consider that hermeneutics was born in the context of speculative theology, as Heidegger himself reminds us.<sup>292</sup>

Reading “Andenken,” by which I mean that of Heidegger, do we not get the feeling of going through a chapter of revealed theology? Hölderlin’s (assigned) mission is not only to name the gods and the Sacred; his poem itself has become sacred. But for those who read (Hölderlin’s) “Andenken” (the poem appeared, Heidegger recalls, in a “popular” review, “The Almanac of the Muses”) nothing sacred (in the theological sense at least) immediately emerges. It is one of Hölderlin’s rare “great” poems to mention the name of no gods, nor even of the heroes of antiquity. If we take an inventory of the proper names, we find, successively, Garonne, Bordeaux (written “Bourdeaux”), Bellarmin, the Indies, Dordogne, and once again Garonne. If we except Bellarmin (Arminius,

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<sup>292</sup> “The term ‘hermeneutics’ was familiar to me from my theological studies” (*OWL*, 9).

the German hero), who is not a god but a romantic hero, there are only place names, all of which refer to the real situation of the poet, his stay in France. But Heidegger refuses such "prosaic" notations. "Andenken" does not recount the memories of Hölderlin the tutor (GA 4, 84); it says something completely different, which is what we would like to believe: if there were nothing but memories of a voyage put into verse, this would not be a poem *by* Hölderlin.

*Andenken*: thought in remembrance of.... The poet *thinks* and does not content himself with describing, even poetically. He thinks *about*.... But about what? About friends. Where are they? And, moreover, *who* are they? They are "Bellarmin and his companion," that is to say... Hyperion himself. Or should we say: Hölderlin?

*Hyperion* is the name of the poet. He himself is the *companion* of whom we now ask where he is situated. But the poet must know quite well where he himself is, especially now that he is the greeting party who makes himself recognized as he who has returned to the homeland to remain there." (GA 4, 128)

But what if he had not truly returned to the homeland? What if he got lost on the way? What if he no longer knew where he was? Is this not what happened to Hölderlin, to the point that he even lost his proper name? If it is indeed a matter of a certain "return," this is perhaps not a return to his country, but a return in time. Is Hölderlin-Hyperion (he who goes "beyond") thinking of his youth? Is he addressing an emotional memory to that youth? Is he thinking of his companion Diotima? Do the "brown women" (*braunen Frauen*) "of these places" remind him of her, even though she left for even farther away than the Indies, left for a place from which no one can return, if not in memory? Heidegger does not ask these questions. No doubt they would appear too naïve

to him, or too biographical. Perhaps. But let us read a bit of what he says about “women”:

This name here has kept its earlier resonance when it designated the mistress or the protectress. However, in the present context it refers only to the birth of the poet in his Being. (GA 4, 107)

Must “woman,” and especially the women of these parts, brown women, be nothing but mothers? These women hardly seem to interest the thinker, at least in themselves. He will indeed note that there is something strange about the expression “of these places” (these are, in fact, strangers, foreigners). He justifies this expression “that to the modern ear has the brutal effect of being at the limits of juridical or commercial language” in advance by explaining that it is a matter of “maintaining this distant presence at a distance, which is its proximity” (GA 4, 108).<sup>293</sup> It still remains a question of *brown* women. I emphasize, because this adjective of color is immediately interpreted in a rather determinate sense. Brown “recalls the earth of the South, where the element of the fire of the skies shines with an excess or clarity.” But the “fire of the skies,” according to the poet, is the natal element of the Greeks. This is as much as saying that the brown women are there to refer to the Greeks (but not necessarily to Greek women), that they are simple signs of the stranger or foreigner who must be appropriated by the natal, that is, the German. From this arise two lines of another poem, “Gesang des Deutschen,” as well:

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<sup>293</sup> Elsewhere, Hölderlin writes the “highest poetry is that in which the non-poetic element [...] also becomes poetic” (“Reflection,” in *Sämtliche Werke* [SW<sub>4.1</sub>, 234-35]). Kommerell would see in that the “breath of Empedocles” capable of metamorphosing everything. But this is also the entire aesthetic of German Romanticism with its theory of generalized prose. Heidegger does not want to hear another word of such an aesthetic, because it would lead Hölderlin back into the genre and the age of literature.

Thanks be to German women! They have kept  
The friendly spirit of the images of our gods for us.  
(SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 4)

A commentary follows that it would in fact be better to leave silent, but that I will cite pitilessly, if not in its entirety:

German women save the appearance of the gods in order that they dwell as the instituting event of History....German women save the coming of the gods in making it pass into the tenderness of a friendly light.... The safeguard of the coming of the gods is their constant contribution to the preparation of the Celebration.<sup>294</sup>

However, Heidegger recognizes that the praise of “Andenken” does not name German women but the (brown) women of these places. These are not blonde protectresses. The others, then, must be monsters, like Antigone or Niobe, “become like the desert,” or like Diotima, alias Suzette Gontard, an adulterous woman who wrote to her lover (it was her last letter): “Are you coming? – The whole land is mute and deserted without you!”<sup>295</sup> “Come!” is the very call of love.

This poem is called “Andenken,” (In) Remembrance.” But the expression is especially used for the memory of the dead. Of whom does Hölderlin want to preserve the memory? In order to answer, we must enter into a domain that

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<sup>294</sup> “Andenken,” in GA 4, 107. We could of course allege that if History is not the fact of women, it is not that of men either, since only the gods can make History come. But only men have a primary relation to this History. We also do not know whether the name of *Dichter* admits of a feminine.

<sup>295</sup> Letter from Suzette Gontard (1 or 8 May 1800) in Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke* (SW<sub>7.1</sub>, 105). Heidegger did not cite any of Gontard's letters, much less mention her existence or her name, or that of Trakl's sister, the “brown-haired Greta.” To have the right to the city (or to be cited), the right to speech, women must be goddesses like Parmenides' Aletheia, and yet here is a goddess with neither a face nor a body.

Heidegger always held as rigorously insignificant: personal memories, biographical memory, and memoirs. Let us, then, enter into this domain that has been “forgotten” (or occulted) by pure thought.

It has long been believed that it is only with his return from Bordeaux that the poet learns of the death of Suzette. Pierre Bertaux has contested this version and maintains, on the contrary, that Hölderlin had been notified (by his half-brother Karl) of the worsening of her illness (consumption, no doubt), which had eaten away at the young woman for a long time. This very news might have motivated Hölderlin's hurried departure from his position as tutor in the home of Consul Meyer. Perhaps he had time between 7 June 1802, when he was notified in Strasbourg, and 22 June, the date of Suzette's death, to visit her one last time. All that is very possible and would explain the state of absolute distraction in which he arrived at his mother's, and even his subsequent madness. As an ultimate proof, Bertaux gives the adventurous (to say the least) interpretation of a central verse of “Andenken,” a poem he takes to be a Memorial to she who has Disappeared: “It is not good / To be soulless / Of mortal thoughts”) (*SW*<sub>2.1</sub>, 189). The core of the lines would then be a cryptogram: *sterblichen Gedanken*, “mortal thoughts,” would not name the thoughts proper to Mortals (as Heidegger interprets them), but thoughts of death, relating to death. These thoughts would not relate to death in general (or as death), but to the death of S.G., Suzette Gontard = *s(terblichen)* Greek(*edanken*). We must recall that at the end of *Hyperion* Diotima dies. Offering his book to his loved one (with the personal dedication: “To whom else but you?”), Hölderlin already presents it as the *memory* of his past happiness: “Here is our Hyperion, my dear! This fruit of our happy days will bring you, despite everything, a bit of joy. Pardon me for having made Diotima

die.”<sup>296</sup> The “general disposition (*Anlage*) of the book” demanded it, as though writing *called for* the death of its heroine. “Andenken,” however, was written well after the death of “Diotima.” We might think that at this point Hölderlin had forgotten it. But what would forgetting signify for a poet such as Hölderlin? The “valiant forgetting” that another poem celebrates is certainly not a simple negligence or an infidelity. “Andenken” does indeed speak the “faithful thought,” *in memoriam*, and it is in this light that we should consider Sinclair’s bitter remarks, complaining that his “friend” remains “married to a tomb.” Bettina Brentano in turn takes up these remarks in a more romantic form:

Ah yes, he who marries the tomb, the living have quickly considered a madman: by day, he dreams, as we dream at night, but in the depths of sleep he is awake and full of compassion. He goes hand and hand beside the other who has long ago disappeared from the surface of the earth.<sup>297</sup>

The final line of “In lovely blueness...” says: “Life is death, and death is also a living” (*SW*<sub>2.1</sub>, 374). Heidegger cites the line (*GA* 4, 165), but to pull it in the direction of a thinking of death “as such,” as though death were not always the death of a *singular*, living, being.

Whatever this passion, be it encrypted in the poem or not, it is at least clear that there was nothing “soothing” about the “German” woman for Hölderlin. On the contrary, she ended up consuming him. Was he not her god, her idol? Did she not think much harder about his “image” than about that of the god of the church? But “Andenken” never evokes the gods. That perhaps

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<sup>296</sup> Letter to Suzette Gontard. Undated rough draft (end of October 1799) in (*SW*<sub>6.1</sub>, 370).

<sup>297</sup> Cited by Pierre Bertaux, *Hölderlin ou le temps d'un poète* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 309-10. According to Bertaux, Sinclair’s interest in his poet friend, his obsession with tearing him from the claws of an abusive mother (one of the protective “German women”...), had other than purely literary motives; to put it delicately, it bears witness to a very Greek friendship.



only renders the poem all the more divine in a sense that escapes every theology, but Heidegger just as much, it seems, even if he affirms that the Greeks had no religion (a Latin word). According to Heidegger, it is the evocation of the “days of celebration” that leads to “commemorating women.” Perhaps.

But is it because this celebration is that of the “engagement” of the gods and men, as a passage in the hymn, “The Rhein” puts it, and thus the celebration of the moment of equilibrium of “destiny”? Again, perhaps. But is this destiny “the hidden birth of History, of the History of the Germans”? That is taking identification too far. It is not a question of Germans in this poem; what Germans could be at issue, those of 1800, those who, according to one of Hölderlin’s letters, have nothing to do with the poet, so that he is forced to take the path of exile? Or those of 1942, who apparently still have nothing to do with his poetry, or indeed have something else to do? Or is it a question of a mythical Germany still “to come,” at least as long as destiny has not come to hear and understand Hölderlin’s words... or those of Heidegger? When Heidegger evokes the solitude of creators who “live near by / On the separate summits,” this neighborhood of peaks separated by “abysses,” he not only images the “neighborhood” of poets and thinkers in a nearly Wagnerian framework (“this time of peaks, this swell...only he who, like the shepherd, knows only the steep paths and the source, the mountain pastures and the clouds, the sun and the thunderstorm, can sense them”) [cf. *EHP*, 162]. He also gives this solitude more dreadfully “current” tones when he writes that the two, poetry and thought, spring forth the “actualization of the *Dasein* of a people through the State – politics” (GA 39, 51). A people – what people? Between the first course on Hölderlin (1934) and “Andenken,” which makes a *retrait* (withdrawal) toward the *polis* as “the place the Sacred assigns to History” (GA

4, 88), a great deal has happened in the “time of peoples.” This probably explains the disappearance of any mention of “creators of States”... but not of the Germans. We must simply presume that “their” time has not yet come or that they must become themselves in “hearing” the “still unheard” words of the poem (that they will not hear except in lending an ear to its privileged interpreter). Let us try to hear then:

The North-East wind blows.  
To me it is the most beloved of all winds  
For it announces the spirit of fire  
And promises sailors a good voyage.  
(SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 188)

The North-East wind, Heidegger writes, “is led out of its native country [Germany] in the only direction it indicates: toward the sky of the South-West and its *fire*” (GA 4, 84). To this point, everything is perfectly exact. We are even astonished to read such trivialities: Where could this wind carry but toward the “South-West,” that is, toward the place the poet remembers, and about which he has “thoughts”?

But go now, and greet  
The beautiful Garonne  
And the gardens of Bourdeaux.  
(SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 188)

For those who are familiar with the geography of France, “South-West” indeed names that Atlantic region, the Aquitaine (the region of water), that spreads from the Garonne to the Pyrenees; and the ocean can only be the Atlantic. If this wind continued its march like the “sailors” whose sails it fills, it would in effect go to the Indies... but the “West Indies,” America then. “But at

present the men / have left for the Indies,” and that, the poem specifies clearly, “at the windswept point, / At the foot of the vines / Where the Dordogne descends / And together with Garonne, / Broad like the sea, / The river pours out” (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 189). The description is exact, an irreproachable topography, including the evocation of the “vine,” of the famous Bordeaux wine.

But Heidegger did not understand the poem in this way. Reading “the fire,” he reads “Greece” under the pretext that elsewhere Hölderlin in fact says that the “fire of the sky” is proper to the Greeks. Reading “the Indies,” he reads “beyond Greece [to] a more distant Orient.” True, the earth is round... but the first person to experience this (painfully, of course) was Christopher Columbus, one of the discoverers of America. There is a poem by Hölderlin entitled “Columbus” of which only a few beautiful ruins remain for us. It begins with a breath at least as intense as the North-East wind:

If I wished to be one of the heroes  
And might freely declare it,  
Then it would be a hero of the sea.  
(SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 242)

Another fragment consisting of only two stanzas is entitled “Diotima”: “I could name the heroes / And make silence reign over the more beautiful heroine.” To make silence reign over Diotima is what Hyperion-Hölderlin promises: a deathly silence, if I can put it thus, and a silence that “Andenken” cannot but keep. But “Andenken” will be able to name the heroes, the sailor friends, those who have left “for the Indies” and perhaps even farther, and who “fear to go to the source.” Yet what source? The “fatherland”? Strangely, the poem does not breathe a word of this. Perhaps this silence has more to say about the “nature” of the source than any commentary. Speaking the source is perhaps

never possible without speech at the same time failing, forbidding itself to speak. Perhaps this is the sign of “proximity,” the sign that the source differs from itself in an infinite distance, that it only promises itself, but thus refuses itself to all immediate speech. The source, for the poem, would be this breaking (off) of speech at the source. The source of Heidegger’s exegesis does not reside in the poem itself, however, but in his reading of five lines of another poem, “Bread and Wine”:

For spirit is not at home  
In the beginning, not at the source.  
It is the prey of the fatherland.  
Spirit loves the colony, and valiant forgetting.  
Our flowers and the shade of our forest delight him,  
The overcome. He who gives his soul was nearly burned.<sup>298</sup>

Heidegger read in these lines “the fundamental law of history” that the poet is to found: “The historicity of history has its essence in the return to the Proper, a return that cannot be made except in the initial form of a voyage to the foreign” (GA 4, 95). This historicity, however, is but a transposition of the Hegelian dialectic. In order finally to be at home, in order finally to return to oneself in full *self-presence*, one must leave oneself, go and alienate oneself in the other. The other is not other except in already being in relation to *its* other (the “proper”) and thus in being appropriated. Memory would be but a remembering of the proper via the stranger, though not just any stranger: no, a stranger who already (from the beginning) recalls the proper. Thus, the not-being at home of the beginning is already being at home as the speculative result of the source that must, in order to know itself absolutely and as the

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<sup>298</sup> Quoted in Heidegger, GA 52, 189. Heidegger notes that these lines are taken from an outline of the elegy. That they were missed by Hellingrath in his edition of Hölderlin’s poems, and makes reference to Beissner, (147).

absolute, produce an image – an other who, being other *for* the self, already in advance, in anticipation, this forgetting in fact forgets nothing. Nothing is lost, and we could say that the poet's exile, if it is certainly less aggressive than a colonialism, in Heidegger's eyes, is, on the other hand, no riskier than tourism. But the poetic experience of exile in Hölderlin is a thousand times more radical and exposed that what Heidegger makes of it. Let us recall the words of "Mnemosyne," the poem on Memory: "...we have almost lost language in the foreign." What does it mean for a poet to lose language? It is "almost" losing life. And yet it is possible that language must be lost to speak and live as a poet, to speak "as a madman."

Where does the source begin? It does not begin at the source, at the beginning, but at the end, the sea, where the horizon extends to itself to the point that we *lose sight of it*. "But the sea / That takes memory, gives it" (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 189). What does it mean to take memory? Heidegger writes that "To the extent that taking memory is equally giving it, and giving is taking again, the sea that takes memory gives" (GA 4, 142). This is a variation on the theme of repatriation through the voyage to the foreign. In the same way, Heidegger wrote that those who have left "for the East" (since it is thus that he reads "the Indies") must always be more valiant in their forgetting (of the fatherland), since once they have arrived at the "Indies" they will have arrived "at the turning in which the voyage that led them to the colony changes into a return to the source" (GA 4, 142). A bit later, in a still more marked way in the identification, he writes: "The Indus marks the turning that leads to the *German* nation" (GA 4, 139; emphasis mine). Nonetheless (and I do not make the remark to oppose a meaning different from the "Occidental" orientation that is a dis-orientation, a detour in the turning of the Orient), it might well be that the sea takes memory... and does *not* give it back. But does the sea not give

memory also? Yes, but because it takes it, and takes it *in the first place*. “Taking” is before “giving” in the stanza. What is most disorienting in this “image,” moreover, is indeed this anteriority of taking. What if, by chance, the sea takes in the same way that “love,” which “rivets attentive eyes,” takes, that is to say, carries away, transports, ravishes? Where would this theft leave us? What would it give, if it gave anything at all?

This question carries us beyond the classic scheme of the ordeal of the stranger that, whatever Heidegger says of it, faithfully reproduces the initial journey of Spirit in what Hegel named “the experience of consciousness.” Heidegger writes:

The extent to which what these lines, which put the law of historicity into this language, are saying poetically can be derived from the principle of unconditional subjectivity of absolute metaphysics proper to German thought, such as we see it in Schelling and Hegel, according to whom the Being-in-itself of spirit first demands the return to the self, which in turn cannot take place except through Being outside-the-self: the question, then, that we will content ourselves with considering will be the extent to which such a reference to metaphysics, even if it makes “historically exact” relations appear, obscures the poetic law more than it enlightens it.<sup>299</sup>

This is to say that here Hölderlin would no longer be thinking in the framework of historicity, whether formulated in dialectical terms or not, that he

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<sup>299</sup> Heidegger, GA 52, 114; note 1. The predicament, translated by an unusually long and complicated sentence, still does not mask the de-cision preformed by reading except by putting it under cover of a false question that is left open. Heidegger has already decided: we cannot and must not derive poetic historicity from the metaphysics of German Idealism. He is probably right, even though Hölderlin, along with his “friends” Hegel and Schelling, was at the source of this Idealism. In another way, however, we must ask whether Heidegger is not once again taking the route of Spirit. We change sites, leaving that of the absolute Subject, but the law (historicity) is the same: the return to Self becomes the return to the proper, *Ereignis*.

would be thinking in other terms, without reference to historicity, or rather in the thinking of an other history, a history that is more legendary, more mythic, more poetic, more inflated with “golden dreams.” He would be thinking a history with a more imaginary, more wayfaring geography, which removes nothing of its force; on the contrary, it is this imagination (the march to the stars) that made Columbus a modern hero, rather than the assumption of a “destiny,” whether national or not. (Columbus was Genoese and probably Jewish, and the Spanish sovereigns who had just expelled the Jews confiscated his discovery from him). If Columbus is a *modern* hero, it is for having first accomplished the famous Hesperian “return to the homeland”: he went looking for the Orient in the West, the origin in the end, “noon at two o’clock,” Baudelaire would say. And he ended up finding the Hesperian islands. But at the same time, this was also the beginning of the end for this reign of the naïve or of the native that he discovered, and Columbus’ return was anything but a salvation. The disorientation was only beginning, the sources drying up one after the other, and the poem is invaded more and more by the numerous frantic voices: “You are a know-nothing” is written about Columbus in French on the manuscript. Or about the tutor Hölderlin?

Does every lesson, like Hölderlin’s poem, escape itself in the moment of concealment that is nothing other than the coming of speech promising and refusing itself? It is not our place to decide. Rigorously speaking, it is impossible to account for this, for to do so would necessarily mean doing exactly what Heidegger does, speak *in the name of* Hölderlin, even in the name of a truth of the text that would be forgotten and disfigured. In the name of what are we going to correct the Heideggerian exegesis, of an exactitude of the text?

“Through erasures, drafts, his reworked fragments, Hölderlin seeks an ever truer and more correct expression,” Paul de Man affirms in an article I will discuss for its methodological value.<sup>300</sup> It is this myth of exactitude that governs both philological and philosophical readings. Heidegger distinguishes between “correctness” (*Richtigkeit*), which is nothing other than adequation, and the truth that is discourse: *Richtig, aber nicht wahr!* (“Correct, but not true!”). It is thus that he often puts critics in their place. But this is only to obey another type of presupposition (truth is a presupposition, we read already in *Being and Time*). After having enumerated a number heresies Heidegger knowingly commits against “the most elementary rules of text analysis” (I have taken down some of them: the use of the apocryphal “poem” “In lovely blueness...”; ignoring contexts; isolating lines or single words to give them an absolute value, most often through information foreign to the original, and so on), de Man concludes in a surprising manner: “However, these heresies are not arbitrary because of a lack of rigor but because they rely upon a poetics that permits, or even *requires*, arbitrariness” (de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 250; emphasis added). The arbitrary corresponds to what I call the *dictation of pre-sense*. It has nothing to do with the arbitrariness of a simple convention (that of “signifier,” for example) but rather amounts to an absolute legitimation. In the name of the “same” that presides over the neighborhood of thought/poetry, *that*

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<sup>300</sup> Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 1983), 246-47, 266. Heidegger usually cites the “historical” edition, that by Norbert von Hellmuth, which de Man finds “outdated” and questionable as regards the large Stuttgart edition by Friedrich Beissner, “one of the great achievements of modern philology” (248). But now this edition, which de Man judged irreproachable, has been outdated again by that of D.E. Sattler, who present different versions, variants, erasures, et cetera, on the same page *without choosing* among them. Between Heidegger’s subjective method, which decides upon a text according to the logic of his own commentary, Beissner’s “objective” method there is a fundamental filiation: both believe in the existence of a text, and even a definitive text. With the most recent edition, we are confronted by a dissemination with neither return nor deposit.



*is to say of the Same* as such, commentary must be appropriate to the poem from the moment that the poem already inscribes appropriateness in the Same.

Yet why have recourse to Hölderlin? Did Heidegger really need Hölderlin to say what he had *to say*? What need does he have to cover himself with such a reference (which is at once doubtful and prestigious), even though Heidegger “is the thinker who has shoved aside all available authorities” (de Man, *ibid.*, 252) (that is indeed what the phenomenological prescription to go straight to the things themselves signifies)? De Man is right in responding that it is not because Hölderlin is a poet. To see this, it is enough to see how Heidegger treated Rilke, who nonetheless said the same thing with his “Open”.... No, a *witness* for this “presence” is necessary. In effect, all others have failed; the philosophers have fallen under the forgetting of Being, and Heidegger himself “is not sure he has seen Being and, in any case, he knows that he has nothing to say about it beyond the fact that it conceals itself” (de Man, *ibid.*, 253). (This is an abusive, though not entirely false, simplification.) A witness (and a *single one* suffices) is needed who could put before our eyes the deposition signed by the very hand of Being, the witnessing of its presence in the sense of evidence that is just as indisputable as the stigmata of Christ for Thomas. This deposition Heidegger found in Hölderlin’s poetry, which carries the very signature of Being. Exaggerating a bit, de Man will even be able to affirm:

There is nothing in his work, not an erasure, no obscurity, no ambiguity, that is not absolutely and totally willed by Being itself. Only one who has truly grasped this can become the “editor” of Being and impose commas that spring forth from “the very necessity of thought.” (254)

That a witness is necessary, perhaps. But why have chosen Hölderlin? De Man begins by distancing “national” (read *German*) motives as “unrelated,”

although they seem relatively central if we remember that the *Heimat* is identified with “Being.” For de Man, the principal reason for this choice lies elsewhere: “*Hölderlin says exactly the opposite of what Heidegger makes him say*” (de Man, *ibid.*, 254-55). The paradox only seems obvious. On this level, the opposites in fact meet up again: “To state the opposite is still to talk of the same thing through an opposite sense” (de Man, *ibid.*, 255). And that is already a great deal, because that proves that this thing *is indeed the same*, if we recall the way in which Heidegger described identity through the gathering together carried out by difference. But how can de Man establish that Heidegger does indeed make Hölderlin say the “opposite” of what he in effect says? For that, we must know what Hölderlin “really” means. We must, like Heidegger, although in an opposite sense, identify Hölderlin’s proper meaning as indeed being *that very meaning* ... (the “opposite”). In this game, we risk being able to demonstrate nothing at all, if not the presupposition of a signified – X. But let us examine the de Manian demonstration more closely. It relies principally on a commentary of the hymn “As on the Day of Celebration...,” of which Kommerell had already said that it *could well* (“I’m not saying that it is”) be a “disaster” (*Unglück*). It is not accident that this text is chosen by de Man, for it begins with an anti-philological affirmation characteristic of the Heideggerian exegetical “method,” as Beda Allemann has already remarked: “The text that serves as the basis of the present commentaries, reviewed from the manuscript outlines, is founded upon the explication we are going to attempt” (GA 4, 51). Heidegger *established* the original text and did so according to his exegesis, which, however, should come “after” the text.

The first difficulty with de Man's essay concerns the identification of the "signified" under the name of "Nature."<sup>301</sup> Through the adjective "omnipresent," de Man deduces that "Nature" signifies the "immediate" presence of Being. Elsewhere, de Man affirms: "its language is Being present." But the privilege of presence is not absolute in Hölderlin, and absence (of the fled gods, for example) is not a simple object to be lamented. As I said above, there is a "lack" at the heart of speech that *calls*, a lack that does not call so much to be filled in as it is already the *height* of the sacred, that is, of what passes by presence (the "Open"). This immediacy is never present in Heidegger's commentary, which says exactly the *opposite*:

Omnipresence maintains the extreme opposites of the highest sky and of the deepest abyss in opposition to one another. What thus maintains the one drawn up against the other in its adversity remains torn apart the one outside the other. It is thus that opposition emerges in the most extreme acuteness of its alterity. (GA 4, 53)

De Man must not have read this passage very closely or he would not have imprudently assimilated Nature to the immediate. It is true that he could not read otherwise, since in the Hegelian manner he understands the immediate as the absence of mediation that immediately negates itself as such. This misunderstanding or presupposition led de Man to declare as contradictory upon the notion (borrowed directly from Hölderlin) of "rigorous mediacy." (In two words, this notion is not "contradictory" unless we take the principle of

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<sup>301</sup> Cf. *supra*. Heidegger realizes that Hölderlin "was not familiar with the significance of the primary word, *physis*, whose force, today, we can barely measure." But at the same time, he asserts, "in the word *Nature*, Hölderlin poeticizes [*dichtet*] something else that indeed finds itself in a secret relation with what was once named *physis*" (GA 4,57). This relation is so secret that Heidegger does not say a word about it.

non-contradiction as being intangible, even in its dialectical version, that is, in the explication of a syllogism by the inclusion of the excluded third term.)

“Heidegger’s thesis can be considered as demonstrated if the following identification is granted: the intercession, which is language, is also the immediate itself” (de Man, *ibid.*, 260-61). De Man here touches upon the sensitive point I have tried to show: the identification of Nature (or a name for Being) with language or speech. This is the core of Heidegger’s poetics, but it in turn rests upon the supreme identification that governs the identity of Being and thought, that of Being *as* Being. It is difficult to see how either Hegel or de Man could get out of this knot that binds Occidental thought from its beginning. Simply, instead of seeing in language the knot of identification, they consider it only as a “means” to an *exterior* end – the revelation of the Absolute to itself. It is as if this Absolute could be present (to itself) without language or even when the Absolute merely makes use of language as a middle term, a “medium” – without this medium, which is in the beginning thought of as doomed to effacing itself in the transparency of “sense,” in fact coming to take the first place, as the “engine” of the machine that, otherwise, would remain nothing but inert oppositions, and even stammerings.

But just as Heidegger presupposed this identification (of Being *with* and *by* speech), it finds powerful motivation in Hölderlin himself. De Man relies upon the following line: *Was ich sah, das Heilige sei mein Wort!* “What I saw, the Sacred be my word!” He quite rightly remarks that the verb *sei* (“be”) is not an indicative but a subjunctive with the value, here, of an optative marking a (mere) wish. Not only does the line express “the eternal poetic intention,” but, he adds immediately, this cannot be anything but an intention, never a fact. In short, it is the moment of the “beautiful soul.” The poet’s word indeed calls

*presence* but does not establish it. But on the one hand, is not *calling* nothing but a mere wish? Is it always and everywhere necessary that what is called enter into presence for the call to be “true”? Can we conceive of the poetic call based on the model of a simple desire that always wants its fulfillment? And, on the other hand, how are we to understand the final line of “Andenken”: *Was bleibet aber stiften die Dichter* (“But what remains, the poets provide”) (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 189)? This statement, for Heidegger, constitutes one of the five traits qualifying the essence of poetry. Must we then say that he “invented” that essence, that he takes his desires for realities? No matter how we turn the formulation, the desire to found Being (in the very word, the word for Being, but a word that is other than the word for the Other) is not simply a mere wish. It is the poetic vocation such as it called upon Hölderlin but also destroyed him. In a sense, this wish has realized itself only too fully, and *my* word, in order no longer to be anything but *the* word, similar to the word of the oracle, no longer belonging to the person who proffers it.

We must still hear [or understand] this word. As Heidegger remarks, no information is given about “what remains,” since for once the thing is not *named*. “He [the poet] does not name the thing upon which we would immediately like to put our finger, the ‘content’ of what remains” (GA 4, 145). Is there only content there? Or would what remains not characterize itself precisely in such a way as to escape the too easy distinction of container and contained, of signifier and signified, et cetera?

Whatever we establish as the meaning of the poetic word, something excessive that is always persistent and even recalcitrant always remains (*das Übrigbleibende eines gerade noch verbleibenden Restes*) (GA 4, 144). This remainder is an unassimilable residue that is irreducible to a determinate

signified. It is not the remainder in general, but *a* single remainder, Heidegger emphasizes, reading an earlier variant (for once). This is a remainder, then, that is “what remains of a proper remaining.” And that fundamentally is what the poet “finds”: nothing other than his own word, which as written bears witness as what remains (of the said event). The word is the letter itself, which must be kept, the source that “leaves” its place “with difficulty.” It “remains” inasmuch as its “permanent” source, the source in which it dwells, is always springing forth. There is not other secret: the poem is the going to the source, since it comes from this very source.

But how can what comes from the source return there again? What comes from the source moves only in one direction – toward the sea, and, even if it regrets leaving its native place, this can only be nostalgia. Or must we rather imagine that this “image” (of the source, the river, and the sea) is but an image that disfigures the movement of the proper precisely in figuring it? Does the Greek *physis* mean coming to the self in coming from the self? Is this once again poetry “as” *physis*, no longer as imitation but simply identification, though an identification that will always produce a remainder that cannot be appropriated? The text is what “remains” and what, no matter what happens, is never at itself, never at home. (To answer, it is enough to see how difficult it is to establish the variants in “what remains” itself!) Put differently, if by some extraordinary chance identification ever took place entirely, so that the word “were” the sacred without remainder, then there would quite simply no longer be any speech. No words would remain. There would no longer be anything but the “sacred,” period, that is all. But if the Sacred and the word are two, separate, it is simply that, whatever the sacred character of the word, we must be able to say, to say – “the Sacred by my word!” Is this exclamation already the sacred? If it is but the announcement, the call, of the sacred, it should efface itself (just

as commentary must disappear in the end before the coming of the poem itself) so that the Sacred itself comes in person.

This self-effacement might be the poet's vow [or wish], the very dream of art: to efface itself as art to the point of no longer appearing as art(ifice) but rather as "Being," come purely from itself to itself. At the same time, this vow must be said since it is the whole misfortune of even the "fortunate" word that a remainder, a trace of this effacement, always remains. Effacing is not nothing; it is perhaps a "supreme" writing (though there is not supreme writing). To this Hölderlin's manuscript bears witness, made as it is of deletions and an overabundance of corrections that we would like to efface. That is what all exegetes, philologists, and philosophers dream of in order to have a final state, a final word that would be the word of the end: a "remaining." But only the poets institute this "remainder": what remains (the text), only they establish that, in writing it. But since writing will always be leaving one trace too many, one remainder too many will always remain. The poem will never be sufficiently effaced, or it will only be sufficiently effaced in being rewritten, without end. The beginning, the source, will never be at the source. "The Sacred be my word" is still a statement that "remains." There is no full word or statement; there is no content in the remaining that the word remains, that is, in what always defers the coming through the very call to come. A remaining: a Requiem?

The "attempt undertaken to characterize dwelling and foundation without consideration for content," to cite Heidegger against himself (GA 4, 147), does not truly respond, as we have already seen, to Heidegger's attempted explication of the final statement of the poem. Does it respond more fully to this statement itself? We cannot answer this question: only poets can respond to

their words. They keep their word, are above all men of their word. And Hölderlin was the first to promise to keep his word. His word demands that he keep his word. "The Sacred be my word!" concerns a sacred promise, a sermon (*sacramentum*), because the sacred is the promise itself, the word to be kept. At the same time, "they are lacking, the sacred names." Even the name of the "sacred" does not keep its word (none of these letters is sacred; they are not even letters of nobility). The name "sacred" lacks the name necessary to keep the sacred promise. But this lapse is not a simple failure. It can always appear to be such a failure, if we take the Sacred as acquired in advance or if we take the remainder as subsisting (whatever be the variations or variants). Here all the schemes of cause and effect are null and void. Remaining is not produced by poetic institution, no more than the Sacred is its result (which would, in effect, be sacrilege). The word's lapse is the very heart of its sacredness. It is the breaking and the price (and the hold) of poetry. Because it leaves this coming that remains to come without voice, poetry calls for a saying that would be entirely calling, and nothing but. We must stand fast in the very place of the failing that marks the promise of an ineffaceable debt. The word will not be in the sacred unless it defers the Sacred in calling it to come, which also means that the word will never be in the sacred, if by the future we understand an as yet unrealized present. It is a matter, here, of the sacred or of the promise, as it is of death.

Death is not a possibility-to-be except in remaining in its pregnancy, continually growing fatter from its most proper and unrealizable, or rather, untenable possibility, that of impossibility. The promise cannot be kept, that is what must be kept. But (*aber*) what remains, (only) the poets say. They live close to the source; that is why they are poorer, essentially poorer. They cannot take up residence there unless they keep their word. But the word cannot be



kept in an appropriable way. It cannot be kept unless one renounces oneself, renounces standing-for-oneself, just as the source keeps nothing for itself, but gives, lets what will distance itself spring forth irreversibly from this place. Irreversibly: *there is not return to the self*, and that is what escapes Heidegger just as much as it does Hegel. Hölderlin knew this and thus also knew that he was going to his ruin, without return. It is always already too late to be born or even reborn. Birth cannot but escape the mortal (and even the god, in another sense). It is omnipresent, the all-powerful, which, however, leads everyone to maturity and ruin “in its marvelously light arms.” It is the Nature that gave man language (the most dangerous of goods), so that, “creating, destroying and disappearing, and (thus) returning to the eternally living” (a return not to the self, but to Nature), he *testifies* to “having inherited from [Nature] what he is”: a man of his word, who keeps his word of Nature only out of love for Nature, and for love of the “Love that conserves the Universe,” for the love of the Being of love, whose letter is a being-disappearing in the very difference to the letter (*EHD*, 166-172).

It is possible that the poetic crisis exceeds every critique by reason, which does not mean that commentary is exempt from an elementary critical “spirit” (from a criticism of itself, that is, of its status as commentary). This crisis puts nothing less than identity itself at stake, beginning with the identity of criticism’s own language. No one can entirely master the word. The word is ungraspable. Even that phrase, “the word is ungraspable,” is ungraspable. *But* we are grasped by this ungraspable word – in the lack. *But* a poetic lack.

Chapter 14

ANTIGONE IN THE PLACE OF BEING

At the beginning of his 1943-44 lecture course on Heraclitus, Heidegger relates two “anecdotes” (GA 55, 5-28). Both concern the site, the place of philosophy in the city, or rather what the Greeks named *polis*. One of the anecdotes is famous, and Heidegger returned to it at length in the “Letter on Humanism.” Some visitors come to find Heraclitus and discover him close to a bread oven warming his feet. Since they are amazed – there is nothing very interesting or “tragic” about a thinker who feels the cold – Heraclitus responds sharply: “the gods are even here.” In this *very* place, close to the fire, in the ordinary light of day, in the home of the familiar dwell the gods, the Strangers / Foreigners. In the same way, *there*, in the habitual (place), is the in-habitual of Being.

The second story is less famous. It is told by Diogenes Laertes. Heraclitus had retired to the sacred enclosure of the temple of Artemis. But there, in the consecrated *place*, his fellow citizens find him in the middle of playing knucklebones with children instead of devoting himself to meditation. This time less friendly toward them (these are not foreigners but the inhabitants of the same *polis*, Ephese), Heraclitus questions them: What are you amazed at, somber knaves? Is not that more worthwhile than conducting politics with you?” The remark is stern, and *could* be applied to the fellow citizens of Heidegger; himself also retired to his sacred enclosure (the heights of Todtnauberg). One could then explain Heidegger’s retreat after he had taken note of his “great stupidity” (the 1933 Rectorship) in the following manner: it is

better to teach Heraclitus or play dice than to tangle oneself up in the political affairs of the day. That would support a judgment his former student Hannah Arendt has spread widely: Heidegger's error was less to have believed in National Socialism than to have occupied himself with politics, a typically, one could say hereditarily, philosophical mistake. The philosopher is fundamentally unadapted to the everyday world of affairs, in the Greek sense of *pragmata*, because he dwells elsewhere, in clouds that make him fall into a pit as soon as he puts his feet back on the ground. This is the story of Thales and of the servant who laughed about his fall. Of course, blindness is never an excuse, all the less so since Heidegger otherwise pretended to have a piercing view on History. But it is true that since Socrates and Plato the ground is pulled out from under the feet of the philosopher uniquely preoccupied by the invisible world of Being.

Heidegger immediately challenges this interpretation of the position of the philosopher, however. He does not dwell elsewhere, but *in this very place*. One might be tempted, he writes, to interpret the "situation" ("*Situation*," in ironic quotation marks in the text) in a modern way: the philosopher would recognize himself *here* as an "a-political" man who is not completely at his task except in the enclosure of his private life. But beside the fact that the distinction public life / private life is not Greek and that it is only true in one way (the qualification of "private" shows in what sense the Greeks thought man as *essentially* political, political in his very being), we must still agree upon the sense of this small word, "political." This is *not*, despite its origin, an originally Greek word.

Since *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, that is, since 1935, Heidegger contested the translation of *polis* by State (*Staat*) or City-State (*Stadstaat*).

Polis means instead the place (Stätte), the there in which and as which Being-there (das Dasein) is as taking place historically. The polis is the place of history, the there in which, from which, and for which history takes place. To this site of history belong the gods, temples, priests, celebrations, games, poets, thinkers, the king, the council of the Ancients, the assembly of the people, the army, and the navy. All of that does not belong to the polis, is not first of all political, for having a relation with a man of state and a strategy and for relating to affairs of state. On the contrary, it is political, that is, historically situated, as far as, for example, the poet is only a poet, but then really a poet, the thinker only a thinker, but then truly a thinker. (*IM*, 117)

In other words, what is contested is the modern, and more particularly Hegelian, interpretation of the political as the matter, *above all*, and thus also *exclusively*, of the State, that “concrete universal” that would govern all human behavior. It is not because the philosopher would keep himself at a distance from political affairs that he can be qualified as “a-political.” *As a thinker and only that* he might even be “more” political than any politician, by which I mean, more *originally* political, that is to say, concerned by what is at the beginning of politics – the *polis*.

Thus, Heidegger would have come back to the *polis* as to that place which *makes a place for* any politics and which, as such, “is absolutely not a ‘political’ concept” (GA 53,99). This strange re-traction governs Heidegger’s “position,” a position that in a certain way is no longer one at all, but rather a de-position. If we can speak of a Heideggerian retreat, it is not the traditional one of the philosopher gliding in his metaphysical clouds; but no more does he espouse the position of the theoretician, of the thinker *of* the political (the position of Schmidt, for example) who situates himself above the mêlée and climbs back to this side of the political to delimit its foundation, its *principles*. Not only does

Heidegger refuse to allow himself to consider the principle properly speaking, not original, but is already nothing but a consequence, a modern derivative.<sup>302</sup> A principle is what governs because it comes first: it is a translation of the Greek *arche*. A good prince must govern according to good principles, by which we understand principles that are philosophically proven. And that is why for Plato there are no good rulers except philosophers. But what if the principle of the political is erroneous as such? What if it is not the political (especially the State) that is at the *point of departure* of the *polis*, but, inversely, the *polis* that is at the point of departure of all politics? The *polis* is not and cannot itself ever by a principle, at least not in the sense of an indisputable principle that is sure and certain, *beyond question*. This explains as well that Heidegger, when he undertakes a dialogue with the Greeks on the essence of the *polis*, does not immediately do so with the philosophers who wrote “Politics” (Plato, Aristotle), but with the poets that these same philosophers had excluded from the *polis*, and, above all, with Sophocles. If *Antigone* is in question, it is without doubt for having given rise to the most radical philosophical interpretation, that of Hegel. But the singularity of Heidegger’s questioning lies in that he does not at all situate himself on the same level as Hegel. The horizon is not the State, not even self-consciousness. *Antigone* does not come into question except through a very particular view of a dialogue with the Greeks in which it is the essence

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<sup>302</sup> The title of Reiner Schürmann’s book plays on this level: *Heidegger on Acting and Being: From Principles to Anarchy*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Nothing is less anarchical, even *literally*, than the thought of Being. That it thinks Being as “without foundation” or as an “abyss” (*Abgrund*) does not in any way mean that it purely and simply abandons the demand for a foundation or a *commanding beginning* (it is thus that one could translate *arche*). The thinking of Being climbs back above Being to what sends it, destines it, and what is in no way whatsoever an-archical, but would rather be autarc(h)ic, as I have hazarded to put it in relation to language. The Same (the *Es* of the *Es gibt: das Ereignis*) commands, even if the Same is an Other (from what followed – philosophical thought decreeing its “principles”). The political translation of this thought always threatens being a fundamentalism, an *arche-facism*, to the extent that heterogeneity is, if not reduced, then at least led back to a single and *same* Origin. But must we and can we translate this thought politically? That Heidegger took such a risk at least shows the path not to be taken.

itself of “occidental destiny” that is in question and whose initiator is himself a very singular poet, the “poet of the poets”: Hölderlin.<sup>303</sup>

Man is *essentially* political. Evidently, everything depends upon what we thus *call* and what is included in – and thus excluded from – the definition of the political. The Greeks, inventors, among others, of “democracy,” excluded from the lot slaves, women, and even barbarians. The *polis* is, primarily, a belonging to the place proper. That is why banishment is a punishment worse than death; it deprives “man” of the place of Being. For us Moderns, that is to say, for a subject that thinks itself at the origin of itself, as at home (in itself) before hand, the question of place makes practically no sense. On the spatial model, place is identified exactly with contingent exteriority. Above all, the subject determines all being, here or there, as self-consciousness, so that the here itself no longer refers to the presence or absence of the gods (of the Others) but gives itself as the immediacy of self-presence.

Heidegger never pretended to subtract the adjective “political” from the subject “man.” On the contrary, he clearly affirms that *everything* must be political *for this subject*, but only if we consider it as being certain and resting upon an unshakable foundation that is nothing other than “man,” *ego*, and/or the State (society). In other words, this determination is valid only for the modern subject (itself a redundancy: there is no subject but the modern one). In this historical determination, there is no domain of reality that could be subtracted from this imperialism of the all-political, but also from the all-subject, where the essence of “political” totalitarianism originates. Heidegger goes so far as to

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<sup>303</sup> Can we ignore just as royally Hölderlin’s sympathies for the French Revolution (itself thoroughly marked by Greek models since Rousseau), then his implicit reference to (or reverence for) Bonaparte (in *Friedensfeier*, as Jean-Pierre Lefebvre has shown)? We cannot decide upon this question immediately, all the less so since it would be necessary to investigate the source of the very concept of revolution.

give to the totalitarian the sense of the unique path possibility for the “fulfillment of metaphysics,” which corresponds to the “perfection of Technique.”

The fundamental modern form in which the specifically modern human self-consciousness organizes every being, all while relating it to itself [that is, self-consciousness], is the State. That is why the “political” becomes the normative self-certitude of historical consciousness. The political determines itself from History conceived according to consciousness, that is, History “technically” proven. The “political” is the fulfillment of History. Because thus the political is the fundamental technico-historical certitude of all acting, the “political” will be characterized by the unconditional putting out-of-question (*Fraglosigkeit*) of itself. The unquestionability of the “political” and its totality belong together. The foundation of this conjunction and its terms do not rest, however, as one naïvely believes, on the accidental arbitrariness of dictators, but founds itself in the metaphysical essence of modern reality in general. (GA 53, 117-18)

All this development to end up at what? To explain or even justify modern totalitarianism straight out? It is rather to found not “the accidental arbitrariness of dictators” (a significant plural) but the very principle of dictatorship in “the metaphysical essence of modern reality!” To put this differently by retranslating concretely, if there were Hitlers or Stalins, are Descartes and his project of unconditional “certitude” at fault? When all is said and done, it is the connection itself, the order (in the sense of the chain of reasons but also of what orders, plans, and dictates its “reason”) that would have to be questioned, even though it has sheltered itself from all questionability in self-certainty. It is to an *interpretation* of modern reality, however, that Heidegger in the final instance committed himself. He denounces the ignorance of those who did not have this “view in what is” and who attribute to abnormal and even pathological

individualities what falls within the jurisdiction of the norm par excellence, even though it be in itself an enormity of the result of a radical wandering [errance] (of the forgetting of Being): the technicalization of all reality. Consequently, we can understand why he qualified National Socialism as the decisive encounter of modern man with planetary technology, and also how this explanation effaces the singularity of the Nazi “phenomenon” (anti-Semitism). For on one level of essence there is no essential difference between Nazism and Communism, or even democracy, to the extent that it too is modern and submits to the command of technology.

Against the modern model of the State, it would be necessary to erect the more “authentic” model of the Greek *polis*. We could interpret Heidegger’s gesture in this way and, once again, would follow the wrong path, not only because he nowhere proposes to return to the Greeks, but also because the *polis* is anything but a model (which it never was, except from the modern perspective, from Rousseau to Hegel). It is not a model because it is highly questionable, and that for the Greeks themselves: the “worthy-of-question,” in contrast to modern politics, which shelters itself from every question in its principle of unconditional self-certainty. But if the *polis* is in no way *primarily* political, and if, moreover, there is nothing that could be removed from the political, what can we still say of the *polis*? Can we say that it is not a being and thus that it is a nothingness – a *utopia*? The projects for an ideal *polis* in Plato testify to the fact that, since the Greeks, the *polis* was already seen as such a utopia. But we can also think in a fundamentally Greek way that the *polis* announces the place of what is not a being without being pure nothingness: Being. It would be tempting to see it thus and following similar disjunctions, at least rhetorically, in Heidegger: the essence of the technical is in no way technical; similarly, the essence of the political (the *polis*) is in no way political.



The whole question remains in knowing if such a passage to the essence is possible, or if it does not content itself with repeating the metaphysical leap from the ontic to the ontological, from consequence to principle.

To accomplish the *retrait*<sup>304</sup> from the political to the *polis*, the recourse to an essence or a foundation (thus to all *founding* by the originary, even “Being”) must be avoided. This is what Heidegger will have understood (too late, of course) and it is why the look he casts upon *Antigone* in 1943 is fundamentally different from the one he cast in 1935. It is a *retracted* look, as though facing the horror of an error. How could he have identified the splendor of Being with what took place and for which Heidegger will have but a single word: *Unheil*. From now on, it is not longer a question of aligning “thinkers” (or “poets”) and “creators of State” on the same side. But most of all, heroism has entirely changed meaning, if not camp. Before, the founders (including those of State: Hitler, for example) were called *apolis*, “without city and without place, solitary, trapped in the middle of nowhere, and by the same token, without status or borders, with neither hearth nor home,” because *as creators* they have to ground all that. At present, it is rather Antigone (she who has no place, is *apolis*, and who, in the imagination of all occidental history, has always symbolized the resistance to the arbitrariness of the reason of the State) who is perceived as the “witness of Being” and, as such, as the exemplarity par excellence of Greek “man”: the most *Unheimliche*. This exemplarity is itself exemplary, that is, without example, absolutely inimitable, an exception literally speaking. It is what is withdrawn, subtracted from every law of figuration, from fictioning. Antigone prohibits all “fiction of the political.”

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<sup>304</sup> *Retrait* would need to be translated as both “retreat” and “withdrawal.” I have used this French word untranslated here to evoke both of these meanings, but also to mark the repetition of the “trait” or characteristic, the *re-trait*, that is also signified by the word.

This is no longer a foundation, *not even a poetic foundation* as Heidegger still conceived of it in his 1934 lecture course on Hölderlin, because, especially as hearth, home, and dwelling, how could the “place” (since it is as “place” that *polis* must be translated) be founded, and how could it give place to a foundation? It is this failure (of refoundation) that carries the *re-trait* [retreat], here marked with a hyphen because it is not simply a prudent withdrawal (not at all: it is difficult to reproach Heidegger for having been timid, he who will identify himself almost entirely with the supreme audacity of Antigone) but a step upstream toward what conceals sense from (and thus gives it to) the political as such: *the re-trait of the place-polis*. Heidegger's retreat comes from the *re-trait* of the *polis*, which can never establish itself as the foundation of political space. Every fundamental position is exposed to being but a wandering, all the more since it wishes it were solid and certain of itself and of its “truth.”

The polis is and remains the properly worthy-of-question (Fragwürdige), in the strict sense of the word, not simply what can be questioned (Fragliche) in any question or debate (Frage), but what relates to the highest and broadest contemplation. That it be thus is still evident from the late considerations that have been transmitted to us in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Amongst other things, Plato says this in his *Politeia* (book V, 473ff.): “If either the philosophers do not become masters in the polis or the so-called current rulers and holders of power do not ‘philosophize’ in an authentic and appropriate way – there will be no end to the disaster (Unheil) for the polis.” (GA 53, 105)

*Unheil*: the word is strong and *could* well be the way Heidegger “salutes” the current “so-called rulers and governors.” At least, we could read it this way, if we wished, to save Heidegger from the very disaster that he had saluted ten years earlier with a *Heil*.

For the Moderns, this view of Plato will appear perfectly “Platonic,” Heidegger continues. Everyone knows that philosophers glide in the clouds and that they lack “all practical sense, all contact with reality.” How could they manage affairs of State? But it is not about that, since the *polis* is not the State, especially the modern State, and since the “affairs” are not the essential part of the State. But neither does Plato say that political leaders should occupy themselves with philosophy, “as if it were a matter of the type of a collection of beetles.” It is not a matter of putting politicians *in the place of* philosophers (or inversely), but of arriving *at the place of Being*.

According to another of Plato’s statements, philosophers confine themselves to the brilliance and light of Being, and that is why it is so difficult for the ordinary eye to discern whether or not someone is a philosopher. (GA 53,106)

Being does not have a place any more than the *polis* does, which is “founded on the truth and essence of Being.” We do not find it anywhere, like a thing that that is or is not in its place. It is not a current affair, not an affair at all. It has nothing to do with that, nothing other than to dwell there, in its brilliance, sometimes, like Antigone, to the point of losing sight and life. That Heidegger also had taken Nonbeing (*Unheil*) for – in the place of – Being is certainly not pardonable, but bears witness that such a dwelling remains the most exposed to aberration and to loss. Heraclitus could still retire in the inviolate sanctuary of the inviolable Artemis, the goddess “of *physis*,” Heidegger says.

But today, at present, in this time of “distress” when there is no Present – no place in the wandering of the planet (earth) is inviolate or inviolable. A guest, the most “unheimlich” of all, the most disturbing because the most familiar (and the *least known*), is standing at the door: nihilism. He is already

there; he has entered even before having knocked. He is everywhere and nowhere in particular because he is already confused with Being, because he takes the place of it, in the *form* of the “human.” Everywhere “at home,” he nonetheless remains foreign to everyone, the *other*, he who must be excluded to reestablish the purity of a purely fantasized home / *Heim*. We could call him the “hôte” (host, haunting, other), he who *haunts* the dwelling, that guest you never wanted to accommodate, who snuck in, fraudulently, by the same means that we believe ourselves sheltered “at home,” the *only* master, “ourselves” and *no other*. Making the other nothing, we by the same token engender in our interior our other, our “interior enemy,” Hegel would say (we will return to that), the Trojan horse that will have surrounded the place *beforehand* by the very fact that it is thanks to its exclusion, its annihilation, that, like a phantom, it can cross the most closed-off walls of an intimate interior or of a nation (and even a “Europe” or “America”) that we believe to be very much our own, cemented, like before, by a Wall.

The *polis* is what *takes the place* of Being, what institutes itself as the place of Being in place and in lieu of Being – just exactly as *Dasein* does. That means that it is the first place in which Being shows itself under the figure of the difference, of the conflict (*Streit, eris*), between beings and non-beings, appearing and appearance, the true and the false, et cetera. The *polis* is not “worthy-of-question” for the pleasure of the question but because it opens the space of questioning, above all, of this question: *Who are we?* Traitors or heroes, free beings or slaves, men or gods...? Each time, a difference installs itself in the very place of Being, already opens itself in accordance with the *polis*. This is also why tragedy is the very display of “political” Being. Not because there would be “exceptional” destinies, but because already, beforehand, *Dasein* – or the exposure *to* Being (to the risk of Being: *ôüëïá*) – is

the exception to everything that is. Only *Dasein* can be what it is not and vice versa. It has no definition, no preassigned law. It must assign *itself* – in the name of Being, which it is not but which it takes the place of. Polarity is thus the trait or the “cut” (*Aufriss*) of all *polis* as such:

Perhaps the polis is the place and the domain around which all that is worthy-of-question and strange (*unheimliche*) in a worthy sense turns. The polis is *δύεϊν*, that is, the pole, the vertebra in and around which everything turns itself. In both words (polis and polos) the essential thing that the verb *pelein* says, in the second line of the chorus, finds itself named: the constant and change. The essential “polarity” of the polis concerns the being in entirety. The polar addresses the being in that it turns and concerns the being as manifest. Man in a worthy sense is referred to this pole, inasmuch as man, understanding Being, stands in the middle of beings and here each time necessarily takes a stand (Stand) with its circumstances (*Zuständen und Umständen*). “Status” is the “State.” Thus polis signifies as much as “State.” We are thus already on a false path again when thinking polis as State, we knowingly or thoughtlessly confine ourselves to modern representations of the State. (GA 53, 100)

Now, why does the discussion surrounding the “original” meaning of the *polis* intervene in the middle part of the course on “The Ister”? Let us recall the structure of the course: (1) The poetic language of the essence of rivers – the hymn “The Ister.” (2) The Greek interpretation of man in Sophocles’ *Antigone*. (3) Hölderlin’s poetic language: the essence of the poet as demi-god. There is not obvious justification for the excursus on *Antigone*, and would could reconnect the first and third parts of the course without harming the interpretation of the poem, since the “essence of the river” and the “essence of the poet” are the Same (by means of the medium of the demi-god). If not direct, the connection is at least necessary, for *Dasein* is the being-between, the place-

between, and as such is the very site of connection. This place-between, far from being a just milieu or a “measure” (Protagoras), is defined essentially as excess, immoderation, and thus asks the question of what the milieu, Being as hearth (as the second part puts it), is.

The “between,” as ex-istence, is ecstatic. From the first part of the course on it is a question of the place, but of the place as incapable of being situated in a space. It is not a fixed point, but always a movement toward: a direction [*sens*], an orientation. The river is the *chiasmus characteristic of the thinking of the Turn*. It is the locality of mobility and the mobility of locality. About the form of such a phrase, Heidegger writes that the appearances of a pure place of language is not easily overcome. The words must be understood beyond the immediate, that is, logical, meaning of the type of pronouncement “x is y.” Is it a question of speculative phrases (of the type “God is Being”)? For that, there would have to be a subject. But if one term is reflected in the other, it is because their identity does not preexist the reflection of the one in the other. This is not even a reflection, since nothing is sent back. We cannot make an image of this for ourselves, because in passing from one term to the other the scene changes, making this a metaphor that is even more radical than a literary metaphor that supposes a stable point of comparison to which we return to relate one term to the other. This dis-placement does not spare the place itself, the place in which it intervenes. It is the dis-placement of displacement, the voyage of voyages, and thus the locality of the locale. Or better, none of these take place unless they are said at the same time, unless saying travels with he who speaks. This is what makes language the dwelling of Being, a nomadic dwelling that does not wander aimlessly, for the nomad is always governed by a *nomos*. This *economadism* is itself double, economy and nomadism. On the one hand, the dwelling comes from the spacing that bestows locality, and thus the river

determines the here (*Dort*) and the there (*Da*) through which a coming-to-dwell is possible and begins. “The river not only grants the place in the sense of a simple position that living men occupy. The river itself retains the place. The river itself inhabits” (GA 53, 55). It inhabits in the sense that it gives place, *bewohnt*, which is to be understood as *be-wohnt*, the capacity to inhabit (just as the thing, *das Ding* is described as *be-dingen*, the capacity to thing, be-thing, “condition”). This is a gift, a dowry: the river *behütet* this habitation, safeguards it precisely in giving place to an inhabiting (and “it is huts that man lives...” [GA 53, 55]).

But on the other hand, no place is fixed forever.

The essence of the place in which the coming-to-dwell finds its beginning and its access is that it travels. The essence of this voyage is the river. The place is here and there, not by chance, but according to the hidden law of a coming-and-going (*Wanderung*: migration). (GA 53, 58)

But the here and the there are not points in a given space succeeding each other in different ways. There is no succession but an accession that is always also a de-cession. The preceding place is always kept or conserved in the following, to be sure, but, on the one hand, this apparent succession follows no necessary order (history is an unregulated succession), and, on the other, there is no result, no final point that totalizes the others. For the place always changes direction or meaning [*sens*] in that it “is” or gives direction or meaning: orientation. To be sure, the history of meaning always begins with the Orient (if not, where would the orientation be?), Indus, in Hölderlin’s poem: from East to West, from the *Morgenland* (the “country of the morning,” the Orient) to the *Abend-land* (the “country of the evening,” the Occident). Nonetheless, a place-between must be introduced between East and West, and this will be Greece,

turned in both directions, *bi-polar*. This also explains the median position in this course. However, this median is itself the place of the Turning in direction/meaning, the perfect trope and thus the only beginning. (We see clearly here in what way Heidegger distances himself from Hegel, who saw in Greece the moment of “infancy,” of abstract immediacy, to be passed over.) The crucial point is that the Ister (a Greek name; the archaic form for the Danube) runs against the current:

But it seems to me to nearly  
Run backwards and  
I believed it must have come  
From the East.

(*SW*<sub>2.1</sub>, 191)

At its source, the Ister seems to return upon its steps or to linger; it dwells. Then, after a bend, it withdraws and goes toward the East. But the essential point is this hesitant beginning. It makes the orientation appear other. The Occident is this very disorientation of meaning / direction [*sens*]. Or rather, the change in meaning / direction is essential to the Occident, so that meaning / direction appears only as this turning of meaning / direction upon itself. Its meaning / direction is the turning of meaning / direction. The same obsession governs modernity from the Copernican / Kantian revolution to the Heideggerian *Kehre*, passing by way of Hölderlin's “return to the homeland” and even the Nietzschean inversion of values. Even if it means changing the political translation of this obsession, we can say that Heidegger inscribes himself (despite himself, it is true) in this tradition of the rupture. Meaning / direction appears as the turning, but this turning is itself one more turn, a re-turn in two senses, alteration and iteration – itin-erratic, again. This is the return to a beginning necessarily lost in that there is no beginning to the quest for meaning



/ direction, for the Occident, except in the experience of the loss of meaning / direction. But by the same token this is also the (re)invention of this origin by means of a supplement of the origin, a hyperbole in the movement of radicalization.

To access to the *polis* as that locality that is “worthy-of-question” is just as much to gain access to the “poetic” inhabiting Hölderlin would open. Just as the community offers itself only as inoperative, out of order, so the poetic foundation of place will in now way be a production of the idea according to a hierarchizing principle. This will rather be an exposition at the limits of the unfoundable, a going to the foreign that alone makes the path a becoming-“native.”

But what is the foreign here? It is not, according to the evidence, *just any* foreign that could lead us there.

The foreign related to the return that is but one with it is the provenance of the return, the initial welcoming-coming of the proper and of the native. This foreign to the historical humanity of the Germans is Greece, for Hölderlin. (GA 53, 67)

This return is not simply a loop that returns to the same in passing through the other. For this other is precisely nothing other than the “source” of the same, and that is what must be appropriated for the same to *become* properly the same. There is indeed a turn or a turning, but it does not turn *backwards*, precisely because what we are to turn ourselves toward does not *re-present* itself. It has not moved behind, but, in a sense, “in front” of us; it remains waiting for its own beginning. It is the welcoming in everything that demands the appropriation because it is provenance as promise (and promised land). The

relation between the proper and the foreign is in no way simple or even dialectical. “The ordeal of the foreign” is not only a voyage (*Wanderschaft*) in a foreign and distant land, preparing for the return and thus appropriation. It is not a question of an indispensable education in life experiences in the mode of the *Bildungsroman*, but of the very experience of the proper, which is not completed upon the return but *starts* in the foreign, a beginning that is itself already and only an appropriation. In the beginning, there is the foreign as this provenance of welcoming. Experience is this and nothing else: a going to the source, toward pro-venance, that is, the foreign. There is not return as *telos*; there is nothing but the turning that makes the experience of the foreign a remote source. Such is the “free use” of the proper that Hölderlin says is the most difficult to learn: *in the beginning, there is nothing but the Greek*. But the “Greek” is properly Greek only when it is shown as the *other pole*.

*Wir lernen nichts schwere als das Nationelle frei gebrauchen* (“We learn nothing more difficult than freely to use the *Nationelle*”) (SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 425). “*Das Nationelle*” is a foreign word, even in German. It is not even certain it exists. To be sure, “national” makes sense, but we must realize that in this first year of the nineteenth century, the nation is a new idea in Europe, and especially in Germany, where nothing corresponding to a national, united State exists, be this State monarchical or a Republic, one and indivisible. It is only as a consequence of the French invasion and in reaction against Napoleonic oppression that the concept of the “German nation” arises, notably in Fichte’s famous *Addresses to the German Nation* (1809). Oddly, even though it is in reaction to a foreign invasion that German national sentiment is born, and even though the idea of the nation came directly from the French Revolution, the Revolution is given as an ideal of universal liberation. But this is indeed the history: it is made of appropriations (and of misappropriations) of foreign elements; it is an (and

perhaps the) experience in which the proper always comes from the other, but also alienates itself in use.

To attempt to grasp what Hölderlin “meant” by *Nationelle* (and thus the “proper”), we must see what the word relates to, what the other word it forms a couple with as its “foreign.” This other is precisely what Heidegger would have named “Spirit”: “culture,” in opposition to “nature.” Or rather, since “culture” is a Latin word that partakes of the bucolic and religious, the other of *Nationelle* is *Bildung*, what Heidegger evokes in his *Schelling* as the condition of the German “nation.” Passing from “culture” to *Bildung*, we pass from one culture to another, if I can put it thus. But while a foreign language can be learned, one’s “native” language cannot: it is given. The native language must be taken just the same, so that it quickly becomes apparent that the difference between the foreign and the proper, as soon as it is a question of language, as we have seen, is more than a matter of translation, is infinitely fragile and perhaps even indeterminable as such.

But *Nationelle* indicates the proper in a determinate aspect, that of the “nation” or of a people. In this regard, it is a question of “provenance,” of history, if you please, but a unique history. To put it bluntly, it is a question of “destiny,” that is, of the suitability of provenance. In this history, “we” (we “Germans,” Hölderlin would say) must learn the proper, must learn to appropriate our provenance (Greece) for ourselves. I will not enter further into this extremely complicated relation designated under the name “return to the homeland,” a relation that in many ways marks a stage that has been “passed over” in Hölderlin’s progression. We would, in effect, have to untangle a tight interlacing of conceptual relations (and yet it is a matter of concepts?) forming a chiasmus, an asymmetrical one, moreover. Before all else, we would have to

question the identity not only of these (given? forged?) “terms,” but of the addresses. To put it bluntly, about which Greeks are we talking? And as for the Germans, whose entire history is precisely a problem of identification, can we forget that in Hölderlin’s eyes they did not exist, or that, inversely, those who “really” existed had nothing to do with the poet? Can we forget this statement from the letter written to Bohlendorf just before Hölderlin emigrated to France: “But it is at the price of bitter tears that I have resolved to leave my fatherland again now, perhaps forever. For what do I have in the world that is more dear to me? But they have no use for me” (SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 427-28).

“They have no use for me” is the English translation of a German expression that speaks of usage or of employment, *brauchen*: Hölderlin is out of work because there is no need of poets. And there is no need of them because, since Plato, poets are perfectly useless; they are useless mouths because, excluded from the city, they have been reduced to silence, because the “nation” functions differently, according to another *poiesis*, because they believe they do not need to learn the proper, since it is given. But precisely because it is given, the proper is forgotten. It is a law of culture, Hölderlin says, that “with cultural progress, what is properly named *Nationelle* will always have the least privilege” (SW<sub>6.1</sub>, 426). To translate this better: culture’s original trait, the one that at first comes as being ahead (principle), will become blurred, will retreat into a *retrait*. For with culture, what occupies the foreground is precisely what is put on stage or given form, fictioned (or fictionalized). Form has features and draws everything toward itself, rejecting everything else in the shadows, the unformed. But everything else, the remainder, is precisely the given. Thus the foreign element, which must be learned, acquires a decisive (formative) hold over everything, quite simply because it is what gives form. For example, rational logical clarity, conquered by Greek philosophy after a long struggle,

henceforth passes for the prerogative of the Greeks, their privilege, their gift proper, thus covering the origin, all that is obscure, “terrible,” chaotic, or Dionysian in them, and that it will take Nietzsche to uncover. This vision is too simplistic, though. The proper risks appearing as the dark side of the moon, a bit like the repressed unconscious. But that it has been forgotten is perhaps not the effect of an unhappy fate. It may be that there is something proper about forgetting, because the very status of the given is never to be able to appear, or not “as such,” in the light of its form. Thus, far from being lost “with the progress of culture,” it would preserve itself all the more profoundly in the Being-in-disappearing that would mark its proper being.

Let us enter into the course of the explication of Antigone. If polarity is the proper meaning of the *polis*, then the place in which this polarity is displayed will not be the political but tragedy, Greek tragedy, of course. More precisely, the exemplary place of this display, for Heidegger, but already in a sense for Hegel, will be Sophocles’ *Antigone*. Although here and there, and notably in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger is interested in the figure Oedipus (it is on this occasion that he gestures, with reservations as to its “subjectivism,” toward Reinhardt’s “recent” interpretation of *King Oedipus* as the “tragedy of appearance”), the text he will comment upon the most often is the famous first chorus of *Antigone*. To what extent Heidegger up until this point identified with the figure of Antigone, we can only adumbrate in this study. Oddly, the figure of Oedipus, of the “blinding” constitutive of a *Dasein* who wants to know too much and who, according to the phrase Heidegger takes from Hölderlin, has “perhaps one eye too many,” could have better described the thinker’s political “error,” *on the condition that he recognized it*. There is no

indication that would allow us to determine if this is so. But Oedipus could not have described that error unless we once again agree situate the “tragedy” of the thinker on a strictly political level. According to Heidegger, however, we must take everything the wrong way round, or at least on another level of precedence.

It is thus that I read the “historical” preliminary to Schelling’s *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*: “1809: Napoleon reigns, that is to say, in this case, oppresses and outrages Germany” (1). Should we read, “1936: Hitler reigns, that is to say, in this case oppresses and outrages Germany”? This would be tempting, all the more so since if we identify Hitler with Napoleon, we could imagine Heidegger at Erfurt in the place of Goethe, but this time in order to respond firmly to the politician for whom tragedies “are things of the past” (was Napoleon a Hegelian?) and who declared that the only destiny in the present age of the world was the political: “No, spirit is destiny, and destiny is spirit. But the essence of spirit is liberty” (*Schelling*, 2). It would even be tempting, here, to replace Napoleon by Hitler, in whom two years earlier Heidegger also saw the “soul of the world” riding under his windows, and in the place of the “Come to Paris...there the conception of the world is grander,” from Napoleon to Goethe, put “Come to Berlin...” from Hitler to Heidegger.... We could then dream about this scene that did not take place, about a Heidegger telling Hitler, attentive, for once, his four truths. But, besides that neither Hitler nor Napoleon could stand contradiction, this dream is not only utopian and even the utopia properly speaking (a spiritual politics or an enlightened dictator: the ancient philosophic tradition goes back to Plato, the founder of utopia as the politics of the Idea), is a (bad) staging. For it is in the very name of “Spirit” that three years earlier, in his Rector’s Address, Heidegger called upon his dumbfounded auditors to see in the Führer (or at least the National Socialist “revolution”) the “destiny” of the German people. Destiny and liberty are confused and cancel

each other out in the identification with the Absolute by which the subject determines itself, above all in producing itself as self in a sublime staging. What, after all, does this call to liberty mean? Nothing other than the philosophical, dictatorial definition, dictating the law of the Subject as total “reality”: “give yourself your own law.”

And yet, it is to Antigone, the same woman who stands facing Creon, another “dictator” for whom destiny is politics, the same woman who has always figured the spirit “just beyond the law,” to cite Derrida (*The Politics of Friendship*), that is, the spirit of a beyond-justice, in accordance with the disproportions of the law itself, that the thinker addresses himself in 1943. It is to Antigone that Heidegger addresses himself, then, to bring out the question of the “Greek interpretation of man” as the height of *dwelling* (*Dwelling*). An entire chapter is given to the translation of the word, which Hölderlin rendered as *Ungeheure* (monstrous, unheard of), already Heidegger proposes *Unheimliche*, precisely because it maintains an intimate relation with *Heim*, *Heimisch*, *Heimat*, what I will call Dwelling (*Herd*: the home explicitly assimilated to Being). But it is a matter of emphasizing a multiplicity of meanings, this multiplicity itself being run through by a duality, or rather by an intimate adversity that constitutes the heart or home of Being-man.

In his recapitulation, Heidegger clearly distinguishes the polar nature of the *Unheimliche*: the Terrifying can be what provokes terror, but also what, even while it is giving birth to terror, holds back permanently, suspended before that which permits no approach and so displays the dwelling in the distance that is reserve, respect, modesty. It is, then, the “venerable” (*Ehrwürdige*). Tear-ifying, it tears out of the beaten paths (*aporos*, in the chorus) but by the same token toward the “secret” (*German-heimnis*): the sacred as prohibited, limit, and

thus place. The *Unheimliche* already names a power, a reign (*walten*) in the double sense of a violence (of which *An Introduction to Metaphysics* speaks more precisely) and of creative power. Finally, it is the inhabital; but it is always inhabital in the double sense of what contradicts habit and the familiar, of the in-habital (thus disquieting), and of what bestows an inhabiting because, reserved in everything, it is what is addressed or, better, con-sented upon (*das in allem Geschickte*). This duality is the very heart of the Being of man in that it announces his belonging to Being, that is to say, to the Differend that is Being itself in that Being is not being and yet gives place for all beings. That is also why it is important to understand that the proper is in no way a being either, that if Antigone represents the highest degree of *Unheimlichkeit*, it is precisely for representing nothing at all.

Antigone is herself the supreme audacity inside the domain of *äáéüí*. Being this audacity is her nature / essence (*Wesen*). She undertakes as the ground of Being *Üñ÷P ôÜìP÷áíá* – that against which nothing is to be done, since it appears in itself (no one knows from where). Antigone undertakes as the consented what is sent to her, from that which deploys itself (*west*) beyond the gods above (Zeus) and below (Dike). But that is not even the dead, though it is also not her blood ties binding her to her brother. What determines Antigone is that which first gives foundation and necessity to the privileges of the dead and of blood. What that is, Antigone, and that means the poet as well, leaves without name. Death and Being-man, Being-man and bodily life (blood) in each instance belong together. (GA 53, 146-47)

I jumped directly to this passage because, like a radical short-circuit, it explodes all interpretation relating to Antigone, especially that of Hegel, who saw in the Creon / Antigone conflict the conflict between two determined spheres: the universal State and familial Religion, public and private, masculine



and feminine. These two terms are themselves structured hierarchically, according to an evident metaphysical principle, so that the feminine is immediately devalued. Hegel speaks of a process of “undermining” (*sape*) or of alteration: “Womankind – the everlasting irony [in the life] of community – changes by intrigue the universal end of the government into a private end, transforms its universal activity into a work of a some particular individual, and perverts the universal property of the State into a possession and ornament for the Family.”<sup>305</sup> The irony of this text is that Antigone, acting for the good of the family (or of her blood – what ties her to her *brother*) against the universal laws of the State, is the *unheimlichste*. Her “family” is of an *other genre / gender*. Thus, the conflict is not between the familiar (Creon) and the inhabital (Antigone), for as Hölderlin had already remarked, Creon also exceeds all measure. The conflict is between two equal but opposed “reigns,” as Karl Reinhardt puts it,<sup>306</sup> two modes of *Unheimischsein*, of being displaced: Creon, lost in the “bustling activity without opening into Being,” and Antigone, lost in the without-name, but truly on the path toward dwelling, in the “coming-to-dwell through the belonging to Being.” We must understand this: to belong to Being is to belong to nothing, not even to the dead or the gods below.

But we should not go about our chores too quickly. If we can reject the “usual concepts and categories with which there has been such a struggle since the time of Hegel to penetrate to the essence of *Antigone*,” as Reinhardt writes (64), because these concepts and categories are either too general or too narrow for this single tragedy, it is especially because they are falsely dialectical. They impose from the outside dualistic schemas that, in opposing each another, do

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<sup>305</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 288.

<sup>306</sup> Karl Reinhardt, *Sophocles*, tr. Hazel Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 64.

nothing but neutralize one another. If, as Reinhardt again says, “the need to think dialectically has not gone completely without finding satisfaction in this play” (65) (but also something upon which to break itself), it is because the two reigns in opposition “carry so far in altitude, as in depth, that their dispute touches upon difference itself,” less the difference of the “virile” and the “feminine,” or of the “general” and the “particular,” than that of Being *itself* (as difference).

It would actually be easy to show that, even in Hegel, the “virile” does not correspond with the “general” or that, inversely, the feminine is not necessarily identifiable with insurgent particularity. Refusing to make the distinction between her brother an friend and her brother the enemy, Antigone transcends “political” law, refuses it the status of *human* universality. For her, every brother is all (completely) brother, or man is not “political” in the first place. Inversely, in taking the first initiative of the act, in repeating it, even *overtly*, she manifests more “virility” than Creon, who, as Hölderlin puts it, does nothing but follow in her footsteps. We must avoid simplifying Hegel’s interpretation excessively and thus must not forget that if femininity is the “irony” of the community, it is *created by that community*, which makes femininity its own “interior enemy.” There is no community except on the basis of a sublation of the family. If only one of the brothers was honored, it is because he was the only one to identify himself with the *polis*, to have made of it his “family.” Without the very value of “familiarity” (proximity, presence), no “political” legitimacy can be assured. We still see the demonstration of that fact (which we call the “nation”). There is no nation without this (natural? cultural?) value of “fraternity” that culminates in dying for one’s country. (Is this the privilege of men?)

The crux of Heidegger's interpretation is situated in a very peculiar reading of the famous Creon / Antigone dialogue. He is concerned with determining the reasons that pushed Antigone to break Creon's edict, that is, the edict of the "community." I emphasize, for it is precisely this identification of the prince with the community that Antigone begins by denouncing. She contests the legitimacy of the Prince, of the *Führer*, one might say, even though Creon is in no way a tyrant in the modern sense. At the very most, he would be a dictator in the literal sense: decreeing the law, but in the name of what principle? After all, was Creon not right, from a strictly political perspective, not to treat the usurping brother the same way as he treated the legitimate brother, even if, "below," among the dead, perhaps ("who knows," says Antigone) another custom reigns, a custom that nevertheless does not have the force of law on earth? When it is a matter of justifying herself, of saying why she has dared break the "political" prohibition, Antigone calls upon other laws, to be sure, the famous "unwritten" laws of the gods. But there is something almost sacrilegious in calling them "unwritten," as Hölderlin remarks. It is to act in the place of the god in order to recognize "the Spirit of the Most High" as "outside the statute" – outside the law. This is an absolute excessiveness, for if there is no divine law, or at least if this law is not written (which plainly comes down to the same thing, at least from the human point of view: what is a law that would not be *textually* formulated?), it is not only to conspire against the divine itself (which cannot know itself, humanly speaking, except in "rigorous mediateness," Hölderlin recalls in translating a fragment by Pindar). It seems to deprive oneself and one's action, even if pious, of all legitimacy. That is why, in the logic of such an excess, Heidegger (like Reinhardt) translates Antigone's response in verse 450 thus:

It is not in effect Zeus who ordered me to do that, nor the Dike either, living with the gods below, who set that law among men; and your edict did not appear so strong to me that, from its human spirit, it could extend beyond the unwritten and steadfast words of the gods. Essentially of neither today nor yesterday, but from always, that is. And no one knows from where it has appeared. (GA 53, 153).

When we read *that* (ὅαὶ), we cannot help being a bit lost: to what can “that” refer? If “that,” as it was traditionally read until Reinhardt (Hölderlin included), no longer designates Creon’s edict, what is “that” which comes from neither the present nor the past, but “from always,” although no one know from where “that” appeared? Antigone transgresses the written laws, but in the name of other laws, laws *without name* that she essentially cannot cite. If for her Creon is committing an infraction, is guilty of having legislated where no man has the right to do so, where “the action of justice is extinguished,” René Char would say, that is to say, where there is no longer any law at all, at least no written law, we can ask ourselves precisely *where* she situates herself. She does not have the law on her side either, neither that above nor that below, neither heavenly Zeus nor subterranean Dike. She no longer has anything, and yet it is from this nothing stronger than anything, from this “is,” *west dies*, that translates the Greek ἔσθ’ ὅαὶ (“it lives” – what life?), that she knows herself to be strong, living, dwelling on earth. In face of and against everything, she lives from “that.” She lives from it but she dies from it as well (or first of all?), immured living in a tomb without hymen.

What is that? Without name (at least without a written name), according to Heidegger it is only “it is,” the most intimate hearth and home of Being, but a home that burns and consumes every being who attempts to makes his dwelling of it, a hearth and home that dies in dwelling. Only Being toward death do

beings come to dwell. Inversely, human beings are not at home except when outside dwelling, like he who can be outside all beings and permanently there: “in” this dwelling of the proximity of death as the “coffin of nothing.” This nothing is not pure nothingness. On the contrary, a polar adversity exists in the nothing. It depends upon the side of the differend on which one places oneself. From the perspective of what is, of beings or of the real, Being is nothing (as in Buddhism, Being is emptiness). But from the side (which is not a side and certainly not a “perspective”) of Being, those who confine themselves to beings everywhere and always achieve nothing. This is the meaning of the *pantoporos aporos*, but also of the statement in the *Sophist* speaking of the aporia in which the philosopher facing the meaning of the word “Being” finds himself.

The place of the human being is this non-place in the middle [*mi-lieu*] of all (beings): Being. But because this non-place cannot be occupied like an ordinary place, because one cannot simply pass by there as one passes through a city or a country, one cannot thus bypass it. It is “lost” and man, in turn, is under the orders of (left by and over from) Being. He forgets Being because he can understand it, but because he does not understand except with it, he can never do anything, unlike with any being. Because of this fact, man is in his very being a catastrophe, and even the unique catastrophe at the heart of all that is. Man is a catastrophe in the literal sense of the Greek *καταστροφή*: not a fall out of the original paradise, for the origin is precisely the catastrophe, the irruption of the Differend at the very heart of Being, commanding simultaneously its retreat and the deployment of historical powers, of wandering. We should no longer assimilate it to a negativity, Heidegger continues, even negativity that is dialectically sublated or transfigured in the Nietzschean affirmation of the totality of the will.

Rather, if we must give an example of this catastrophe at any price, we must give the example of Greek tragedy as that representation of polarities that cannot install itself at the center except in de-centering themselves and each other. Nothing acts in the sense of a subjectivity; there is nothing but *pathos*: the *πάθος* is, for Heidegger, “the fundamental trait of all doing and all acting: *ôû añÜîá*, that which constitutes the ‘dramatic,’ the ‘action’ of Greek tragedy” (GA 53, 128). It is on this occasion that Heidegger challenges the modern interpretation of tragedy: the heroes or heroines of Greek tragedies (supposing that they could be qualified in this way) are neither martyrs nor exceptional characters, pathological geniuses. The tragic must not measure itself except against the truth of Being and the simplicity in which it appears. “That is why almost nothing happens in Greek tragedy. It begins with the decline” (GA 53, 128). What declines the decline is “destiny.”

Heidegger cites a statement by Aeschylus about destiny, which is also the central figure of tragedy in Hegel, a figure without face and that swallows up all faces and figures by the fact that they posit themselves, oppose and exposes themselves, to perish one at the hands of the other or even at their own hands. It is not without importance that this statement be cited in the profession of “faith” that is the “Self-Affirmation of the German University.” For from the beginning it relativizes and makes fragile everything that this Address affirms, and affirms in the sense of a “self”-affirmation. Aeschylus’ statement colors the entire *Rectorship Address* with a properly tragic tonality, as though Heidegger had known in advance that his taking a stand was doomed to failure and even disaster. Prometheus, the mythic inventor of philosophy, of that knowledge that must come *before* everything as the original knowledge of Being, of statute and of Law, recognizes nonetheless that “knowledge has considerably less force than necessity,” which alone has the force of law. Thus, tragedy not only

precedes philosophy, which according to its proper concept and destination must nonetheless precede everything, but marks it like a branding iron. Not only every work, be it a work of art or of political institutions (this confusion can be fatal), cannot but fail before destiny's "over powerfulness," but this destiny also defines philosophy at its birth: "all philosophy fails; that responds and belongs to its concept," Heidegger will repeat in his *Schelling* of 1936.<sup>307</sup> If philosophy is tragic, this is still in a sense other than that in Nietzsche (where it is a matter of a Dionysian *affirmation* – a self-affirmation – up to the point of affirming this breaking and failure). Philosophy is tragic because the destiny of Being *calls* its own retreat [*retrait*], forgetting and decline. That signifies that there is still something *above* Being which destines it to appear (and to dis-appear).

But what destines? That remains "without name," "no one knows from where" it has appeared, Antigone says. But, bowing to this Nomos, to this Edict without name, adjoining herself to it as to the address of Being, of it proper Being, ὁ ἀνὴρ τῆς πόλεως, being put to the test of the without-name, Antigone is immediately "exposed beyond all human possibilities," not only in an implacable antagonism vis-à-vis the common place (the *polis*) but also in the position of her proper "self," which is lacking all content. She is *apolis*, not as *upsipolis*, like Creon, who dominates (or believes he dominates) within the common place. She is absolutely without a proper place. "*Sie ist unheimisch schlechtin*," and that, Heidegger specifies, has nothing to do with her actual death, for it is something at least, which thus reattaches her to Being and gives access to the home back to her.

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<sup>307</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen des Menschlichen Freiheit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1971), 118.

The figure of Antigone, such as Heidegger describes it, is perhaps not “historically” exact (what would a historical exactitude mean here?), but is it gripping. She seems to draw herself up purely and simply, and to a certain degree resembles the rose of Silesius, which “flowers without reason, flowers because it flowers.” She is, and this being explodes Being, if we can say so. She destroys all appearance, all positions, true or false, at the same time that in a dream marriage such “nuptial” destruction accomplishes the essence of Being (at least, of Greek Being): appearing as such, which nothing else that appears (or then, with the “completely other,” the *daimon*), the phenomenon in a pure state. In the end, Antigone has absolutely no reason to have “taken the *deinon* upon herself.” Neither the cult of the dead nor “family ties” clearly suffices, in Heidegger’s eyes, to found such a gesture. On the contrary, Karl Reinhardt writes more scrupulously:

What carries the appearance, the choice, the death of Antigone, what embraces them and supports them like the most profound and universal ground from which only the particular can draw its growth is no less radical than what was, for Deianire, Ajax, Hercules, the source of their being. Only that, however, this rootedness, in the present case, is still more removed from our modernity. It is a matter of funerary cult and myths of the classical epoch.” (Reinhardt, 118)

Heidegger, however, writes:

But because the exegetes of this tragedy incessantly try to find an explication for Antigone’s deed in her speech, that is, a statement about the being who causes her act, we arrive at nothing but a return to a being, be this the ancient cult of the dead or blood ties. We misjudge that Antigone speaks of neither. We still cannot that she absolutely does not speak of a being.” (GA 53, 144)



It is thus that, looking to return beyond the cult of the dead or blood ties, thus beyond beings and toward Being, Heidegger comes to say of the cult of the dead and blood ties that it is Being as “home” that gives these two ontically and historically determined forms “foundation and necessity”: “The belonging proper to man *and to him alone*, to death and to blood is itself only determined by the relation of man to Being itself” (GA 53, 147). (I emphasize because that means curiously that animals have no relation to either death or family.) But in all rigor, this extreme ontologism remains a humanism inasmuch as the relation to Being is that of a privileged being (man) and can even justify an arche-nationalism with a superior force. Even if I do not like these terms, it is an anthropo-phallocentrism. In the same way, if what Reinhardt calls “the voice of nature that is most proper to man” (Reinhardt, 115) speaks through Antigone, each of these words remains to be investigate: “voice,” “nature,” “the most proper,” and of course, “man,” it being a matter of a female figure, though invented by a man for men.

If the “blood” and the dead, that is, the “ground,” are rooted in the relation of man to Being, they can by all right appear as “sacred,” *still more so* than they could in a simple mysticism of “*blood and soil*” which would only be biologically and politically, (or rather) ontically, legitimated. To put it otherwise, if for Heidegger the conflict at work in Sophocles’ tragedy is not between State and religion but at the very heart of Being, “that which constitutes its most interior adversity”; if the tragic “counter-play” plays between Being-*unheimisch* in Creon’s sense (“bustling activity without opening into Being”) and the other Being-*unheimisch* in Antigone’s sense (becoming *heimisch* “from the belonging to Being”), then the stakes are simply displaced by a degree, returning toward the originary. For despite everything it is difficult not to identify Heidegger’s Antigone with a form of “religion,” be it a religion

without gods, without rites or dictates, a religion without religion that could be called “poetic,” though in a sense that is absolutely unheard of: *unheimlich*.

## Chapter 15

### A RETURN TO THE ORIGIN (OF ART)

Why reread *Origin*? Heidegger himself tried to do so. He felt the need to add, first, an epilogue (“partially written later”) and then an addendum (“written in 1956,” twenty years later). This was certainly no exception to a long practice of rewriting. The essay “What is Metaphysics?” would be coupled with an afterword and a preface and was thus framed by strict limits that aimed precisely at situating and even containing it. But here, something else is at stake, the “truth” of writing, we might say. At the end of the addendum, Heidegger tries to imagine the trouble his reader will have reading his text “from the inside”:

There is an unavoidable necessity for the reader, who naturally comes to the essay from without, to refrain at first and for a long time from perceiving and interpreting the facts of the case in terms of the reticent domain that is the source of what has to be thought. (*PLT*, 87)

The reader is not at the origin, at the source. He remains on the outside. Does this “troublesome” situation nonetheless define only the reader? The “author” is also not without difficulties, different difficulties, especially that of knowing to speak, “each time in the language most opportune for each of the various stations on his way” (*PLT*, 87).

Heidegger emphasizes that he is in no way responding to the “enigma” of art; he is not going to say what that might be. In a sense, he too is on the

outside. Yet the question of the origin, like that of the essence, is heard beginning with the first words of the text: "What something is, as it is, we call its essence or nature" (*PLT*, 17). Immediately, the origin conceals itself. It does so, on the one hand, in a double referral from the artist to the work, and vice versa, that amount to a troubling reflection, and, on the other hand, in this third (and first) origin that would be art but that can by no means be shown as such. There is no essence of art. The empirical method, like the transcendental method, does nothing but build illusions. Nothing but the circle remains, a going from the one to the other, from the other to the one, without every being able to find an exit. This is a circle that we must not hasten to call hermeneutic, if by that we believe we are able to designate an honorable exit. Something like an essential limit, and not merely a limit of thought, is touched upon in this essay. Heidegger remarks upon it twice, when in the Supplement he returns to put his finger on the wound. He cites himself:

For this reason there is the note of caution... "In referring to this self-establishing of openness in the Open, thinking touches on a sphere that cannot yet be explicated here." (*PLT*, 86)

This reference in effect touches upon the limit-question, that of the essence of Being, or of Difference. Let us say it openly, although, perhaps, from the outside: to say that truth institutes itself is to efface difference and thus to accomplish the gesture proper of metaphysics. In other words, from the inside, this is to say exactly the opposite: to show an essential finitude of Being, of the identity that can never establish itself but by the effect of a difference that is strictly unspeakable as such, and that, therefore, must not be expressed as "simple" (if ontological) difference. Which of the two meanings is the true one?

It might be impossible to respond to this question. We enter into an essentially undecidable area.

My hypothesis is on the exterior level, since I do not see how one could get into a text, if it even has an interior (but since there is not exterior either, no “outside-text,” we will not be able to leave the circle). But my hypothesis also finds itself contradicted by a generous internal movement: from the moment a text allows what will have been said only in disguised words to be heard, even in the form of pure eventuality, it must be read in this way, if not saved. (A text can never be saved. Like the origin, it escapes. In the same way, it can never save anyone.)

According to this text, art is determined as the putting (in)to work(s) of truth, which is perhaps no big deal inasmuch as truth gives the horizon of all occidental art. Even post-modernity, or what calls itself thus, is held entirely within this circle, whether or not it is committed to a different concept of truth. Conceptual art, for example, which has nearly banished every notion of the work but still speaks the language of the work insofar as it always envisages its work in the frame of an installation, cannot but produce the truth of what it represents in its own manner (by bricolage or some other whim). It serves no purpose to evacuate metaphysics if only to continue living in its shadow (its light, its idea, its concept, only barely weakened, sanded down, impoverished: a “white conceptology”).

If the Heideggerian determination of art as the putting (in)to work(s) of truth, the installation of truth into a stela, as Lacoue-LaBarthe would say, gives the truth of art and its concept, it is perhaps not a question of opposing it with another conception of the work (as the installation of truth) possible and what will remain inconceivable as such, inconceivable but not *strictly* unthinkable.

Or if this is unthinkable, it is because the thinkable is not of the order of what is called “thinking,” of the identity of Being and of thought, of presence and representation. The unthought toward which we will be called is not so much what has escaped thought, a sort of beyond that would be graspable (with what hands?). It is what escapes thought, like the Being it thinks, what does not demand that it be... thought, but what gives Being to be thought. And here, that means the work, which only “is” (gives itself) under the figure of art.

In one, and even *the*, thesis (of art as thesis) in the essay, Heidegger posits the fundamentally *historical* character of art. This can be understood as a reductive ontologization, which it is in part. But we must also see what, in this very violence, opens an abyss under us, we who are accustomed to believing in the eternity of the concepts of art, truth, et cetera. There is perhaps no art, at least no art in its truth and carrying the name of art, except in the Occident. Philosophy has taken as its point of departure, its undisputed principle, its need to be rooted in the essence of the human being. To say that the essence derives from a philosophical origin, that it is the work or fiction of philosophy, is to show the clearly circular definition of the origin as begging the question. The more a principle wants to be originary, the more it is, as such (re)petition. To speak of the origin when considering art is already to make art speak the language of the fundamental, of essence, of truth; it is to ontologize. Heidegger knows this. That is why he is not concerned with the origin of art, but with the origin of the *work* of art. The question is displaced. Must art, or what is named art, always and everywhere be the origin of something like a work? Without a work, art is, rigorously speaking, nothing. It is around this nothing that *Origin* turns, around “poetics.”

The first thing Heidegger establishes concerning the work is that it *means nothing*. It means nothing else, and in this sense it is not an allegory, a symbol, or a sign that would refer to an external signified. Of course, it is always possible to make what Heidegger says with the names *world* and *earth* conform to the old difference between signifier and signified, form and content. This explains why, as a preliminary measure, he takes so much care to deconstruct the three dominant interpretations of thingness. Considering art from the view of poetics falls within the same strategy of *Destruktion*. It is precisely because poetics breaks the old difference, which was always hierarchized on the side of the signified, into pieces that it is elevated to this distinguished role. It remains to be seen if poetics does not, despite everything, correspond to the old theological function of meaning, especially if the new difference reintroduces the old division under other names (earth / world) that are more difficult to situate. Let us remember that “poetics” is not a question of allegory or metaphor, as, for example, when we say we find a monument or a painting “poetic.”

Thus, we might ask if the temple itself says everything Heidegger makes it say. Does it say anything at all? How could a temple (or a painting) speak if speech is refused to stone? If the temple speaks, it is not for having a mouth (even an oracular one) and a tongue. Besides, that is now what speaking is: the voice of Being is voiceless. If the temple speaks, it is in the same sense that language speaks. It says, shows, or rather lets itself be (re)said. To speak is to show, and if the temple shows, it is because it *is* this showing without intermediaries such as words. It shows before all speech, in the Open of this essentially voiceless milieu that is the disclosure of Being, before language as a means of expression and communication of a sense (through words). Language is this as well, of course; it would be fatuous to deny that. Otherwise, Heidegger

would not have needed to communicate the other (“correct”) conception of language. Yet that is but an expedient, a derived and secondary supplement. What is essential is that.... But having arrived at this point, we should be stopped short:

Projective saying is poetry: the saying of world and earth, the saying of the arena of their conflict and thus of the place of all nearness and remoteness of the gods. Poetry is the saying of the unconcealedness of what is. Actual language at any given moment is the happening of this saying, in which a people's world historically arises for it and the earth is preserved as that which remains closed. Projective saying is the saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world.

Language itself is poetry in the essential sense. But since language is the happening in which for man beings first disclose themselves to him each time as beings, poesy – or poetry in the narrower sense – is the most original form of poetry in the essential sense. Language is not poetry because it is the primal poesy; rather, poesy takes place in language because language preserves the original nature of poetry.  
(*PLT*, 74)

What is unsayable is nonetheless said, and said in the formulation “the unsayable *as such*.” For we read that the essence of language consists “properly” in that “it carries beings *as* beings except through language, and thus, as sayable. The *as* (*als* and not *wie*) is the mark proper of language, the mark by which language makes it possible to say anything at all. Without the *as*, which *Being and Time* named hermeneutic, is that of the putting (in)to work(s) (into the open): the manifestation of saying itself. It is clear that this manifestation must go before every given language, for example, must pass into the temple *as* temple. If not, this would not be a temple but merely a heap of



rocks.<sup>308</sup> This would not even be the earth, because it cannot appear as earth, or what refuses to appear, unless it enters into the space of *as*, and, for example (but is it one?), into the space of the nameable.

*Earth* is a strange name that reappears often in Heidegger's work with very different meanings according to the context. I will not examine this polysemy because it is possible that the question of meaning has not object here, at least in the sense of an ultimate signified. *Earth* is a pseudonym for the without-name. It corresponds neither to the material, not the sensible, nor even the elementary (or the a-historical), and resists all appropriation by meaning, so that wanting to say *earth* as such is properly to disfigure it. This is nonetheless what happens in the project of the world. Earth appears, then, as an inappropriable remainder. Earth wants to say or means the unsayable, which precisely cannot and does not want to say (or be said), and which nonetheless will be said, but *as* unsayable, in and through the work.

The entire nearly unbearable tension of this struggle between world and earth lies in that the earth, or the unsayable, always has the final word. It will never say itself entirely; it will never come into the full presence of the work. This means that the work is doomed to ruin from the start, but also that this ruin is its very fulfillment, for only the ruins manifest the final word as such, give the final word to the unsayable in that it ends (in the work breaking itself, and thus in the poetic word that is cut off) by manifesting itself as unsayable and thus being – said. All this comes down to saying the same thing Trakl says: “One can never communicate.” As a result of the poem's saying the unsayable without communicating it, but in showing it to the work as what ruins the work,

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<sup>308</sup> Faced with the ruins of the temple of Olympia, Heidegger will write, “All that had absolutely nothing to do with a simple pile of blocks of an enormous size.” *Sojourns*, bilingual edition, ed. and tr. F. Vezin (Paris: Le Rocher, 1992).

this incommunicability, far from being simple deficiency in speech, is quite simply speech's chance, its most proper possibility. The unsayable, as Heidegger puts it clearly, is – Nothing, or is the Origin itself as the leap into what comes before everything, including every work. What founds the work “of” the origin and makes it original is this leap into what comes before everything.

We imagine the conflict between world and earth like that between two unequal instances, abstract or symbolic actors, and even like mythological powers in a philosophical version of artistic genesis. There is genesis there, but certainly not in the sense of a creation of the world. This is so because there is neither creation nor creator, and also because what we call the world does not correspond to what Heidegger understands as the world. The world is, here, the very project of the There. But there is indeed genesis, that of the truth. We often pass blindly over the sentence that tranquilly pronounces, “The truth of opening *becomes* in the project of poetry.” Becoming is not opposed to Being. Where this project is problematic is, as always, in its origin. Where does it come from? The question is inadmissible: it would be to question the origin of the Origin. The Origin has no origin. The Origin with a capital must be distinguished from the origin without one. We thus remark the process appropriation that marks the entire operation of the leap into an original language, the leap from a common to a proper noun. But the effect (even the origin?) of this leap is always a counterjump from the proper to the common.

This cannot but affect all of Heidegger's language with a dangerous ambiguity, and this is why the only origin of the work “of” the origin is the immemorial, which cannot have an origin. This amounts to saying that the historical is without origin and thus is immemorial. If it could put up with a

logic that is itself posited as an Origin without origin, the reading of Heidegger would push to such logical non-sense. But as with the unsayable, we must reverse the perspective and see that if we can only speak of the immemorial, it is because history reigns *everywhere*, even where it appears to be dissolved in the mists of time. According to Heidegger, however, history appeared all of a sudden, in a moment he can even situate in history under the name of the Greek beginning. Therein lies Heidegger's logocentrism. There is a questionable bias, here, even if it be philosophical justifiable, philosophy being, according to its very name, this bias.

Every beginning is essentially illegitimate, and yet we must start somewhere. To begin is to appear. The beginning is this sudden, unjustifiable manifestation that cuts and strikes like a flash of lightning. In the case of Heidegger's reading of history, the flash of lightning that sends Being in its brightness is identified as the absolute beginning, at least the absolute beginning of history. But from where does it take its leave, from where does it depart, and from what does it separate? From the before, which then and only then appears "as" the before, but which is no more beginning than after, since it simply *is* not, is not a matter of Being as having entered into presence. We must therefore say that the immemorial is fundamentally just as unsayable as the unsayable, but that it is said as such by the springing up of the historical, since the immemorial is the very point of the springing up. But this springing up is a point that cannot be situated, and it is here that Heidegger fails his own thought. When it is a question of two instances like world and earth, then, we must realize that it is not only a combat between unequal forces but a struggle in which defeat is the only possible outcome, at least the only one in order for the combat itself to appear.

Earth, or rather reserve (itself double), will always have the finally word; but since it is the word given by the other, the world, the earth sees its victory stolen from it. By the very fact that it will always appear victorious, it will appear, and thus will be defeated. This is not a simple dialectic in which the loser wins, for this would always suppose that the goal is to win, to aim accurately, to say the truth. To be sure, the truth is what is at stake, but as the *opening* of the combat. As soon as the combat is open, the games are done, since the open says the coming of truth and thus equally of the world. The world reigns, and therein lays the entire tragedy. Let us take Oedipus; as soon as he attains royalty, he is lost. But is not lost in advance? If not, the tragedy (the putting [in]to work, knowledge) of this loss would not take place. It is the tragedy that wants Oedipus's ruin and wants it not out of sadism or even for *catharsis*, but because it is his destiny to be ruined, to break himself against destiny. His proper destiny is to be a tragedy. Short of not being, tragedy can do nothing against this being. But as soon as tragedy *is*, it is *finished*. That is precisely what Sophocles says in *Oedipus at Colonus*: not being (not sprung up into Being: ἰὸν οὐκ ἔστιν) prevails over *logos*. But as soon as tragedy appears, it returns as quickly as possible to non-being. We unjustly call that pessimism and even nihilism. It is simply the tragic manner of Being (in tragedy). It is certainly not the only manner of being, but that is all we can say about it. Were we to say that this is not the best way to be, we would be blind to what commands (and begins) this Being, blind to what Heidegger calls its *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness; intent; purpose). Being decides "itself" as such or such (a being); but first it decides itself absolutely, in the sense that it decides to be. In tragic being, that means signing its loss in advance, from the beginning, in truth, as departure (or bias: taking Being's side against non-Being, such is the risk). This is why Heidegger says that Being is *Abschied*, that its departure is its catastrophe. *The history of Being is the catastrophe of the origin coming into its*

*own*. This accession, this act of absolute birth, signs its death certificate in advance. The proper will enter into presence only under the figure of the Figure, and even it if calls for the status of the proper, in the statue of the god, “for example,” this figure will never be able to efface its improper origin, its proper status as figure. To enter into presence will always be to enter into (dis)figuration. But does Heidegger not write exactly the opposite when he holds that the statue of the god in the temple is not a *representation* of the god but a *work that lets the god himself come into presence*, and... is therefore the god himself?

In a sense, Heidegger is right to distance the ordinary meaning of representation, external mimesis, making according to a model. According to what model does the sculptor operate? He can only represent the god in terms of human beings, according to what is called the anthropocentrism of the Greeks, which is accompanied by a divinization of the human *morphe*. What Heidegger does not determine is the ontological status of this statue that “is” the god himself. We cannot understand this as pure and simply identification. The god is not stone, and yet he “is” the statue in the sense of an analogy with Being itself. Just as the god manifests himself, makes a remarkable modality of presence (visibility, *eidos*) that has entered into presence, so to the statue brings the truth of appearing into presence. In its brilliance, what appears effaces all difference between the present and presence, what appears and appearing. The work as bringing into the open of presence “is” presence, difference that has been effaced because returned *into* the work. But the effacement of difference takes place in the name of an analogy with Being, a metaphoricity, a transfer about which Heidegger does not speak. The work has the divine quality of bringing the god into presence, because presence itself is quasi-divine, or better, because Aletheia is a goddess.

All this does not appear until the reading of *Parmenides*, the 1942-43 lecture course we have already encountered on the occasion of the discussion of the privileging of sight. But it is indeed the sense of presence, of Being *as* presence, that is at issue. Heidegger simultaneously rejects anthropocentrism and theomorphism because both presuppose a person or subject as their basis. Nonetheless, he avoids explaining the whole question of figure, of *Gestalt*, by immediately positing that figure as conceived or experienced from the moment (I hesitate to say, in the image) of its entrance into presence, that is to say, as Aletheia. Aletheia procures visibility, is the source of every image, but is not itself an image. Therein lays the whole aporia. How is it that Aletheia could be a goddess and that Parmenides spends a great deal of time describing her palace to us? Heidegger denies that it is a question of allegory there, alleging that if truth (non-concealment) is a goddess, it is because if we change the accent in the Greek word *thea*, it can also mean pure view, as in “theory.”

However, if the statue of the god is the god, then in all rigor we must then say that it not only gives itself to be seen (as a particular image) but that it is this very glance. The fact of deliberately choosing the temple because it is made “in the image of nothing” clearly indicates the rejection of a mimesis from the pure (sacred) domain of the Open. The temple, at its Greek name indicates, is the cut, the enclosure that is sacred because it is withdrawn from the profane. Accordingly, the paradox of this delimitation is that it exposes nothing but pure façade, a pure in front of, before. The behind, the inside, remains empty. There is nothing but the purely phenomenal, nothing that would be behind and of which it would be but the appearance or representation. There again, we must acknowledge that Heidegger is right.

The temple represents nothing at all, no more so than does the statue (in the temple). But it represents in an other sense, in a sense we must call theatrical in the sense that the theater and theory are representations conceived of as putting into presence, that is to say, by the same token, stagings. *Lichtung* (the clearing) is the theater of Being, its scene, and thus implies staging – the works that (re-)present it. Otherwise, there is no possibility whatsoever of understanding Greek tragedy as the ne plus ultra of the putting (in)to work(s) of truth. Truth is this open scene and nothing else, the exposition that is also a deposition, a written deposition, truth being unable to present itself as such except, for example, in Parmenides' *Poem*. The "as such," which is the essence of presence and thus of sight, implies the gap of a double that precedes it. But the double also takes its place as the figure, the *persona*, the mask of this entity essentially without figure, without face, without presence, and that would be called Aletheia. Since Parmenides, the philosophical theater of concepts is announced as a staging that cannot figure the blinding whiteness of *eidos* except in contrast to shadows or simulacra, phantoms or ventriloquist sophists, because these are the only (technical) means of presenting what, according to the evidence, can never present itself in person, or rather what will present itself only in person, that is, in a mask. Aletheia becomes an allegory, a double of itself, inasmuch as it cannot present itself except in dividing itself, splitting itself into truth and appearance, presence and absence – the whole series of binary concepts. The paradox of this philosophical theater is that the blinding whiteness of truth immediately turns into the sepulchral whiteness of specters.

What Aletheia figures is nothing other than the myth of the truth of Being, of a pure phenomenon, of the Sacred as the other name for difference, difference appearing by suppression of all content, of everything we would call reality as opposed to appearance, the inside in relation to the outside. We must

admit that this is neither a simply myth nor a simple metaphor, all the less so since the metaphor always has a metaphysical origin and is thus derivative in relation to this Origin at the origin of every figure or trope, but also every concept, beginning with that of metaphor. Like *Aletheia*, truth is essentially a, or rather *the*, myth. At the end of *Parmenides*, after having spoken of the essential difficulty of seeing the Open, of how we cannot see truth come but how that inability is the sign that it has already come (or that Being itself is already assigned to us) and “for this reason always withdraws itself again,” Heidegger writes:

... *aletheia* is the looking of Being into the open that is lighted by itself as itself, the open for the unconcealedness of all appear. Could what has such an essence be a mere “concept”? The endeavor of our entire foregoing reflection has been nothing else than to bring us to a thoughtful experience of this astonishing question. *Aletheia* is *thea*, goddess – but indeed only for the Greeks and even then only for a few of their thinkers....<sup>309</sup>

Occidental myth expresses the beginning, that is, the still concealed essence of the truth of Being. The word of occidental myth preserves the belonging of occidental humanity in the home region of the goddess *Aletheia*. (GA 54, 240)

As long as it thinks of Being, that is, as long as it thinks, it is impossible for an Occidental humanity to “dymyth” such a myth. This is the myth of the Origin itself. We cannot climb back above it except in passing beyond Being and thought. What such a step beyond would be clearly would make no sense,

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<sup>309</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*, tr. A. Schuwer and R. Rocjcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 162-63.



and thus could not be said. Thus an unbearable limit would mark itself, but in the conditional. As the reader will now be able to see, the limit is the place proper to thought, that from which it begins to think, what gives thought its identity as the thought of identity, and, of the identity of Being and thought. From the beginning, identity, unity, and totality trace the contours, in the archetypal figure of the circle, of this “eucyclism” of *aletheia* that Parmenides’ *Poem* describes. However, what this figure can never think is the *cut* that gives its birth, the alpha of its proper name; or, it only thinks this cutting in the form of originary negativity, and even a Nothing. Similarly, the erection of the temple is always preceded by the cut in the earth, in the unsayable, a cut that implies that the sacred or the saved (*Heilig*) is never at the beginning but must always be reinstituted, cleaned of all blemish in a mimetic repetition (of the sacrifice, for instance). This cut, which opens the possibility of the proper and the sacred, of the property that by definition is always private, remains, however, unsayable, *as such*. It is even unsayable as unsayable, because it precedes the “as such,” making it simultaneously sayable and unsayable – as such.

Let us now examine the following three passages:

...great art is never “contemporary” (*zeitgemässe*). Great art is art that carries its essence to complete fulfillment, that is to say, puts into its work the truth that must become the measure for a time. But the work cannot conform to the times. To be sure, such artistic products exist. But they have not leaped-ahead because they are without origin, but always nothing but an after-effect. In the wake of all essential art, there is always epigonal art, “after-art.” This art has the same air about it as essential art, can even have more beautiful effects than it, and yet differs from essential art by a jump – and not merely a degree.

But where art is, truth takes place. History is. This is why we can also say the following: where there is prehistory, there is no art, but only pre-art. This means that the products of prehistory have no need of remaining simple tools or a simple product in current use made by means of these tools, a utensil. They might very well be this means-to-an-end we can classify neither as utensil nor as a work of art (*Kunstwerk*).

But the work of art never (re)presents anything. And that is so for the simple reason that it has nothing to (re)present, being itself what in the first place creates what enters into the open for the first time thanks to it.<sup>310</sup>

Nothing appears to connect these three excerpts to one other, in particular, the third of the first two, at least not immediately. The first two, which are separated by a page, can be articulated around the question of “great” art, which each excerpt delimits in its own way; the first, by excluding epigonal or “after-art” (*Nach-kunst*), the other by excluding, in just as categorical a manner, “pre-art” (*Vorkunst*) from this same field, which is the only art to merit the proper name of art. Heidegger holds that in *great* art, the artist remains indifferent in relation to the work, almost like a temporary pass that destroys itself in its own creation. If we take him literally, this declaration resembles a declaration of war. We can understand why Heidegger holds to eliminating the personality, the lived experience, of the artist from his meditation on the origin of the work of art. But we cannot at all see how it is possible purely and simply to erase such names as those of Rimbaud, Trakl, Van Gogh, and so on, as though they were pseudonyms. We can of course say that “[lived] experience is the element in which art dies” (*PLT*, 79). This conjunction of what is lived and death seems to be nothing but a paradox, which is without doubt why Heidegger

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<sup>310</sup> These passages are taken from an early version of the essay, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” tr. E. Martineau (Paris: Authentica, 1987), 49; 51; 53.

felt obliged to add: "The dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries" (*PLT*, 79). Heidegger seems to repeat Hegel's lesson in the *Lessons on the Aesthetic*, to which the third excerpt alludes, taking up, in order to contest, the word *darstellen*, to present or represent.

Questioning "great" art, the art of the origin, Heidegger cannot avoid the topos of the death of art. The art of the origin, "great" art, is Greek in its essence, that is, *as* art. The *Anfang*, the beginning, in the sense of the original jump (*Ur-sprung*) that jumps out in front of everything that is going to come, that precedes everything and thus already contains it, this Beginning takes place, Heidegger writes, "everything to come is already leaped over, even if it something disguised." That is to say, it takes place "in the West (Occident) for the first time in Greece" (*PLT*, 76). There might perhaps be other beginnings elsewhere than in the Occident, but in the Occident there is no other beginning except Greece: "What was in the future to be called Being was set into work, setting the standard" (*PLT*, 77). Even if it is repeatable, the Greek beginning remains irrecoverable. It is irrecoverable in the sense of being the beginning itself, the *anfängliche Anfang*, an overdetermination that seeks to carry the Greek *Anfang* to the absolute summit. It is the beginning of the beginning (of Being, quite simply), and not the beginning of an epoch: epochs cannot take place unless the possibility of epochs has been opened as such in the first place. Before Greece, there is no history; there is simply prehistory, and thus we can say that there is no art either, on the condition that we think art (and its history) as opened by and in the open of Being. But what if art was not in the first instance, not originally, a question of Being? Would it be possible to think art without Being, as one could and even should (according to Heidegger himself) think God without Being? Perhaps not, at least not philosophically. For it everything that has been said of the Greek beginning can be upheld, it is only as

this regards the birth of philosophy. But this birth is belated, even with the Greeks. Similarly, is it possible to tack the history of Being onto that of art in order to read the history of art according to that of Being?

The beginning is what is greatest, and the art of the origin is great art. The logic is extreme and disconcerting. How are we to speak of an absolute beginning or of an absolute greatness? Is there a beginning without precedent? And is greatness not a relative notion? What is the measure of the great (or of the sublime)? Let us linger a moment over this strange notion of the beginning. The work is the work “of” the Origin, not in the sense of creating it, but rather in the sense of issuing from it. There is no art except initial or original art. But as the origin of the work, the Origin must also withdraw into the work and thus escape it as Origin. The Origin must escape the work exactly as the work escapes its author. It remains ahead but is no longer confused with a primitive state or a golden age; it is mythic like the origin of language is mythic and yet never ceases to spring forth in every child’s words (cf. *PLT*, 76). It is unlocatable and nonetheless as though on the edge of every utterance. If there is no origin of language (other than as unsayable, as cry or unarticulated chant), it is because language is itself the Origin. Language is even more originally the Origin when considered as the *Ur-sprache* of a people – poetry, if we remove from poetry every historical form and even the word *poetry* itself, which is inappropriate, if we recall that the initial Poem “comes from nothing,” and yet never from nothingness (*PLT*, 76). This is yet another apparently gratuitous difference of pure terminology, a play on words that nevertheless shows language to be the (original?) place of difference.

It is thus that we should understand the Origin: there is nothing similar to it, nothing comparable. It irrupts suddenly, immediately, then, but not in the

Hegelian sense of the immediate that has not yet been mediated (negated). For Hegel, the beginning is already in the end and is surmounted by the end as result, while for Heidegger it is the beginning that already contains the end in itself. It does not contain the end of inherent necessity (everything that is born must die), but because it has already projected the end and thus passed it over. The singularity of the beginning is that, although immediate, it does not conceal itself from mediation, since it authorizes and founds that mediation. Thus, what follows will not cease to be in relation with this beginning that nonetheless has already arrived ahead of it. Thus, the Greek beginning determines the entire history of philosophy, even when it takes a new departure (with the Cartesian *cogito*). Every sending remains determined by the sending itself, its initial cutting that suddenly cuts out the country or the space in which the parts will be played. We will be able to play different roles; the nature of the game is already inscribed from the beginning without our being able to return upon it. It is in this way that history is a “free succession.” But as succession, it can never be free as regards the beginning itself. We end up with this double bind: the beginning is liberation, ungrasping, but begins is under the hold of this understand-holding, prisoner of this original liberty.

“An enigma is pure springing forth,” says Hölderlin in “The Rhine” (SW<sub>2,1</sub>, 143). Such is the enigma of the source that even in springing up it conceals itself in itself and withdraws in what springs from it. The Origin “is” this scission with the self, what I call the *departure from belonging*, which is to be thought as the simultaneity of belonging and its distancing or departure, as a farewell (*Abscheid*). Being cannot spring up except in splitting as difference (from beings). In his commentary on Hölderlin’s line (GA 39, 235), Heidegger speaks of the suffering of Being as the irruption of a counterwill at the very heart of the Pure. The river that most purely springs forth wants to return to its

source. It is this counterwill that makes a “destiny,” a *pathos*, of the river. Thus, the origin is itself “pathetic” (or rather, tragic), witnessing a conflict at the very heart of Being, a conflict similar to the one reigning in art between earth and world. It is the work of art (and here, Hölderlin’s hymn) that carries this conflict to its *summit*, though never to its resolution. The work makes the conflict in breaking off there, this break repeating sending and the cut it occasions. The work of the origin breaks, and this is why we cannot have a relation with it except in breaking ourselves upon it in turn, in having the experience of the beginning as unheard (of).

There is a duplicity in the Origin itself, thus justifying the Greek determination of art as mimesis. But this is an imitation that would in each instance be original. The origin can never be present to itself except in the mode of repetition. It must reject what it allows to spring forth, a rejection that in its turn springs back upon the result (the work). It is thus that the Greek beginning sprang back upon itself in engulfing itself in its own originality. But this collapse, this initial catastrophe, also sprang back on what follows (on “us”) to the point that all originality cannot be determined except in relation to the Greek beginning. There is nothing original about the Greek origin, at least not in the modern sense of the origin as that which seeks to distinguish itself. On the contrary, far from wanting to singularize itself, the origin effaces itself in itself, for

To the essence of Being as such belongs the fundamental rejection (throwing back) that springs back from itself to itself. Being lets poetry spring forth in all liberty in order to find itself originally in poetry, and thus finds itself in poetry in reconcealing itself as secret. (GA 39, 237)

The original work does not want to emerge from the source but to return to it. This is why we do not distinguish it immediately and do not find it except at the end, when we have stopped looking for a point from which it would emerge like a reef from the bottom of the ocean. This is also why Heidegger says that the true beginning remains withdrawn and takes on the appearance of a “falling back.” To return to the source is not to return to something, and especially not to a past model. On the contrary, it is continually to confront the absence of models and precedents, to confront the without-origin and without-sense at the origin of presence itself. It is to face the original lack of a foundation, this founding lack that is the secret of the purely springing-forth. It is to leap, but with a bound that can support itself on nothing or that must leap beyond itself: no one can leap who has not already leapt in projecting the space he has to cross as already passed over. “*The beginning already contains the end latent within itself*” (PLT, 76). And this, so that every leap will only be its own repetition, but the repetition of what has already withdrawn in projecting itself into the future. The projection, this throwing in front, such is the initial *Ent-wurf* (design or plan) of the poetic, throwing itself into its own abyss, not to fall into it, but to re-source itself there.

But must we not also recognize that for Heidegger the Greek beginning remains the only reference for, and even the model of, every beginning? In relation to the beginnings (medieval, modern) that follow, it in fact has the exclusive privilege of being “absolutely” original, the very privilege in which Being sends itself for the first time, even if this is also to send itself to its end. It is the beginning of the History of Being, and thus is the beginning of destination as such. This is what emerges clearly from the second excerpt at least: where there is as yet no history (and that means no history of Being), there is no art (no “great art,” that is) but only pre-art (or pre-history). If we replace “art” by

“Greek art,” we get the same, almost tautological, formula. Does Greek art therefore provide the measure of what is and is not (not yet, or no longer) art? That the art of prehistory not yet be art appears a questionable prejudgment. In what way is Lascaux not already all of art? But that pre-Greek or simply non-Greek art be nothing by a prehistory of art transgresses the limits of even the most extreme biases, of the spirit of the temple, all the more so since in prehistoric (or prehistorical?) art, the anonymity of the creator has never been so pronounced: one thinks of the megaliths or of the statues of Easter Island. But is this effacement of the artist not a characteristic of “great art” in Heidegger’s very eyes?

Another question then arises. If art properly speaking only appears with the beginning of History, and if this beginning is given in the Greek beginning, how is the immemorial dimension that makes the whole “originality” of the work of art to be preserved? If truth is essentially terrestrial, it is truth that is played out in the conflict between the double reserve of the (non-historical) ground and the manifestation of the work, which always projects a world. But can we say that there is no world except the historical, and thus occidental, world? Is there no Native American (Indian) world, for example? Do “world” and “historical” necessarily form a pair, including in the “pair of shoes” that manifests the “world” of the peasant (who is closer to the earth than to history, even the “history of Being”)?

One final question: what are we to do with an art without works? Must we qualify it as “post-art” out of concern for symmetry? Heidegger obviously does not speak of this, and it is not unusual to be curious of Heidegger’s (feigned or willed) ignorance when he admits to knowing neither where modern art places itself nor even if it looking for a place. That he took a painting by Van Gogh as



an example, moreover, that he spoke of the “path” of Cézanne or even ventured as far as Klee (though to say nothing of him, to mark the limits of thought), is hardly convincing. In effect, even Cézanne, in whom we can see the beginning of modern art, produced a Greek oeuvre simply in that he produced an oeuvre. (Is “copy nature” not the repetition of the guiding doctrine of mimesis, that is, of *good* mimesis, that mimesis that does not make itself seen as imitation, that effaces every trace of imitation and installs “itself” in Being, just like nature?) Cézanne puts truth into works, he installs the being open of beings in the rigorously limited space of his canvas, and in that remains in the cut of Greek beginning. The same would no longer be true of Duchamp. An art that would no longer respond to the principle of exposition, an art neither determined not determining (and that thus would give no “historical mission” for any people), would risk not being art, in Heidegger’s eyes. What truth, what historical assignation emerge from the ready-made? None whatsoever, and this would not be art.

In linking history, especially in its essential meaning, and art so closely, we obtain a strange delimitation of the history of art. It is neither progression nor evolution, but a sudden and unique leap which would correspond, in the end, to a kind of swallowing up in the moving sands of the without-history, of that ahistoricity that characterized America for Heidegger in 1943. A post-history of post-art (the post-modern?) would logically correspond to the pre-history of pre-art. Before the beginning, there is not nothing, but a muddle that is the prisoner of “matter” (which cannot appear as such), and after the beginning there is not nothing either, only the unbridled reign of just anything at all. In both cases, there is no truth because there is no work. But can we even speak of a before and after? Does this beginning not abolish precisely the conception of time as a succession measured according to before and after? Can

this temporality that *Being and Time* described as “vulgar” qualify the history of art in the historical and non-scientific meaning of the word?

This is still not the strangest part. If we formalized Heideggerian discourse, we would obtain the following sequence: pre-art / great art / post-art. But the second moment, the central moment between the before (past?) and the after (future?), is precisely not the moment of the present, since it designates the Greek beginning. We must recall the moment when Heidegger firmly holds that works *are no longer what they were*, that they are ruins or vestiges, “has-beens” (“*die Gewesenen*”). Even if we could encounter them now in some museum, for example, they have been torn from their world, itself irrevocably swallowed up. They are, at present, but traces, half-effaced signs, vestiges. They are this in a different way, of course: because their mode of presence has been extinguished irrevocably by the modern alteration from presence into representation. Transformed in advance into (thrown) objects, the works can no longer be present by way of Greek presence, regardless of whatever concern their curators may have for their preservation of these works. (It remains to be determined if this original presence is not already a myth, the myth of self-presenting presence.) Does that mean that Greek presence is the only authentic one or that there is only a Greek present, that at present, and compared to the splendor of the Greek beginning (of Being), “there is no Present” (Mallarmé)?

Indeed, and that is confirmed if we examine the status of the third moment in the series. True, if Heidegger does not speak of this moment, and I have had to reconstruct it to complete the logic of the sequence. But this silence in itself speaks clearly. Where are we placed? And do we even take place? (As regards his own contemporaries, Mallarmé was not certain of this.) Do we have a present that would be something other than the vestiges of a disappeared (and

irretrievable) world, or the premises of a world to come (and that perhaps would no longer be a world)? If the Greek temple has so much presence, it is not only that it retains the trace of the initial beginning (of that beginning, that sending, that destines the Present itself), but that it in advance opens the entire continuation that, in its way, will *still be Greek art* – but in which the properly Greek (the *divine*) will have withdrawn or completely obscured itself. In its departure, which is also its swallowing up in the Departure, the temple thus seems to carry everything along with it, stamping “presence” without temple (modernity) with non-presence.

Such is Heideggerian reading of what for Hölderlin was certainly less largely negative. But what is proper to the beginning is that it collapses into itself, returns to the nothing that is its “point” (not) of departure. The beginning in which the present destines itself for the first time can never be present to itself except in an infinite distance, a gap in which the Present then appears, and then only, as having-been.<sup>311</sup> Not only does the beginning contain the end, but it does not appear (*as such*) except at the end. That is why there is no possible return to the Greeks, not only because the return to the departing mail slot is impossible, but because for the Greeks, sending, beginning, the opening of Being, *cannot* appear as such, precisely because they were entirely immersed, and even ruined themselves, in it. That is why we must think (be) more Greek than the Greeks, more “originally” (cf. GA 53, 100). We can achieve this only in thinking sending or the beginning itself in its finitude. It remains to be seen if

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<sup>311</sup> Does this having-been simply designate another present, a present “gathered back” upon its essence in the Hegelian manner? This would be to remain enclosed in the meaningful circle of mourning. If it were possible to think this having-been in the manner of Trakl, as in-born, what never achieves presence, the gap that splits the Origin would then be more original than the Origin itself, but then would be unassignable as such, as a point of origin. Does the duplicity of the Origin in Heidegger remain ruled by the logic of reappropriation?

such a passage to the limit can be accomplished without a certain return of speculative thought, that is, of the limitlessness of the limit.

The question will be left open in order to return to the first moment in the sequence, that moment that is precisely never first, since the beginning has not yet begun there. The same indetermination that reigns in prehistory seems to reign afterwards (in post-art) as well. The things given as works of art cannot be works (since there is no putting [in]to work[s], into the open) but they are not simple utensils either. They float in an undetermined ontological system, halfway between the utensil and the work. That sort of psychedelic spoon, for example, is at once more than a simple spoon and less than a work of art. This obscurity is made clear, however, as soon as we consider the status of those “things” that are displayed to us in museums of modern art and that we indeed often hesitate to qualify as works of art, so much do they resemble nothing at all. We could even find something that corresponds exactly to the psychedelic spoon in the ready-made signed Duchamp. Moreover, is it not significant that modern art was born through its association with the “primitive” art that Heidegger so cordially ignores? Considered with a neutral eye, one indifferent to all aesthetic sense (and it is thus that it must be viewed), the ready-made is nothing other than a equipment in common use. The only difference is that it is an unusable utensil that almost approaches the status of Lichtenberg's knife. It is a work of art only because it is displayed in a place considered artistic (a gallery or museum).

This exposition recalls the installation in the open at the same time that it neutralizes it. It is no doubt to this neutralization of meaning that the ready-made owes all of its ability to fascinate us. But neutralization or indetermination is by no means less taken up in the cutting of initial determination than is simple

imitation. That is perhaps what escapes all post-modernity, a term that is like a catchall in that in it we at once embrace Romantic tendencies aiming at the suppression of historical difference in a medium of reflection and the final repetitions, representations, or installations of the ultra-modern avant-garde in the fulfillment without end of a self-destruction that is no less mimetological. All of this leads back to the metaphysical gestures of the anti-metaphysical reversal, that is to say, of a complete nihilism. It remains for us to think what an art without works, without sense, without truth, and above all, what this “without” would be. For “without” might well mean a simple privation: the insignificant or absurd, just as so many “works” said to be modern present themselves as just anything at all, in which case there is nothing more to do but pull the rug out from under them. Another possibility for this “without” would be that it refer to sense or meaning in a manner that would be complex indeed. That would imply that sense or meaning would never be whole, present to itself in presence, but always self-affected with a “without sense.” But it would also imply that the *without* is also not whole, in other words, that there is no pure non-sense, or that the without-sense is not non-sense, and thus that the *without* is not reduced to a negation or to a nihilism that is always the weapon sense uses to reduce the other to its mercy. This also means that the work is not the final instance *and* remains what cannot be passed over, not because there would be nothing else, but precisely because by its very breaking it testifies for the other to whom it refers, without, however, this reference making sense.

Let us return to *Origin* and to the “final” question of *Darstellung* (showing, theatrical representation). There is, as always, the problem of

translation: we should translate *darstellen* as “to represent” rather than “to present,” on the condition, however, that we understand this representation as a theatrical representation and not a representation of the world. In the theater, it is not a question of ideas but of the scene. In the same way, to be successful a painting that would represent a battle scene must give the spectacle of the conflict itself and not a representation of war. But in the metaphysical interpretation of art, *Darstellung* itself becomes representation in the reflexive sense of the word (where the German prefers the word *Vorstellung*) as a result of the well-known aesthetic categories form and content. That is why, it seems, Heidegger rejects *Darstellung* just as categorically as *Vorstellung*. If representation is a matter of carrying content into the form of art, as Hegel understands it, then art represents nothing. Instead of putting (in)to work(s) or into the open, we have a simply putting into form that makes art appear secondary, a supplement. But art *must* be initial. If we understand *Darstellung* in the sense of the Kantian transcendental exposition, however, then art represents, though not content (time and space being *a priori*). The Greek temple represents nothing, but it presents the scene. It does not spring up *ex nihilo*, it comes “from the Earth.”

It is not a question of knowing what that resembles, since it is the image of nothing, but rather of knowing how to think the image *when it is the image of nothing*. Perhaps the image does not let itself be thought without an image. And the image of the trait could enlighten us. He who draws a line retraces the tearing, the *re-trait* (withdrawal), of the Earth that does not want to be exposed. That is why Heidegger cites Dürer: “For in truth, art lies hidden within nature; he who can wrest it from her, has it” (*PLT*, 70). But art does not hide itself literally, like a treasure hidden in a field. It hides itself as nature hides itself, or better, encrypts itself, according to Heraclitus. This analogy exposes the trait

proper to the origin (it generative impropriety). The *retrait* (withdrawal) into nature cannot be extract except in being *re-traced* (*re-trait*) in art, and as the art of the origin. That is why from the beginning every work cannot be but an extract, an excerpt of the origin in withdrawing (*retrait*), a trace that makes a sign toward its whiteness.

What does a work of art sign? The origin, to be sure. The trait of this origin is that it does not mark itself except as *retrait*, in the double sense of non-appearance (withdrawal) and repetition (*re-trait*). This duplicity itself refers to the traits proper to what does not have the status of a work: the thing (because of non-appearance) and the equipment (because of repetition). The originality of the work therefore always already appears second, its propriety being to draw together two distinct heterogeneous, if not conflicting proprieties / properties under a single face, a face that is itself bifacial, double, and perhaps not even a face, since it also partakes of invisibility (that of the thing). However, the work does not draw together distinct traits into a composite whole after the fact. As the work “of” the origin, its drawing together *must* be *a priori* like the synthesis of transcendental schematism with which, moreover, the work has a close affinity, schematism being the production of figurability *as such*. The complexity of this operation does not exclude an extraordinary simplicity, that of putting into the fold, which cannot be represented as a *simple* duplication.

I have already spoken of the duplicity in the origin, where the springing forth is always recovered or refolded into what springs forth, so that it withdraws in it. The work always appears at fault; its “beauty” even comes from its own brilliance in withdrawing its origin from view, and thus appears as natural as a tree. And yet does not Heidegger himself speak of “producing” (*Herstellen*) as one of the constitutive traits of the putting into works? Let us

examine this moment that constitutes the second constitutive trait of art, alongside (and with the same originality as) the first, installation (*Aufstellung*). Initially, it is difficult to see in what way the two traits are different. *Herstellung*, Heidegger tells us, must be understood in a “corresponding” sense, in analogy with, and in such a manner as to respond to, *Aufstellung*. We translate *Herstellen* as “to produce” and thus pass over the thing if we think of the fabrication of a product, be it the furniture made by a craftsman or an automobile on an assembly line. For it we see what the work is supposed to produce, we must admit that this is not producible, either by craftsmen, industrially, or artistically. The work would in fact produce... the “Earth.” It would not produce a material, whatever it be, but the occluded, the closed in, the inaccessible, and, *a fortiori*, the unproducible. *Herstellen* is thus not to produce in the common sense of products in use, but aims at an ontological or onto-phenomenological mode, which the Latin *pro-ducere*, to put in front, as one produces a play, a document, would mean. In this sense, though, the difference between *Herstellen* and *Aufstellen* (not to mention *Darstellung*) is reduced still more to a thin film.

The “production” of the *eidos* of the show by the shoemaker and that of the *eidolon* of the “same” shoe by the painter differ only by a degree, and it will not suffice to reverse the Platonic hierarchy to exit from the mimetological schema. Mimetologism is not only the devaluation of imitation in relation to the “thing itself,” reputedly inimitable, as we too often believe. It lies in the elevation of what has existence only in a pair to an *unpairalleled* status. If we take the “example” of the temple, we might naïvely believe that, since the temple apparently imitates nothing, Heidegger avoids a renaissance of the opinion, luckily superseded, according to which art would be an imitation and a copy of the real. It is also not a question, Heidegger specifies, of a conceptual or



eidetic imitation, that of an Idea of the temple. After rejecting the claim of an idea mimetism, Heidegger adds that in such a work, if it is one, it is indeed the truth that is at work.

Heidegger does not think of the case of a work that would imitate itself – but let us leave that aside. For what is essential is precisely this primacy of the essential or of the thing itself over everything else, and notably over products (equipment). Where does the originality of the work come from? It comes from the production that produces nothing, at least nothing that would be useable, by which I mean, nothing that *refers to something else*. Artistic production would be an absolute production strictly in that it would no longer refer to (intrawordly) beings but would give place, purely, to Being (the “it is). This is why Meyer’s poem is then cited. It seems to copy an, even the, essence of the fountain; but in truth, it only puts the truth (in)to (a) work. The stream goes from basin to basin, each time overflowing the basin, this overflowing *figuring* the movement of Being: an overabundance, the gift that exceeds itself. This, then, is my interpretation, which should not be taken literally. The poem does not imitate the movement of Being, which would permit making a metaphor of Being (in the figure of springing forth, of the fountain, of the excessive gift). There again, metaphoricity passes by way of an analogy. Just as a fountain “gives and takes, pours and settles back again,” so too does the poem. It is the poem that puts into a work, that is to say, figures, and does so because the poem issues from Being itself. The fountain figures the springing forth of water just as the poem figures the springing forth of Being. There is the same double movement of giving and taking. What remains unexplained is how the truth (the disclosure of Being concealing itself) can be put into a work without immediately being *in the image of the work*. The work is putting into the open

and the open a putting into works. It is this analogy that should be accounted for.

The example of the Roman fountain (*PLT*, 37ff.) leads us back to the privilege of language, recognized and tortuously demanded by Heidegger. It is a question of language playing on two different levels. Its duplicity is even its primary property, which makes it unique. It resonates, like music or birds, but it “installs” as well. What it installs is in fact something other than the earth; it is what must always remain something else, the transcendent, the world. But do we not therefore return to the metaphysics of the sign, that which is put (installed) in the place of something else? That this “thing” not be a thing, that we can call it, for example, Being, a god, or the world, changes nothing in relation to the sign. The temple is an allegory; it speaks for something else, not for itself, but for Being. It could certainly be noted that Being does not preexist the temple, of course, but that it is constituted by the temple’s erection, constituted in the strict sense in which the temple joins and gathers together, in a certain way cements the world in the same manner that it is itself situated, materially, in the stature of its construction: an assembling of stones, certainly, but not in view of the stone itself as a mountainous mass that raises itself up only in assembling rocks according to their own folds and fractures. In the mountain, stone is living, physical.

In Aristotelian terms, in contrast to the mountain the temple has its *telos* outside itself. In this it is a different being, a *techne* and not a *physis*. It imitates the physical mode of being, no doubt, but this imitation (in the assembling, the joint, the folding) also supposes a *gap*, that of the production of the *eidos as such*. It is precisely this “as such” that makes all the difference. For if we can say that the mountain constitutes itself as mountain, only we can say this, only

we can read the geological formation of the earth. The earth will never read anything. It gives to be read, but does not know how to read, nor even what reading (or connecting, reconnecting, making a relation) is. It is a bit like Pythia of Delphi: an oracle, pure orality, but not signifying the slightest bit except from the moment in which the *a priori* schema of meaning is projected upon it. Illiterate, the earth nonetheless gives to be read, but by something else, and in another manner. It is in this sense that the “primary” (non-analogical) mimetic scheme is improper. In no case does the temple rise up in the manner of a mountain. Were it to resemble anything (natural) whatsoever, the temple would not be a temple, because the mountain resembles nothing, or resembles only when appearing as an *a priori* scheme that has been instituted or installed, on the one hand, and, on the other, which is only the other side of the same condition, because the temple must emerge from the earth, must make a violent exit, which is also a breaking and entering, even though what exists is *materially* nothing other than the earth (what else could there be on earth than the earth?) and yet is something radically other: the temple *as* temple. This “as” seems to add nothing and in effect creates nothing. Nevertheless, therein lies the whole operation called *Aufstellen*, installation, the installation of the There, which precisely is not there, not available, but which always *arrives*, suddenly, takes place in giving place. The There, first named *Dasein* then *aletheia*, is Heidegger’s major, and perhaps even only, discovery. What remains to be discovered beyond the Open?

Presence, however, would not be a matter of being invented as one invents an expedient, it is historical and is in no way eternal since “with” its coming comes time. Time is therefore not eternal either. It is historical, and that means that it does not always come; it comes only at certain moments, decisive moments in which it decides “itself.” But it never decides (itself) except in

cutting itself, in cutting itself out – *for example*, in the figure of the temple. The ancient philosophers said that Nature makes no leaps. That remains true. Only History can leap. As long as it comes, History is this leap. Sometimes it even leaps so far that it is irretrievable. Thus it arrives with the Greek conception of presence, it names difference itself, the leap that nothing can equal and that resembles nothing, or that could not but have the semblance of an “original” work: a temple, for example! The “lesson” (through a reading) of *Origin* can thus be summarized by the following: presence is the poetic discovery. Being is a poem and even THE initial poem. It is the poem of which the Greek temple is an “example,” always an inadequate one, it is true, since there can be no *Beispiel* (example) for this *Spiel* (game). But the inadequation of this example bears witness precisely to the non-presentability of presence as the law and origin of all presentation or exposition. That is why, in the end, the ruin of all exposition will testify for this very deposition. Being will have said its final word in forbidding itself to appear as such, in entrusting itself to what will never have appeared except in its absence or by proxy, the earth. If truth is terrestrial, it will have been all the more guarded since the earth always keeps its secret. We will always be able to make it speak, since it has never had speech except through a mouthpiece, except by say of an example, or better through the archetype of what will have been a work, the *extemple*.

Chapter 16

THE STEP (NOT) BEYOND

Under the title of a point (not) of departure, let us stop at the title – step (not) beyond.<sup>312</sup> We should probably renounce *trans*-lating, passing beyond. For if nothing is more dangerous than language, then this is indeed a dangerous passage. What does it mean to pass not only from one language to another, but across language *itself*, to pass through the word *pas*, for example? In that word we do not simply pass, as from one bank of a river to another, from what would be called “signifier” to what would be its unique and *transcendent* signified. This passage itself, the effacement of the signifier for the benefit of the only signified that could “properly” signify, does *not* come to pass: for example (but is it a simple example?), what do we signify in uttering the word (and it is primarily a word inscribed in *a* specific language, Greek) “Being”? if the signifier “Being” is incapable of signifying anything (this is the original a-poria, the stop in stepping), even though at the same time the signified seem to “be” self-evident (and thus empty), then all of metaphysics rests upon a deceptive passage.

Before taking this step and passing to the signified of this “step (not) beyond,” therefore, we must question the meaning of the passage itself, a regressive question that does not, however, return to anything already there, such as a simple past. All of Heidegger’s steps could be read in this step backwards (*Schritt zurück*). But (walking always being a passage from one foot

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<sup>312</sup> The phrase is meant to invoke at once a movement and its stopping. It will reverberate throughout the chapter in such words as “pass,” and “passage.”

to the other) we must also go beyond, beyond overstepping (including the overstepping that is meta-physics) and wrong-foot the title, hear it with another ear, as an injunction imposing a limit: not beyond!

To be or not to be, to step or not to step? That would be the question – of aesthetics. But what is aesthetics? Recently invented (at the end of the eighteenth century), the word is a scholarly term translated literally from Greek. From the beginning, *mimesis*, the imitation of nature, but here of a dead language, presides over its destiny. A foreign word: nothing is original in it, so that it is difficult to know to whom it could be traced back to. It cannot be returned to the original Greek, where *aisthetikos* (an adjective first, not a noun) has nothing to do with Baudelaire's *Aesthetic Curiosities* or with plastic surgery. For the word *aesthetic* does not particularly relate to beauty but refers rather to meaning or sense: the "aesthete" understands, has a feel for the situation, is astute and find the right word for things. Discerning, sifting, like a sieve that separates the wheat from the chaff, he is, in short, a critic – or a philosopher, which comes down to the same thing, depending on one's point of view (and theory makes *a point* – a decisive argument – on viewing).

But as a *noun* designating the "aesthetic science" (just as logic is the *logike episteme*), aesthetics is a metaphysical invention. If the word is modern, the thing itself that the name "aptly" denominates is, Heidegger writes, "as old as the consideration on art and the beautiful in Western thought" (*Nietzsche*, 79).<sup>313</sup> To avoid any ambiguity concerning this antiquity (which for him is the condition *sine qua non* of authenticity), Heidegger adds that "philosophical consideration of the essence of art and the beautiful even *begins* as aesthetics"

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<sup>313</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*. Vol. I. Tr. D.F. Krell. (New York: Routledge, 1979). Further references to this volume in this chapter will be parenthesized in the text.

(*Nietzsche*, 79). Even if the word did not exist, the thing was there; what is more, it was there *as such*: I emphasize because it is not obvious that a thing could be “as such” without the name that gives it being, at least if the “as such” is considered the primordial process(or) of *logos*, that is, of (philosophical) language.

This is one of the curiosities of aesthetics. Before taking up the other, let us ask why aesthetics is the way in which “science” (philosophy, the foremost knowledge of the thing itself) conceptualizes what is named, improperly, “art” (*techne*). With simple recourse to a Greek word, we could have imagined a “technical” science. Oddly, the word *technical*, which also first appeared as an adjective in the eighteenth century, is exactly opposed to the aesthetic: that which, in the domain of art, concerns the processes of work and expression more than inspiration.<sup>314</sup> This definition reflects a division as ancient as the aesthetic as “thing.” Not only is the division a divorce, it is a violent hierarchy, for such has always been the properly metaphysical trait: below, process (technique); above, inspiration. The sensible and material are the support for the ladder leading beyond (and above) toward the super-sensible (idea, concept, and today, value); inversely, “the processes of work and expression” are systematically reduced to the level of the *basely* material, just as the artist will be elevated above the artisan, the simple craftsman. It may be needless to point out that such an evaluation only appeared with the elevation of art to the Absolute, corresponding to the absolutizing of subjectivity. In Greek, a *technities* (or “poet”) is neither a simple worker nor an immaterial genius, and what we translate as “art” was also called *mechane*: could art, then, be the *deus ex machine* of philosophy at its end?

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<sup>314</sup> Cf. Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” *Basic Writings*, tr. D.F. Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 295.

Aesthetics as a theory of art thus appeared before the word, and essentially as the ontological point of view on a phenomenon that never claimed for itself the pure contemplation or *theoria* of Being. If the *aistheton* names the sensible not for itself but already in opposition *and* subordination to what gives sense to the sensible – *namely* the idea, which is never sensible – then the name “aesthetics” reveals its metaphysical origin. The beautiful has the privilege of making the non-visible of pure sight seen, of therefore being the postal carrier (or delivery person) of Being, he who carries the letter of Being to the right destination. The beautiful produces Being, not by fabricating it (Being is neither made nor engendered), but in that it displays or exposes it (lays bare). Hence, art has always been thought according to what I call the “principle of exposition.” Commenting on the sentence from *Phaedrus* affirming that in the hierarchy of beings, “to beauty alone has the role been allotted to be the most radiant, but also the most ravishing,” Heidegger writes:

The Beautiful is that which, by a double movement into and out of itself, delivers itself to our senses from the first appearance, and by the same stroke carries us into Being, that is, what at once subjugates and ravishes. The Beautiful is thus that which tears us from the oblivion of Being and opens up the view on Being.” (*Nietzsche*, 196).

The beautiful, as appearance, but an appearance that must allow Being to appear through itself, just therefore efface itself as appearance, must become *transparent*. The beautiful has no value in itself but only on behalf of what it allows to appear through and beyond (îăăă, *trans*, *über*) itself: *transcendens* pure and simple, Being. Transparency equals transcendence equals metaphysics. Every concept of art, including that of modern art, rests upon this trans-parency of this trans-appearance of Being, the disappearance of that which appears (simple medium) for the benefit of the appearing itself (the end in



view). If art “is rooted and sensible” and is thus the source of the conflict (*Zwiespalt*), this is also in order immediately to leave its place there, to move beyond and outside itself, to “elevate us beyond the sensible” (*Nietzsche*, 198). Even Nietzsche’s aesthetics, presenting itself as anti-metaphysical, but as a reversal of the hierarchy that governs the relation of the sensible to what exceeds it, remains (for Heidegger) the height of metaphysics: to make the ecstasy of the senses the essence of aesthetic emotion or of the sentiment of surpassing “oneself” is to fall back once again upon transcendence or metaphysics, even though, transported to the “physiology” of sentiment, of “artistic” subjectivity, this metaphysics may be unrecognizable.

In the Greek tradition phenomenality has been thought in terms of light (ὄψο), inasmuch as light makes everything appear. But in turn, everything makes light itself appear insofar as light op-poses itself to the obscurity of the impenetrable. Consequently, thingness, “matter,” has always been determined *negatively*, as obstruction, re-covering, *lethe* in relation to *aletheia*, truth as non-concealment, diaphanousness, “transparency.” The imbalance evident in this conception has been translated by the privilege given to the spiritual as immaterial. The sensible that shines and resonates displays itself as *that* work of art which must *not* stop there; on the contrary, it must permit a passing beyond toward the “there” of pure Being or of the Idea. But what comes to pass, with art, is precisely that this does *not* come to pass: an interruption, a caesura takes place in the movement of passing beyond toward “true” presence (that of Being); instead of being a mere figure of transition in the movement giving access to (the) self, presence is distanced from itself by a death-in-speaking. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes, showing (ex-posing, saying, figuring: all these words express the same thing – the *poetic technique* of art) “is nothing other than

placing apart, at a distance from presentation, going out of pure presence, making absent and thus absolute.”<sup>315</sup>

As a poetry example (examples always being necessary), or rather two, for like hands, two examples are always better than one, take Valéry and Ponge. Both speak, though quite differently, of transparency, one in order to pass immediately to the source, to the truth that shows through in language: “We say we are thirsty for truth. We speak of the transparency of a discourse.”<sup>316</sup> These expressions are only figures of speech, tropes, metaphors, truth not being, *properly speaking*, potable, not water. With Ponge, on the contrary, the metaphor, if it does not disappear, changes meaning, because at issue is no longer a one-way passage from a material base (water) to a “superior” truth; this time, the glass of water figures language inasmuch as by means of language transparency shows through the glass of water: “Allegory (here) inhabits a diaphanous palace.”<sup>317</sup>

The metaphysical division can be translated by the traditional conceptual couple of form/content. But while in science and philosophy form is only a manner of speaking or an inessential clothing for “true” content (the signified), in the arts, inversely, it is form that prevails. However, with “Ponge’s” glass of water, it is impossible to establish a similar precedence. Form and content are in effect equally transparent; the glass allows the water to appear and the water, being itself transparent, returns to itself as *itself*; a glass of water. This is why the glass is best suited for the water: it *presents* the water in the best possible

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<sup>315</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Muses*, tr. Peggy Kamuf (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 1996), 122.

<sup>316</sup> Paul Valéry, “Louange de l’eau,” quoted by Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 277.

<sup>317</sup> Francis Ponge, *Parti Pris des Choses* (Cambridge, MA: Schoenhof’s Foreign Press, 1966), 98.

way, without adding anything of itself; but “in addition, the best way to present a glass (in the execution of its duties) is to present it full of water.”<sup>318</sup> This double reference annuls precisely the movement of transcendence, without, however, remaining a pure immanence. All this does not take place without recalling the *double* movement Heidegger spoke of concerning Beauty as *ekphanestaton* (receiving station). The difference is that, far from being a simple moment destined to be passed by in the passage (toward Being or truth), the thing does not efface itself as signifying material for the benefit of an immaterial signified, nor is it the reflection or representation of that signified returning to the source of production, the *ego*, or self. Transparency is not the fact of the Idea but comes from the thing. Form and content, glass and water, remain absolutely heterogeneous, even if they display the same transparency in their indissoluble unity, the glass of water. The relation between them should be described in strict analogy to the analogy of the thing and word, “glass of water.” “Beginning with V, ending with U, the only two letters in the form of a vase or a glass, the word *glass of water* (waterglass) would in some way be adequate to the object it designates.”<sup>319</sup> I will not try to give a “scientific” justification for this literal correspondence between what we call the signifier and what we call the signified. Such a justification would not only be impossible but would run against the current of Ponge’s intentions: every justification demands a reason for being, a foundation, and there is no foundation (or reason) to language by the very fact that it is through language and language alone that something like a foundation can be furnished or a reason given.

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 106-07.

Were I here to say *waterglass* now, I would be obliged to represent things (the word *and* the thing) differently. We would perhaps hear the sound, the toll [*glass*] of another bell. Is language not the constant promise of a glass of water from all faucets? That is the least one can demand of a *potable* language. “But *potable* only means hardly passable. Oh! there is something rotten in the French language.”<sup>320</sup> Not only in French: every language is rotten from the inside in that it is never more than *a* language and not “the” language, *die reine Sprache*. We translate this as “pure” language, and I note that (no doubt erroneously) Ponge derives the verb “to rinse” from the German *rein*, pure. Further, through what is probably an unintentional anagrammatical transposition, *rein* is written in some editions as “rien” [“nothing”].

Despite everything, there is perhaps a kinship between all languages if only nothingness is “pure” (but the pure nothing does not exist). Every language has “something rotten” about it. As witness, I need only the English word *pure*, which has given us “purée” as well as purge from the Latin *purgare*, to cleanse. The word comes from the old French, *purier*, signifying “to pass through a sieve” (it is thus, in fact, that one makes a purée or produces literary criticism). Ponge sees the rotten in the example of “potable,” which, instead of meaning capable (or being drunk), in conformity with its *proper* meaning, means *just barely* sufficient, just enough not to be entirely incapable.... In short, “adequate” or “passable.” Every student knows that the grade “pass” is practically shameful. But the word itself says nothing of the sort. It expresses only the capacity, the capability (thus, potentially the excellence) of passing. Perhaps this is because language, more than a house of *Being*, is a sort of

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 113.

brothel in which words and things, meaning and usages, are exchanged and are always more or less on good terms and always in good (clean) hands.

I call *linguaging* this game of language with itself. But that also means the game with the use of language, its passage, thus, with *us* who pass through it. Purity is the most common phantasm concerning the property / propriety of a language, but it is just as impossible literally as it is “spiritually” (in that philosophy desperately seeks to avoid any metaphor, image, or ambiguity). If language opens up a play *between* words and things, if sometimes this *mi-lieu*, this place-in-between, is a “pure” transparency between them, it is on the basis of that impossibility which makes possible a *relative* transparency or propriety. What is at stake there could also be called (improperly, that is, according to the condition of general or generative impropriety of *any* language) *clear passage*. At once less than a concept and more than a word, this term, by no means an *end/backword*, but in these conditions not a *foreword* either, unless we understand it as an invitation to pass, that is, as with the “to say” – this term, then, by its inflection which is neither negative nor positive, but rather neutral, would translate the passage of sense, the passage that *is* already the whole sense. There is no sense without passing; meaning or sense does not exist for itself. Sense occurs (or does not occur) only through what takes place between itself and the Other (which is *non-sense* only from the perspective of the positivist theory of sense, logic).

And what takes place? Nothing but *this*: the glass of water, nothing else – or the thing itself. But this is just as much the glass of water I drink as the one I read: “Let this book be a glass of water!” In this passing out of difference in which the signifier is valid as a signified, but in which the signified is, in turn, in the position of signifier, the entire system of metaphysical subordination

collapses. In other words, showing *itself*, art (transparency in both senses, from the sensible to the intelligible and vice versa) displays nothing, at least nothing that would be beyond: there is no-thing beyond art as ex-position, production, process, and so on. But if technique is already the whole of art, there is no sense in opposing it to aesthetics, for aesthetics always comes too late, and remains excessive(ly figurative) – a metaphysical supplement.

This brings me to the second curiosity of aesthetics.

The thing was there, not named (not properly) and yet already as such. This is somewhat surprising: Plato wrote no “Aesthetics,” for example. We must wait until Hegel for the appearance of the title “Aesthetics,” that is, also its *end*, an end, if not of the name, then of the thing, of its object: art, the beautiful. Art enters into the aesthetic the day it is declared, if not dead, then at least a thing of the past, surpassed as regards the Absolute (philosophy), as though this baptism were also a death certificate. The name is always the name of the dead, the name of the Father in the name of whom the Son would sacrifice himself only to be reborn in the Holy Spirit, his specter or spectator: the Concept. But is there a concept of art? And why *not*? Has not a new form of modern art been baptized *conceptual*? If this art really exists, one should conclude that there must be a concept of art. however, the very fact that there is a conceptual art might also mean exactly the opposite: as only a species of the genre “art,” the other species thus being necessarily non-conceptual, the concept of art that would synthesize both in its unity (dialectical or not) threatens to be simultaneously conceptual and non-conceptual, or of an other conceptuality, heterogeneous to itself, and thus non-absolute, non-conceptual.

Art (the concept, to begin with the name “art” itself) always threatens to be without concept, or is rather the threat of the concept (and of the name, of the

name as the substantive of the subject-concept). According to the necessity of phenomenology, the concept *must* be capable of presenting itself, of figuring itself. But as such any conceptuality find itself threatened, exposed precisely to the “exposition” that, for want of a proper concept, could very well be the work in which, for want of a proper name, what is called “art” is at play. In place of the concept, this would be the *de-cept* [de-position] of art – to begin with its name, which has never been a proper name, or has never been anything but a proper name, that is, a name without signification.<sup>321</sup>

In the Epilogue to “The Origin of the Work of Art,” Heidegger begins by returning to what he had crudely asserted in 1936. Then, despite everything, a concept of art was put to work, unconcealed, art as a “bringing into work of truth,” itself understood as the play of unconcealing concealing itself:

The foregoing reflections are concerned with the riddle of art, the riddle that art itself is. They are far from claiming to solve the riddle. The task is to see the riddle. (*PLT*, 79)

How one sees an enigma is yet another enigma, for in principle an enigma can only be heard. According to an ancient philosophical tradition that triumphs right into the arts, where everything culminates in figuration or representation, Heidegger systematically privileges sight. I will insist upon this precedence of theory (*theoria*), which is the precedence of sense as pre-sense presenting itself to itself, only to remark, again, that it flows from the metaphysical project and that it prescribes *mimesis* as the founding concept of aesthetics. If theory (the pure sight of Being) precedes all *poiesis*, all technique and production will

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<sup>321</sup> Since Kant, aesthetics has been a matter of “judgment” and triumphs in the judgment of Duchamp: “It is he who looks who makes the painting.” Thus art becomes spectral, opposed to the thingness of the work of art’s remaining in itself in Heidegger.

come later, will be a making-after. Art is never original in relation to Being nor in relation to the theory in which Being gives, presents, itself *as such* and not through (*trans*) the sensible or the work of art. the immediacy and transparency of art are its most impenetrable veil; the very reason why art does not reach the absolute is precisely because it makes means (that is, art itself) absolute in relation to the “end” (truth), or because it interrupts the end or sense.

The enigma is “art,” art as such and not art as it is “felt” or “lived”: “Everything is an experience (*Erlebnis*). Yet perhaps experience is the element in which art dies. The dying occurs so slowly that it takes a few centuries” (*PLT*, 79). Following this, Heidegger quotes Hegel’s famous statements about the “end” of art *in view* of the Absolute (which only philosophy can present, *being it* in its process of exposing itself outside itself to its proper Self). If Heidegger says that “the truth of Hegel’s judgment has not yet been decided,” he keeps himself from saying it. This final word, this decision (*Entscheidung*), will not fall until the end of History, like the Last Judgment. But “Until then the judgment remains in force” (*PLT*, 80): it is the final word. Before the end, it is already the end, though not yet properly *spoken*; for that, we must await the final word. But since this will be the word of the end (of History, that is to say, of Saying), it will not be able to be spoken except as the end of the word, of itself, will never be able to say *itself* except as the *so-called* / *self-calling* final word.

As long as art is a historical figure, it is necessarily finished, since it has been passed by in the movement that is the history of its coming-to-its-end, a movement analogous to that in which the work of art comes to be as completed, fully executed. To take this a bit further, as long as art puts itself (in)to work(s),



it is finished, in the double sense of perfection and of death (or of “becoming-immortal”).

So true is this that now the only finality for art is to enter into a museum. There, as Hegel predicted once again, the Muses are transformed into statues: “Statues are now the cadavers from which the living soul has fled.”<sup>322</sup> But we must note the strange status of these statues animated, if not with life, at least with a becoming-cadaver. How does something that has never lived die? Let us recall that “lived experience” (*Erlebnis*) would be the element at the heart of which art would be in the process of dying – slowly, like a Greek statue damaged by the centuries. If there is a concept of art, it constitutes itself by demarcating itself from what it is *not*: “life,” for example (and it will be necessary to return to the “example”).

But how can art die if has never been alive? Of course, we can speak of “living” art in opposition to a “dead” art frozen in the rooms of a museum-freezer or stored in a basement. Yet even to the extent that, strictly speaking, only the artist is living and the work is a work only when detached from its “producer,” when it “is” (lives?) for itself, autonomous, the distinction between living and dead art is reduced to a simple point of view, an image, a metaphor. Statues resemble cadavers and *always* have. They neither speak nor move; they look only with an absent glance, like Baudelaire’s Venus: “But the implacable Venus looks at some unknown thing in the distance with her marble eyes” (“Le fou event Venus,” in *Le Spleen de Paris*). This explains why the statue is surpassed by the gesture of the young girl who offers the fruits of art, that is, art as *signum* or vestiges, and who, in opposition to the statue, *looks* (at us): “the

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<sup>322</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 455.

painting of the eye is itself the quintessence of painting, the painting of painting, and the painting of art in general,” writes Nancy (*Muses*, 95). Just as “I would be hard put to say *where* the painting I am looking at is,” I would be equally hard put to say where the young girl is looking who is in the painting that itself is – nowhere – or (is) “the inside of the outside and the outside of the inside.”<sup>323</sup> If painting, far from only “representing” already present things in another place (or way), “only” renders them present or “visible,” this visibility is never simple: it double itself with a veil of invisibility that, however, is nothing other than visibility itself: “What is proper to the visible is to have a lining [*doublure*] of invisibility, in the strict sense, that it makes present as a certain absence” (Merleau-Ponty, 85). Visibility is itself traversed by a (minimal, invisible, but understood as *in* the visible) difference: and it is *in* this difference that art lives (in English, art *inhabits* this difference). Referring to exteriority, art (here, painting) does not refer to anything other than itself, and this is why Merleau-Ponty writes that painting can be figurative “only on the condition of being ‘self-figurative’” (Merleau-Ponty, 69).

Speaking of the statue of the god in the temple, Heidegger writes:

It is not a portrait whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks, for no one knows this; rather, it is a work that lets the god himself come into presence and thus *is* the god himself. (*PLT*, 43)

The statue “is” the god. How is one to understand this: as an identification, a fetishism? But if statues have become cadavers, so too have the gods. (Were the gods ever alive?) This is why Heidegger can affirm that “great art” – the Greek

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<sup>323</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'Esprit*, (Cambridge, MA: Schoenhof's Foreign Press, 1985), 21.

art Hegel described under the title of “art-religion” – is, at present, nothing but a vestige, a has-been (though in German *gewesen* is also a recollection or remembrance – *Er-innerung* – of *Wesen*, a living being or essence). From the beginning, art is finished, if only through its vocation, its determination (*Bestimmung*): the putting (in)to work(s) (*Ins-Werk-setzen*) is the bringing to an end.

The statue, dead before it is alive (it precedes what Hegel calls the “living work of art”), thus represents the first *manifestation* of the “artistic spirit” precisely in that it manifests itself as pure exposition or figuration, although in such an exposition spirit does *not* manifest itself, not primarily as Self but a-part or exteriorized as pure exteriority or figure. This figure “exists,” is “there,” is placed there (is already *Dar-Stellung*), and its being-there, its *Dasein*, is “as a thing.” And yet it is not a simple thing, not a stone. Even if the “indwelling god is the black stone,” is the statue, this thing is already penetrated, crossed through, trans-figured as figure or appearance by the “light of consciousness” (Hegel, 428). In the same way, for Heidegger “the stone has no world” (*PLT*, 45). The end or finality of art already shows through; it effaces itself as thing or obscure stone to make room for pure Being. A statue, however complete, remains incomplete inasmuch as it must still be animated, inhabited by a living eye: “a nascent eye” must appear from under the skin of the stones. This eye, which *looks* like it is growing from the interior of the stone like a “pure spirit,” does not, however, belong to the stone; it comes from elsewhere. The work is not a simple thing, but is *produced* (shown). And it is precisely this characteristic (of being produced) that wants to appear and that art produces in its own way. But just as the thingness of the statue is not the thingness of a blind stone, its being-produced is fundamentally different from that of a simple equipment.

What differentiates a work of art from a common equipment (equipment) does not reside, however, in technique. Duchamp demonstrated this by exhibiting a thoroughly common equipment, *ready-made*, as a work of art. The difference is precisely this *as*, the operator of ex-position. Both equipment and work are manufactured products, artifacts, and there is no point in looking for a difference in their technique: the work of art may be technically more complex, or, on the contrary, more rudimentary. We pass over what marks a work as such if we insist upon remaining on the level of technique(s). The difference has nothing to do with appearance, so that a equipment can look more beautiful than a work of art. Similarly, the example of Van Gogh's shoes is in no way chosen by Heidegger for its so-called "aesthetic" value, as if the painting as painting (and all the more so for being signed by Van Gogh) were more beautiful than the *same* shoes on a farm (or in an urban setting). The difference does not even lie in that the painting would merely represent real shoes or even the essence of the shoes, shoeness, or that one cannot take a step in the painted shoes. The difference is much more unapparent, but, as unapparent as it is, it passes by (through) appearance, traverses it to bring it out as such, that is, as the trans-appearance of the "that it is," the appearance of Being.

Thus, Heidegger writes: "To be sure, 'that' it is made is a property also of all equipment that is available and in use. But this 'that' does not become prominent in the equipment; it disappears in usefulness" (*PLT*, 65). Whereas the equipment (product) makes its being-produced disappear, the work produces it, exposes it as such, and... *says* it. Thus, the difference between equipment and work of art is the appearance of Saying, and of Saying as the space or clearing in which the appearing appears manifestly and as this being-manifest. Once again, an example: the only difference between any old urinal that comes to hand, *so to speak*, and the one we encounter in a museum in the form of the

same urinal “exposed” is not so much that one cannot admire the first or relieve oneself in the second, but that the urinal in the museum is not shown as a *urinal* but as (under the *name* of) “Fountain,” which is to say: “Achtung, this is art!” In the same way, Duchamp’s window looks in every way like any other window, except that it is called “Fresh Widow,” which translates to: “Attention, Fresh Paint.” The painting is fresh and widowed of a letter in order better to espouse Being, to nearly *literally* espouse itself (another Virgin disrobed by the image of writing [*Schriftbild*]): the missing “n” is also that letter that is added – the Name, the proper name that signifies nothing but “shows.” It thus functions as the supplement of Being or that “higher element” that the statue remaining in “exteriority,... the determination of *thing* without self-consciousness” lacked: “This higher element is *language*,” the supplement of the soul (“language is the soul existing as soul” [Hegel, 430]) without which statues are but corpses, and not even “exquisite corpses,” since, as live as they might have appeared, to the point of *being* the god himself, they, as we say of dogs, lack (but) one thing: speech (event more than sight).

Difference passes by way of language. Language marks the work as work of art. This precedence of language, which Hegel repeats at each moment of the “art-religion,” from oracle to epic and tragedy passing by way of hymn, of language as the “perfect element in which interiority is just as exterior as exteriority is interior (Hegel, 439), marks the discourse of Heidegger as well when he defines *all* art as being “essentially *Dichtung*” (poetry). Even if he distinguishes *Dichtung* from *Poetry*, he nonetheless adds that “the work of language, poetry in the strict sense, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts” (*PLT*, 73). This privilege of language (or rather of *logos*) flows from the function attributed to art: *Ins-Werk-setzen*, *aufstellen*, Being-open, exposed as such. The statue, for Hegel, or the temple, for Heidegger, are already

speaking works, even if they speak *without saying a word*, which is perhaps the “purest” way of speaking. They speak by saying what art does: putting into works is putting in the Open, ex-posing into the there that the work installs inasmuch as it is the there: “is there,” Hegel also says, is exteriority of the interior (laid bare). When Heidegger says that “this” painting (by Van Gogh) “has spoken” (*Dieses hat gesprochen*), this is in now way because this “thing” would have attained speech through the intermediary of Herr Professor but because the painting has *openly* shown the Being-manifest of the (produced, or equipmental) being.

But it is indeed the painting itself that gives sight – of what? This, at the very least: that it is a painting. Here, Derrida goes one step further, saying what Heidegger does: see “truth in painting.” That is to say, on the one hand, that Heidegger saw what can be seen *nowhere* – “in” painting there is nothing such as “truth,” which always lies beyond painting as a simple exposition. The painting will have been only a pretext, quickly passed over to get to the thing itself: meaning. On the other hand, and with all the complexity of a deconstructive reading, Derrida does not content himself with saying that Heidegger had visions (or, in this case, voices: “this has spoken”), nor does he want to bring the metaphysician who always sees something other than what is there back to reason (or what passes itself off under this name: the evidence so dear to objective art criticism). Derrida’s extra step is to say what no one has ever seen there, namely the painting as shoe, and, as *thingness*. With what Derrida calls the “remark in painting,” it is not a question of making the shoes speak again, even to make them recite the “ancient” language of allegory or the *mise-entire-abyme*: “This (what you believe to be shoes) is, *in truth*, a

painting.”<sup>324</sup> On the contrary, if there is a placing into abyss, and *not* into truth, it is in a double interlacing of thingness into painting and of painting into shoeness. It is a double interlacing in the way of a double underline or re-mark: (1) this is a painting, but this is “the” shoes – “the painting is *in* the shoes that we are” and that consequently overflows the frame; (2) “conversely the framing painting, that which gives itself as painting at a first glimpse [...] remarks itself [it is thus not a simple remark] as a (more or less shifty) pair of shoes. [...] If the painting could speak in its turn (it has spoken, Heidegger said) [...] would it not say [it would indeed]: I, like all painting, am a shoe.”<sup>325</sup> The painting is in the shoe which is (in) the painting. Everything overflows the borders; the part is bigger than the whole which is in the part, et cetera. There is no way to *say* what, of the shoe as thing or of the shoe as shown, “is” (shown, exposed).

In taking as his “example” a pair of shoes “in painting,” Heidegger seemed to have set loose a time bomb that, in an exemplary way, tears all of aesthetic discourse to pieces. The example explodes the frame as being already the (*w*)hole of art. The “this,” far from disappearing in the universal “truth” that is its negation, resists the law of generalization (that is, of truth and of language) in interrupting its well-regulated play by not merely playing alongside (*Beispiel*) as an illustration of the main text, but as this text’s only means of presenting *itself*, never as such. Still, it *must* present itself: in this necessity lies its defect, presenting itself for lack of the thing itself, which will never have been presented (especially if it is presence itself) except *in its absence*.

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<sup>324</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, tr. Geoff Bennington and Ian Mcleod. (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1987), 433.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

It is here that one could ask if what Heidegger presents as an example, a simple *Darstellung* (presentation), not of painting (since the example of painting is useless and could be replaced by any representation), and certainly not of the shoe, by of the “activity,” of the *poetique* proper to “this” painting, is not already the *final word* on that in regard to which, in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel says that *we no longer have an absolute need to bring content to presentation in the form of art?* if Heidegger’s principal thesis is in agreement with this assertion, it is because, for him, art precisely never *presents* or exposes anything, for the simple reason that there is nothing it *could* present. And if art cannot present anything, it is because it is itself this nothing, this absence of content or message.

It is this absence that it openly exposes it as the very place of art: the truth. Heidegger puts an end to art in another way, not in declaring it finished as regards its “supreme destination” (that of presenting the Absolute by “exposing” it in a sensible figure), but in accomplishing it as absolute exposition. This is also why language for him acquires its primordial dimension: in language, Hegel already said, and as Wittgenstein will repeat in a different way, there is never anything but language, nothing but Self, pure autology. In withdrawing the being of language from subjectivity, in making language absolute, does Heidegger not accomplish the secret vow of metaphysics, the disappearance of the “thing” *in* the “thing itself”? thus, this disappearance repeats the scheme of self-transparency or the myth of presence – of art as well (of art as *divine*). As for the rest, it is the *rest*, the remainder, that which remains of art when the myth of self-presence has been interrupted, when the “without” has cut off sense, when it *passes* (out of) sense and does not simply make no sense. To think art without sense, without presence, and without Being would be to take that step beyond which precisely does *not* go



beyond, does not conclude a movement from art to Being, and always, to the end (of art).

Chapter 17

THE SIDE STEP: FROM HEIDEGGER TO DERRIDA

“Picasso is said to have told this story about his visit to an artist’s studio. The artist showed him one of his paintings and asked Picasso to be lenient with it: ‘I’m still working on it; it’s not yet fully executed.’ Picasso savagely replied, ‘Executing it would be humane.’”<sup>326</sup>

It is with this anecdote that J.B. Pontalis opens his final contribution to the final issue of the *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse*, an issue that is also a deliverance, with the *Revue* ending, finishing (itself off), as in a suicide, but a “beautiful” suicide, committed beautifully, like death in antiquity or the voluntary death that Nietzsche praises, with the title *Incompletion*. A bit later in his text, which is also a meditation on the art of the fragment, Pontalis evokes Chekhov’s death, Chekhov who is supposed to have said, “*Ich sterbe*,” in German “in the text,” if I can put it thus. He says “I am dying” in German, then, not only because one cannot say (although this is what ever fully executed work of art says) “I am dead,” but because one cannot say it in one’s own language. If there is not proper word for one’s *own* / proper death, it is because there is no death “proper.” That is so even though Heidegger tells us, from beyond the grave, that on the contrary there is nothing but that, or that death is the most proper thing in the “world.”

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<sup>326</sup> J.B. Pontalis, “Le Souffle de la vie.” *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* 50 (Autumn 1994), 25.

It is not that I particularly prefer incomplete works, like romantic ruins, like the “Temple of Philosophy” Gérard de Nerval speaks of in *Sylvie*: “This unfinished building is already nothing but a ruin,... and its steps, out of joint, are overgrown with brambles.” Thinking is always, as Jean-Luc Nancy says, *a finite thought*, and in this very respect for finitude is never complete. Thinking is *not* a work, not even a work of art, since a work is only a work when complete, fully executed, when the last word has been spoken, when it has reached its end, been brought to term or to its *telos* (for Aristotle *energeia* is synonymous with *entelecheia*, having oneself as end). The “end” of thinking is not a *telos*, but rather something like an inner limit that forbids any closure on itself. Maybe the steps of this edifice that is philosophy are disjointed, out of joint. The steps are uneven, they are shattered joints. But here it would be a question of whether philosophy can still be shaped into a system, transformed into a work (even a work of art or of architecture), whether there is *one* unified philosophy or tradition that could be identified as such, as “Western Metaphysics.”

Has philosophy come to its end, and if so what are we supposed to do? What task remains for us – to bury it? This question should be reminiscent of the title of a lecture Heidegger gave in 1964, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thought.” Heidegger claims that philosophy has exhausted all of its possibility, since, metaphysics being the same as Platonism, and Nietzsche having characterized his philosophy as a reversal of Platonism, holding that with his reversal of Metaphysics, the extreme possibility of philosophy had been reached. However, the end of philosophy would mean that it has “entered its final stage” (like that of cancer) only on the condition that we do not understand what an end is, properly speaking:

The old signification of our word “end” means the same as “place.” “From one end to the other” means from one place to an other. The end of philosophy is that place in which the totality of its history in its extreme possibility gathers itself. End as completion means this gathering.<sup>327</sup>

From this point (this end), a pathway must be able to lead to the other end, by which I mean what Heidegger called *der andere Anfang*, “the other beginning.”

Now all of this is already well known, and I do not want to comment once again on Heidegger’s “philosophy,” if only because we should not, according to Heidegger himself, be able to speak of “Heidegger’s philosophy.” this does not mean that I would blindly follow Heidegger on his way or take for granted that he did, in fact, achieve this “step back,” returning from metaphysics to its hidden essence (also perhaps a specter returning from the beyond) that is the “unthought” of philosophy and that would therefore require a other kind of thinking. We must ask, first, whether such a step is possible, and then (although it is the same question) if this step does *not* repeat the philosophical mode of thinking, that is, return to an “essence” or to a “more fundamental” ground that is hidden and that, because it runs aground, becomes an abyss. But when I speak of a repetition, a re-petition of (the) principle, I should also insist that every repetition *as* repetition is an alteration, a different step. This leads me to the “thing itself” and to repeat my chapter title: “The Different Step: From Heidegger do Derrida.” Beyond the undecidable ambiguity of the “step” (“step” or “not,” name or syncategorem), I must translate or, if that is impossible, refer what we, in English, call the “issue” to what I have just said about the “end” of

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<sup>327</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 63-64. Even if Heidegger relies upon “our” language (German here, this linguistic “particularity” repeats a scheme from Greek philosophy (that of the *logos*) – the definition of place as *limit*.

philosophy. If metaphysics is *declared* closed (in a kind of performative utterance) with Heidegger, is this actually the case or should we *not* understand differently the step that passes metaphysics by? For this different step, we must step over into another thinking of difference itself, a thinking of *difference*.

Before taking another step, I will first summarize what is at stake in the question of “difference.” In this preliminary step, I will take as a guideline Rodolphe Gasché’s book, *Inventions of Difference*.<sup>328</sup> The title is quite paradoxical, since the book begins with the affirmation that in a certain branch of literary criticism “‘difference’ has become the key term.” “A quick glance at recent book titles reveal the term not only apposed to everything, but in everything” (82). Gasché argues that difference, in metaphysics, stems from identity, and that “what takes place from Parmenides to Hegel, and beyond, is a relative liberation in which difference, rather than being effaced in the face of identity, is shown to have its only meaningful place within identity” (Gasché, 85). For example, when Hegel spoke of the “identity of identity and non-identity” (thus of the identity of identity and difference), this shows how restricted the function of difference is at the heart of the dialectical process. It has a “relative freedom,” relative with respect to identity. Difference is allowed only to the extent that it in turn allows identity the possibility of having a content, of not being identical to pure Being, that is, of not being an abstract identity or the void of nothingness. Identity, therefore, is not only at the starting point but at the end of the process; or it is at the end because it was already posited speculatively from the beginning.

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<sup>328</sup> Rodolphe Gasché, *Inventions of Difference*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

If we understand metaphysics as the unity of a single history going from one end to the other, then metaphysics is born of the violence that consists in reducing the other simply by naming it “the Other.” From Plato, who reduced the Other to the law of the Same (the Idea), to Hegelian dialectics, in which the Other is no less excluded, precisely by being included, becoming a simple moment that *is* not yet and yet that is already mediated in advance, difference is always already recuperated, digested, incorporated (*Unlimited, Inc.*). It has always been kept at a distance, as if it constituted an essential threat to the integrity and wholeness of self-identity, that is, of Being (and thought, since identity is first of all the identity of Being and thought). Since unity, even if it is not the same, not homogeneous, presides over the relationship, the One will always express what the Other is or should be, even if it is in its name. Consequently, the One still re-presents the Other, even or especially *as such*, on the common ground of Being, presence. I simplify here, but it should nonetheless be stressed that the Other of presence is *not* simply an absence, which is an “other” presence, a transformed presence; nor is the Other a “not” in the sense of a negative. For this reason, the thinking of difference must not be thought as a negative ontology. For negation has always been a powerful means by which to reduce difference in dualistic schemes: contradictions and oppositions are the very means by which identity comes into its own (its self) as the totality controlling differences that have been reduced to homogeneous binary oppositions. Even calling what cannot be conceived of “inconceivable” because it never returns to itself in the identity of presence and the presence of identity is still a speculative tour de force. To leave the inconceivable without a name would already be a first step, provided that one does *not* stop there, as if it were enough to float in the empty blue sky of the ineffable. There is nothing ineffable there, even if there is nothing immediately comprehensible there either.

Identity is the philosophy name for difference, but in such a way that difference, once it is posited, exposed, (re)presented, expressed, is already forgotten. In Heidegger's terms, metaphysics is nothing other than the history of such a forgetting, the forgetting of Being as *this* difference. The question I will ask is whether such an oblivion is effaced or surpassed by a thinking that endeavors to think difference *as such*, or whether the very fact of speaking of difference "as such" does not once again come down to falling back under the domination of identity, whereas identity cannot *be* identity without passing by way of the Other (the "internal" difference by means of which something can be self-identical).

But first, what is "ontological difference"? In fact, it is not a difference at all – at least not between two kinds of things, two kinds of "beings." Not only is it not a distinction posited by "understanding" and so a difference that could be understood in the traditional way, where one compares two different things against a common ground, ontological difference is not a distinction at all. Gasché puts this well when he defines difference as a difference between "dissimilars" that have nothing in common but that are ultimately the Same (Gasché, 91). (Heidegger always insists on the irreducible difference separating the Same and the similar.) Being and beings do not differ from the other as a chair differs from a table. For such (ontic) differences are subject to the unity of a genus, and Being is clearly not a genus. It is the *schlechthin transcendens*, the "absolutely transcendent," and is not commensurable or homogeneous with beings. "Being" is not, only beings (chairs, televisions, and even God) are. This "not," whose "first name" or "fore-name" (before the name) in "What is Metaphysics?" was "nothingness," qualifies Being as different from any being. With regard to beings, then, Being is nothing. It is not a thing, a being among others. But that does not mean that Being is absolutely *nothing at all*. On the

contrary, as everything, Being has always been thought by metaphysics as supreme Being, which allowed theology to seize upon it, but Being is the supreme being only insofar as it is the Being *of* beings, the most being part in beings. That implies putting aside ontic difference, for, with regard to the supremacy of Being, any particular being is disregarded as being only *a* being (not *the* Being). The supremacy of Being does not result from a particularity or from a specific quality that would differentiate Being from all other beings. On the contrary, the difference in Being results from its in-difference to any ontic difference, that is, comes from its absolute generality. This means that metaphysics is only a theology because it is first an ontology, and not the reverse. In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger cites an “example” with a restriction that plays on the German word for “example,” *Beispiel*: “nowhere in beings can we find a correct example for the essence of Being, probably because the essence of Being is Play (*Spiel*) itself” (*Identity and Difference*, 58). The example (and the play on the word “example” in which the game is played out) comes from Hegel. Someone enters a shop to buy fruit. He is offered apples, pears, cherries, and grapes. But he refuses them all. What he wants is fruit – not apples or pears, but simply fruit.... Likewise, it is even more impossible to find anything like Being in its universality. At the same time, without Being and its generality, no single thing, for example a fruit, would ever be. Being a fruit is not itself fruit, but without this Being, no fruit can ever be, so that, in the end, not only is Being not nothing, it alone *is* properly, beings being only what are not, properly speaking, *me on*.

Now, what can we say about ontological difference? Could we say that this difference “is” something? No. That is why difference has never been properly thought as such in metaphysics. Heidegger writes that forgetting belongs to difference, for difference was destined to be forgotten: how can one



not forget “nothing,” or, at least, that which is not a thing, not an umbrella, for instance? Heidegger tried to step back from “Being” (as the Being *of* beings, as the “proper” identity giving ground and legitimacy to any being) in order to think difference for itself, as such, or, as he puts it in *Time and Being*, to think Being without any concern for beings. But is it possible to think difference *for itself*? Does difference have a “self,” that is, ultimately, an identity? Or does it not rather differ from and in itself? If this is the case, we can understand the necessity of thinking “difference” differently, the necessity of that different difference called “*différance*.” This other name for difference corresponds to the necessity of re-thinking the relation of difference to identity, and, of questioning the possibility of an identity of difference as such. The “as” of the “as such” is no longer self-evident. As Gasché puts it, “difference as such lacks the quality not only of Being, but of propriety as well, and to such an extent that no as such is *appropriate* to it. To think it remains therefore an infinite task” (Gasché, 103). Further investigation would show that, in Heidegger’s attempt to free difference (and Being) from its forgetting (that is, from its link with ontotheology), a repetition of the metaphysical gesture that I would very roughly qualify as “identification” is performed. Heidegger himself was conscious of this danger when, at the end of *Identity and Difference*, he wrote that the “step would remain incomplete” because “our Western languages are all in their own way languages of metaphysical thinking” (*Identity and Difference*, 66). We already have a simple example of this in the “as” (*als*). To think difference *as* difference is already to think it in terms of *logos*, of gathering, of identity, or of unity.

If it is true that ontological difference is not a distinction stemming from understanding in the restricted sense of the German *Verstand*, does it therefore have absolutely nothing to do with comprehension (*Verstehen*) of meaning,

especially with the self-understanding of the meaning of Being as it has been determined in *Being and Time*? If *Dasein* has been chosen as the only being to have access to Being, it is because *Dasein* has the sense or meaning of Being, can in advance and always already understand Being by relating and acting not only to its own Being, but toward other beings. For *Dasein* only is there an other, and this is so because *Dasein* has the sense or meaning of difference (that is, of Being). *Dasein* is different from other beings, animals, objects. (This is clear inasmuch as *Dasein* is marked by negation and exists for death.) How, in this respect, could difference be something absolutely incomprehensible, but likewise, and symmetrically, how is a self-understanding, an understanding of inner difference that constitutes identity proper, the upside of *Dasein*, possible?

Self-understanding is not self-evident. Let us recall the last words attributed to Hegel on his deathbed. His was a brutal, senseless death, like all death: cholera has no dialectical meaning. There are two versions of the same story, if it is one. The first version is told by Heine, the second by Kierkegaard: “I touch here upon the comical side of our philosophers. They constantly complain about not being understood. As Hegel was lying on his deathbed, he said discontented, ‘And he did not understand me either.’” In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard writes: “Hegel must have died upon saying these words, saying that no one but the person who misunderstood him understood him – and if Hegel was speaking of himself...?”<sup>329</sup>

Is it possible to understand oneself? Is not an other always necessary for that? Likewise, can one give oneself, this giving being understood in all senses

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<sup>329</sup> Werner Hamacher, *pleroma – Reading in Hegel*, tr. Nicholas Walker and Simon Jarvis. (Berkeley: Stanford University Press, 1998), 110.

of the word, including that in which giving leads to physical, sexual possession? Can one give, offer, oneself, as a witness, as a witness of one's "own" death or of one's survival? Who understands whom? A part should be more than the totality in order to grasp itself *as such*, as self *and* other. These are questions that should be answered (for), questions that bind us to an infinite responsibility toward our self *as* (toward) the Other, toward our self as *including* the Other in our self. Thus, what I am saying is understood or should be understood as included and understood in a language, my "own" language. My "own" language, and yet it belongs to me less than I belong to it. (To speak English, I must already be in a generality common to all those who understand English.) Before even being able to say or write a word, I would always already be taken (caught and taken like a prisoner) in what comprehends (or takes) me (and other who share this understanding) without, for all that, being sure of understanding myself in it. Thinking takes place in language, but this "place" is anything but indifferent to what takes place in it. There I at least a passage from one to the other, and vice versa, so that neither could be isolated nor taken for itself without including the other in this self. The same is true of *Dasein's* understanding of the meaning of Being. But then, how can they be different from one another and the same as to the difference itself, which puts them at an equal distance from beings? This question leads Derrida's critique of the privilege accorded to *Dasein* (that is, ultimately, to human beings, even if not conceived of in terms of subjectivity). I will return to that later.

For the moment, I only want to pass from Heidegger's conception of difference to the "other" one, Derrida's. First, we have to know whether such a passage is possible, and then, whether it constitutes a (linear, homogeneous) progression, or whether it is rather an abrupt disconnection, something like a *gap* – a difference that could not be thought without thinking difference

differently, to the point that meaning could no longer pass through it. And yet we must make meaning pass through it, for a difference whose meaning we do not understand would no longer be difference. To pass from Heidegger to Derrida there will not be the same “striking gap” to pass over as there is, for example, on the way from Rimbaud to Heidegger, since what difference there is, is not that between two worlds as incommensurate as poetry and philosophy. Heidegger and Derrida do indeed belong to the same world, if it can be called a “world”: they are both philosophers. Of course, they are rather peculiar philosophers, since neither of them completely understands himself as being only a philosopher. It is even this non-understanding that brings them together, puts them on the same “wavelength,” that of a certain discrepancy with regard to discourse, conceptual language, and the philosophical tradition from its beginning. Neither can any longer recognize nor identify “himself” in a figure or code constituted by a corpus that reflects back to him something essentially troubling.

To dismantle the representations or “covers” that block access to the “thing itself” is the task explicitly required of *Destruktion* in *Being and Time*. In this sense, it is almost *too* obvious that deconstruction (at least as a word or concept) comes from Heideggerian *Destruktion*. For example, I cite this passage from *Toward the Question of Being*:

...the lack of reflection began already in 1927 with the superficial misunderstanding of *Destruktion* such as it is discussed in *Being and Time*, a notion that has no other intention, as a de-construction (*Abbau*) of representations that have become banal and void, than to win back the experiences of Being that are at the very origin of those of Metaphysics.<sup>330</sup>

In *Politics of Friendship*, Derrida cites a passage from *What is Philosophy?*, where Heidegger repeats that *Destruktion* “does not signify the demolition but the deconstruction, the clearing, the putting-aside, of historical statements...” (92). If it takes an extra step in this direction, it is not to add to the radicalism of *Destruktion* but, on the contrary, to cast doubt upon this very radicalism. Is there beneath the representations that have become banal and used up something else, something more fundamental to which we should *return*: an origin? It could be said that the deconstruction of the supplementary turn of the origin, the deconstruction of the re-turn to a one and single origin, sharply checked *Destruktion*. This sharp check shows an *absolute limit* in the movement of going-to-the-ground (and running aground there). If the word “deconstruction” indeed comes from *Destruktion*, just as the word “différance” is a simple medication of the word “difference,” this does not then mean that the “thing” is the same. Is there in fact any sense in establishing an origin for a movement that tends to deconstruct the very notion of origin?

If there is indeed some sense in passing “from” Heidegger “to” Derrida, it is more difficult to assert if this passage would constitute a progression, and in what sense or direction. Here the bond that is tradition (even in the disruption of tradition, which can itself become tradition) is not enough to explain everything, and especially cannot bring back the passage to the comforting

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<sup>330</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Toward the Question of Being*, tr. D. Schelling (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1972), 36.

scheme of filiation and genealogy. Derrida has never stopped insisting upon the distance “in relation to the Heideggerian problematics” that he has marked “in all the essays” he has published, a distance that is marked in both content and form, so that in reading only one of his texts we can see that “it does not *look* like text with a ‘Heideggerian filiation’” (*Positions*, 71). In this, I agree with Gasché when he discusses an argument by John Caputo, according to whom Derrida, in his reading of Heidegger, produces confusion, so that not only does Derrida appear Heideggerian, but a certain “dissemination... has already taken place in Heidegger’s text.” Consequently, “it becomes impossible to establish strictly what is Heidegger’s properly or what is Derrida’s own” (Gasché, 79).

But I would first be tempted to reply: what does it really matter? Is it of any essential concern for us to delimit what is the property of each, his copyright, when difference does not issue from the Proper and when deconstruction does not belong to anyone, not even itself? However, this argument is erroneous insofar as the very word “*différance*” was invented in order to make it differ, in a strictly unheard-of manner, from simple difference. Not only is it different by the alteration of a simple letter (a silent letter, moreover, so that this is an unheard [of] difference); it refers to a double root in the Latin word (itself different from the Greek word *diaphora* to which Heidegger refers most often) *differe*, so that a temporalizing effect is added (“to differ” as “to defer”) to the dimension of space. This multiplication of different meanings in the same word is not the most important point; what is crucial is that all these meanings (including others that I cannot evoke here) are different from each other to the extent that they cannot be united in a single, simple root, even if this root were hidden. When Derrida speaks of a cluster of various heterogeneous meanings, he does not presuppose their possible unification or synthesis. Not only does difference not have a *single* meaning, but, since it has

several meanings that are irreducibly heterogeneous to one another, the “word” ultimately deconstructs the entire system of meaning in language, a system that is ground in unity and self-identity. This does not mean that it has no meaning at all, but that it is not a word and not a concept either. For this reason as well, difference does not belong to the *ont* of Being, meaning, *logos*. But I insist: that does not imply nonsense, which ultimately is submitted to the same law of the unity of sense, if only for the simple reason that nonsense is nonsense only in opposition and contradiction to sense, and because contradiction or negation is another branch of the binary logic of identity (the principle of identity as the principle of *non*-contradiction). As the condition of possibility of sense (meaning), difference is also its condition of impossible as a single sense that would be identical to itself. Difference is the strict limit of what it lets be. It cannot present itself, or “is” present only in the way a ghost or a trace is, a trace that can only be effaced to allow any present difference to present itself. Such is the “arche-trace,” which no archeo-logical (because logical in the first place) search ever discover, and which can *never* be discovered, to return to the example of Hegel.

One could object that difference is really nothing but an illusion stemming from the impossibility of complying with the minimal law of any coherent, that is, logical, discourse, an ancient law already formulated by Plato and Aristotle. According to this law, a discourse, a *logos*, must at least be a discourse on something, must speak of something, must be a *logos tinos*. Phenomenology complies with this minimal law, even when this “something” is not a thing, is not an apparent phenomenon. The Introduction to *Being and Time* already tells us that: what must absolutely be shown, the “true” phenomenon, is “obviously what at first and most of the time does *not* show itself,” that is,

that which proximally and for the most part does not show itself, and belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground. (*BT*, 59).

In the language of fundamental ontology, phenomenological showing must unconceal the Being of beings. Being withdraws in beings; it belongs to the being in giving it sense and foundation without ever showing itself in the way the being appears. Even when scientific demonstration is not possible, some sort of “showing” is required to present the “thing” to be thought, the “theme.” And even if, for Heidegger of *Time and Being*, the main point is not to attend to a logical series of arguments but to “follow in the steps of Showing” (*dem Gang des Zeigens zu folgen*), even if it is not a matter of taking this different step (*zeigen*, to show, is not a demonstration, and there is nothing to be demonstrated in either Being or time since neither is a being nor a matter of a statement), a *presentation* is still required in order that thinking be a thinking *of*.... On the contrary, difference being not only not a being but unable to present itself (and, therefore, to be presented), and residing within the horizon of Being, and therefore of *logos*, not being a question of the principle of exposition, it seems that to think this unheard-of difference is to think nothing at all, would not be a thinking. At least not a philosophical thinking, laying claim to truth.

As far as thought and truth are concerned, difference would mark out a radical difference from the philosophical stage. This is quite a familial scene, taking the classical turn of a parricide (which, since Plato, is inscribed in and as the philosophical scene par excellence). But parricide is not truly parricide unless there is incest too. The philosophical competition in which “the” truth is disputed bears witness to what is at stake. But Derridean suspicion concerns precisely these stakes; they are what he puts in jeopardy. Truth is at stake, and this is why Derrida, like Heidegger, remains above all a philosopher. Only,



contrary to Heidegger, Derrida no longer maintains any claim to truth, at least not in the same way. He gives his attention to truth without giving himself over to it. And he makes no pretension to detaining it, to having or possessing it ("in a soul and in a body," as Rimbaud says). Pretension is the demand, the claim to a title, a privilege, a right. To pretend to something is to aspire to it, to desire what by rights should be *returned* to us. Pretension is a firm and affirmed intention to return what is pretended to the self. But as it must affirm itself and, therefore, must pass through language, the original intention, resulting from a pure intentionality or unfissured wanting-to-say, risks getting taken in within the game of language (and languaging), risks being taken in, misled, there, and thus risks missing the intended object in taking it for the word (which also has pretensions to Being). The final truth does not always show up for the appointment, or if it does show up, surrenders, disappointed. *Truth* barely missed being truth in missing Being. And on account of this always possible and thus necessary failing, those who make pretensions to truth also return with their hands empty, become pretentious. In different terms, the conception is always a deception,<sup>331</sup> just as the concept always risks being a *decept*, a theft of meaning and therefore of a heritage.

To take up the title of a book by Derrida, it is a question of this right "to" philosophy, of the right to the truth that is *the* philosophical pretension. Without having recourse to etymology as a universal password, I will, however, recall that *to pretend* comes from the Latin verb *praetendere*, to hold near to, to present, therefore. Any immediate presentation is a pretension, a claim which a presumption to immediate presence. To pretend is to hold in the "near," an intentionality inscribed in the beginning of phenomenology, which fosters the

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<sup>331</sup> *Deception* as in *false friend*, a traitor that passes for something it is not.

privilege of presence. In a sense, the pretension to immediacy is *by right* always founded in philosophy. radical and generalized Cartesian doubt is the most patent example. Naïveté (the state of nature, natural consciousness, et cetera) must be submitted to this suspicion that at root is *skepsis*. But the philosophical approach only suspects naturalness in order better to base its own pretensions. Philosophy “pretends” in that it acts as if it knew, while it knows that it does not know, and thus already knows.... As though knowing that one does not know were *already* knowing something. Everything in Heidegger’s approach is reminiscent of philosophical suspicion; we could even say that he carried this suspicion to the extreme, the point of no return, to the point of being suspicious about truth itself. But this is still a quest and a request for truth, a question and questioning of “the essence of truth.”

Yet when Derrida questions Heidegger, it is precisely to suspect him of privileging the question itself, of the quest for a *more original* truth, one truer than “nature” (that is, than this philosophical meta-nature). For example, *Of Spirit* is subtitled *Heidegger and the Question*, since what is really in question, as Derrida puts it, “is the subtitle of my book, the question of the question, which is almost constantly privileged by Heidegger as ‘the piety of thinking’” (*Points...*, 183). If the question is “almost” always privileged by Heidegger, it is because he “almost” goes back on this in taking hearing / understanding – listening to, understanding the other and thus oneself in the other as preceding the privilege of *Fragen*, questioning. The who question turns upon the precedence of the question, which is also that of *Dasein*, that being privileged in the quest for the meaning of Being because it and it alone can question. The question therefore turns upon the return of humanism in the thinking that pretended to dethrone the human being of his pretensions (to be a subject, a reasonable animal endowed with *logos*, et cetera). However, in a reverse and

complementary gesture, Derrida constantly insists on the necessity of the question as a prerequisite for deconstruction, including the deconstruction of the precedence of the question. I will cite, for example, this passage from the beginning of *Of Grammatology*:

[I]t is indeed the *question* of Being that Heidegger poses to metaphysics. And with it the question of the truth, of sense, of the logos. The incessant meditation upon that question does not restore confidence. On the contrary, it dislodges the confidence at its own depth, which, being a matter of the meaning of Being, is more difficult than is often believed. (22)

To hear/understand the other, one must begin by no longer hearing/understanding *oneself*. We must remain silent, efface the “self” and thus *return* to speech, give it back, to itself – here, the *Logos* that has been confiscated by the tradition and become logocentrism. The whole difficulty of this “restitution” is contained in this silent voice, these dead letters. An immense, infinite task of deciphering, of translating (trans-lating), in short, of what we might call Heideggerian hermeneutics, is thus opened, engaging, quite simply, the meaning of reading, the reading of meaning, its very meaning as a necessary dis-orientation. This happens in such a way that we can understand Derrida’s uneasiness, even his anxiety, when, after some summary and by no means clear investigations, it is suggested that we conclude with a “Do not read Heidegger!” It is *forbidden*. Is it dangerous? This command is all the more peremptory in that it stems from ignorance. We must not read Heidegger because he has been declared unreadable, which comes down to wanting to *do away* with him. As a single counter-example, I take the following declaration by Derrida: “Briefly; 1. to think (speak, write) the *logos* ‘before’ these oppositions, ‘before’ voice and meaning (*phone*, *semainein*) – another ‘history of philosophy,’ let’s read Heidegger, for example...” (*Points...*, 179).

Derrida, like Heidegger, tries to think “*logos*” or difference before conceptual and metaphysical oppositions (in which *logos*, the source of all oppositions, itself becomes the single master term of the opposition). If Derrida put quotation marks around the “before,” it is because he read the word in another way, does not relate it to a historical before, to this *Anfang* that would be the origin of the History (of Being), identified by Heidegger as that of the Occident. This is another “before,” and another fore-word, before-saying, as well; but if the place of this before cannot be situated in either time (even in a more original temporality) or space (an archaic Greece), it is no less a before, a kind of *arche*. Otherwise, why call the trace of the Other “arche-trace”? I refer to another passage from *Of Grammatology*, where we can read:

For example, the value of a transcendental arche [*archie*] must make its necessity felt *before* [my emphasis] letting itself be erased. The concept of arche-trace must comply with both that necessity and that erasure. (61)

There is a double right here: the right to philosophical necessity and to its erasure, which does not efface the philosophical but displaces it, deposes it to give right [*droit*] to what Law [*Droit*] has *excluded*. It is in this way that Derrida’s “double science” can be read.

If there is no way leading out of the enclosure of metaphysics, however, no language other than that of metaphysics; if there is no difference except as the forgetting of difference, precisely because arche-difference is not and can never be, can never be present as such; if one cannot pass from one side (the metaphysical) to the other (which is not simply *non-metaphysical*), it is precisely in this point (of no) passage, this threshold or step (not taken – the impossibility of passing from one to the other without taking a leap), that

something takes place. This something is named with an untranslatable word, since it is an *invention* (an invention of the proper): *passance*. This invention would like to translate the (non-)passage in which sense is suspended – not annihilated, but interrupted, opened to its very opening. There is no sense without *passance*. There is no sense (or difference) existing by itself, no sense of sense. But again, that does not mean that there is no sense at all, or that difference, which opens the possibility of sense but does not constitute sense as its metaphysical ground or even as its transcendental condition, would be nothing but an empty word. Différance simply cannot be reduced to a word, whether it be proper or figurative. Regarding language, the possibility of a difference between a proper and an improper (metaphorical) sense, the possibility of a passage or translation from one to the other, rests on the *impossibility* of a clear-cut difference, the impossibility of making any decision in favor of one or the other.

The passage is also that across "the line." I refer here to Heidegger's "Über 'die Linie'" ("About 'the Line'"), which is itself a sort of "suspensive" citation, adding quotation marks similar to those put around the word "spirit" to Ernst Jünger's title, in which the *über* clearly has the value of a *trans*-, beyond. In his title, then, Heidegger himself would have returned upon his "overcoming of Metaphysics" (that is, of nihilism) inscribing a warning there: do not step beyond this "zero" line, but only about, "on," concerning, up against it. To pass beyond this line would be to pass beyond the desert, which essentially has "*no measure*." It would be to pass beyond the "There is no present" that opens all the *ground-less* precisely because they refuse to pass over this unique step (not taken) and take this refusal of the (heroic?) gesture of getting ahead of ourselves (of trying to be absolutely modern), refuse the temptation to move on to something else too quickly, refuse the temptation to pass over to the other side

and thus to fall into the abyss. It is a matter of casting doubt on the possibility of a reversal that would take place through the abyss, at least that reversal Heidegger, from a reading of these lines from “Mnemosyne,” named Turning: “Yes, before them [the gods] / Mortals reached the abyss. And so, that turns / With them” (SW<sub>2.1</sub>, 193). That “turns,” yes, but in what direction? Is it in the “right” direction, the direction Heidegger wanted, that of a *return into presence*, true presence, the true meaning (that has been forgotten) of Being as having come into presence? Or rather, has there ever been presence that was not fissured, ruined in the abyss? And is true presence not the founding myth, the myth of a full, undamaged origin that is self-present? To reverse, therefore, would not be to return to the origin, to pass into it, but simply to remain or resist. From a “fundamentalist” Heideggerian point of view, this resistance will appear “retarded,” (slow) not having taken the leap, deferring the moment of the True. But what if every instant, even the “flash” (*Augen-blick*) of the event (*Ereignis*), must defer “itself” and differ from “itself” and pass into an *Ent-eignis*? We must insist upon this: such is the different /differing step, the step deferring and differing from *presence* (proper, presence to and of the True).

In the “explanatory” exposition of the seminar devoted to his lecture “Time and Being,” Heidegger distinguishes two features of thought. Thought is understanding (*verstehende Denken*) and explication (*auslegende Denken*). Heidegger then immediately asks if, in general, explication (or interpretation: *hermeneia*) can characterize that thought in which taking up the question of Being once and for all is the issue. “Understanding” and “explic(it)ation” are structures of *Dasein* that are clearly exposed in *Being and Time*. The distinction is inherited from Dilthey and as such is only suitable up to a certain point. The structure of understanding and of interpretation is prerequisite for meaning or sense, is its pre-sense. It is anticipation as the donation of sense; but there is no

sense without Being-there, and, consequently, there is no Being without *Dasein*.<sup>332</sup>

That is why thought, in that it takes what is *given* to it into care and establishes itself in a relation of receptivity and thus of finitude, remains preparatory. It is preparatory in the double sense that it can never do anything but pre-dict [come before] what is already coming upon it, always taking it by surprise, and in that it comes from this very coming; that is, in the end, thought can never appear to itself, never think itself, but always spends itself in thinking itself because it is dispensed with by the very thing in view of which it is thought. The anteriority of understanding as the anticipating project of meaning is nothing but the result of the *a priori* of the donation itself. We thus understand Heidegger's insistence, his defense against expositions. Exposition is a secondary mode of explic(it)ation. It has to do with words and not with the thing itself. What is more, it is only interested in always disclosed beings. Even when apophantic, exposition remains derived. That is clear when I stand before a Klee painting or even when I hear a poem by Trakl. Neither one nor the other (re)presents anything that has already been disclosed. As concerns them, it is as though we were in the middle of New York City – we do not understand a thing. But at the same time, we are no less on the lookout for or concerned by what is happening. On the contrary, we are taken by something that understands *us* in advance, even though this thing is almost nothing at all, the “little piece of yellow wall” in front of which Bergotte died in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*. To be taken thus, dispossessed of self in order to attain a more

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<sup>332</sup> “Being (not beings) is something which ‘there is’ only in so far as truth is. And truth *is* only in so far as and as long as *Dasein* is” (BT, 272). The “there is” of truth has the mode and the meaning of the being of *Dasein* itself: “We must ‘make’ the presupposition of truth because it *is* one that has been ‘made’ already with the Being of the ‘we’” (BT, 271).

proper Self than one's self, such is the movement Heidegger has in view under the name *Ereignis*.

If only we could understand this word, a common word still in use in everyday German: event. Of course, Heidegger says that *Ereignis* is not an event in the sense that we speak of historical events, like the "European market." But can one withdraw entirely from common language? If *Ereignis* is a hapax that is entirely incommensurate to all common dwelling, is language not the "house of Being"? Or have we landed upon the intransmissible idiom, be it that of the proper itself? Things become even more complicated when we consider the peculiar way in which Heidegger de-composes the word (*Er-  
eignis*) and discovers in it the "proper" (*eigen*). Does this "proper" name therefore name what is most proper, the making-come into the proper? But we must not forget that all making-come is also an origin or provenance: *Er-eignis* "comes into its own," as word, through everyday language. This appropriation of language presupposed that in the before language is not proper. It is this very impropriety that makes all appropriation possible. In the same way, if we say that the *Ereignis* is a reciprocal connection of appropriation between Being and human beings, we say nothing at all inasmuch as neither (if we can even think them separately, in themselves) properly has a proper (or own) *before* this appropriation, and inasmuch as this appropriation is the event for Being as for human beings, the event that makes language itself "proper." Let us read the following passage from *On Time and Being*, where Heidegger comments upon "himself," seeking to make "himself" understood.



We understand this step at first as an “a-way from...” (*weg von*) and as a “toward” (*hin zu*). Thus, Heidegger’s thinking would be the movement away from the unconcealment of beings to go toward unconcealment as such, which remains hidden in unconcealed beings. Yet something completely different is thought in the title “Step back” (*Schritt zurück*). The step back draws back before, gains distance from that which wants to come close. The gaining of distance is a de-distancing (*Ent-Fernung*), the liberation allowing what is to be thought to approach. (*On Time and Being*, 32)

The *Schritt zurück* is by no means a “retrocession” toward a more proper ground, toward Being as “meaning and foundation.” It is not a question of disclosing what is withdrawing in what is approaching, Being in beings. It is rather a question of drawing back before this proximity, of gaining some distance, of liberating oneself not only from beings, but from Being as the Being of (or in) beings. *Ent-Fernung* is to be understood in a different way from in *Being and Time*, since it is not related to intraworldly beings. In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger uses the same word to explain the meaning of the step back. By *Ent-Fernung*, we free “the matter of thinking, Being as difference, and we let it present itself to us in a face-to-face that can remain without an object” (*Identity and Difference*, 55-56). Being as difference is not an object to be contemplated or re-presented by a subject; but it still present itself anyway, coming close, and for this reason, coming into its own/proper: into presence.

However, *Ent-Fernung* can also be thought as a distancing (that is, of beings or of Being as the Being of beings), for the *Ereignis*, the event, is that there is no Being or time except inasmuch as both are *not*, that is, inasmuch as they are dispossessed of all propriety/property. This formulation is still misleading, for to be dispossessed of what one has, one must first of all have that. Yet what is peculiar about the dispossession proper to the *Ereignis* is that it

takes nothing away, but on the contrary gives. To understand the event of appropriation, we must begin no longer to understand anything about it. We must be expropriated, though an expropriation in the sense of the *Enteignis* or *Entfernung* that liberates the distance *in* appropriation itself, opens a spacing there. This is not a simple alienation or even the process of a negativity. On the one hand, there is no result; and on the other hand, nothing is properly lost, or this loss announces what is proper to the gift – that it abandons itself entirely and without reservation, abandons itself in the gift and as gift. It is in this way that we must understand the forgetting of Being as its proper sending, its generosity: Being forgets itself in what is, and thus Being does not itself appear, or disappears in being. Being outdistances appearing, leaving it behind with a leap – with an origin, but an origin that ultimately cannot be exposed as such and in the light of the “as such.”

Insofar as the destination of Being now lies in the offering of time and insofar as both [Being and time] lie in the *Ereignis*, the proper feature is announced in the appropriating: namely, that it withdraws its most proper feature from endless unconcealment. If we think from the standpoint of appropriation, this means that it ex-propriates itself from itself in the aforementioned sense. Ex-propriation belongs to appropriation as such. By it [expropriation] appropriation does not renounce itself, but keeps its propriety/property.<sup>333</sup>

The “as” itself becomes indeterminable *as such*. It was first said to be “specious” (*verfänglich*). In other words, one could get caught there several times and in several senses, in several senses of being “caught,” as well (to be

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<sup>333</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, 23. The last sentence speaks in quasi-legal language: *Ereignis* does not renounce what is proper to it in the *Enteignis*; on the contrary, this is the only way for it to keep what is proper to it, in withdrawing what is “most proper” to it (*sein Eigenstes*) from the unlimited non-withdrawal. But what is kept is never hidden, is not a secret that could be exposed. It marks the limits, the finitude, of *aletheia*.

caught in a trap, or caught up in a text). Being as (*als*) *Ereignis* could signify, first, a new thesis on Being, a continuation of metaphysics, then. But if we take a step back, returning from Being as the Being of beings to Being as difference, then Being (as the Being of beings) is part o of the *Ereignis* and would even be a “genus of *Ereignis*” rather than *Ereignis* being a “genus of Being” (*On Time and Being*, 22). Why the conditional *would be*? Because, Being is not, properly speaking, and is not a genus; and most of all, because it could not be said properly, at least not with the verb *to be*. *Ereignis* “would be” perhaps... but cannot be (anything whatsoever) because it “may be” (gives” Being... as such. But by the same token, does it make sense to speak of the “as such” concerning what gives it being? Does it make sense to speak of *Ereignis* “as such,” properly speaking (and the “as such” is the mark of appropriation “taking place” in and as language, as it is put in *OWL*)?

Being disappears in the *Ereignis*. In the expression “Being as *Ereignis*,” the “as” now signifies: Being, letting come into presence destined in the appropriation [event], Time held in the appropriation [event]. Time and Being are evented in the *Ereignis*. And *Ereignis* itself? Can we still say something about the *Ereignis*? (*On Time and Being*, 22-23)

No, not really, not “as such.” Appropriation immediately turns into expropriation. But how does it happen that, turning into expropriation, appropriation *keeps* its propriety? Why do we say that “expropriation belongs to appropriation (as such),” if there is no appropriation “as such”? And why not say the reverse: “appropriation belongs to expropriation”? Is it because there is even *less* an expropriation “as such”? But is this not to recognize that appropriation “is” more than the expropriation that belongs to it, as the whole is bigger than the part? And does the movement of appropriation not recall the appropriation by sublation, *Aufhebung*? In alienating itself in the Other (not an other absolutely,

but already *its* other), appropriation could keep (*bewahren*) its Self, its Proper, so that in the end there is in fact no loss: the *Ereignis* saves “itself” through “its” *Ereignis*, its “most proper,” as the Absolute is saved by the negativity at the heart of its procedure of self-manifestation and self-production. And the property owner always reigns over the whole transaction (what is yours is already mine...). The property owner is not the same, to be sure; he is not an absolute subject, not a human being. Nonetheless, if there is *Ereignis* and if it gives Being, it is only on the condition that there is “someone” to receive this gift. Thus a human being, if we call him *Dasein* or not, takes the place of Being in taking the place of its event. The place-holder remains there like the only one who could “accept” this present, that is to say, let it be *spoken*.

In a note at the end of the essay “Différance,” Derrida writes:

Différance is not a process of appropriation in any sense whatsoever. It is neither its position (appropriation), nor its negation (expropriation), but the Other. Consequently,... no more so than Being is it a species of the genus *Ereignis*.<sup>334</sup>

The reason why difference, this difference that is “older” than ontological difference and thus Being, older because it does not belong to the age or to the “epoch” of the history of Being, cannot be sublated in Appropriation (a sublation Heidegger represents in the form of an *Austrag*, at once difference and conciliation) is simply that not only is difference (like its homonym) not, but it is not even an appropriate word, not a *name*.

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<sup>334</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 27.

“Older” than Being itself, such a *difference* has no name in our language. But we “already know” that if it is unnamable, it is not provisionally so, not because our language has not yet found or received this *name*, or because we would have to seek it in another language, outside the finite system of our own. It is rather because there is no *name* for it at all, not even the name of essence or of Being, not even that of “*difference*,” which is not a name.... What we know, or what we would know if it were simply a question here of something to know, is that there has never been, never will be, a unique word, a master-name.<sup>335</sup>

Before concluding, a conclusion that must remain open, and therefore will not conclude proper speaking, I want to give a final example of the name of the difference. As we know, the late Heidegger preferred the word *Unter-Schied* to *Differenz*. The difference between these two names for difference is not really important, since *Unter-Schied* names the same thing as *Differenz*, a “foreign” word in German that could be retranslated literally as *Austrag*.<sup>336</sup> In the last text of *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger tries to think *Unterschied* beyond ontological difference, as a difference between two “terms” that cannot be identified separately or, *a fortiori*, reduced to one another. *Unterschied* is, first, what carries (*trägt*), but in a double way. It carries to full-term (*austrägt*): *ein Kind austragen* means to give birth to a child, carry a pregnancy to term. *Post austragen* means to deliver the mail, and the *Austräger* is the postal carrier who delivers what belongs to x or y. *Austrag* is a delivery and a deliverance; but we can also take the very literally: to carry away, out of... (to its term or terminus). Thus, in carrying the letter or Being *from* Heidegger *to* Derrida, for example, something gets lost, a letter, at least, though a silent letter, true enough: the *e* in

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>336</sup> The only difference between *Unterschied* and *Differenz* is that *Unterschied* is more oriented toward sexual difference.

difference. But something is gained as well: this very mutism, or the step (not) gained.

The dif-ference carries out world in its worlding, carries out things in their thinging. Thus carrying them out, it carries them toward one another. (*PLT*, 202)

In delivering each, posted in the distance from the other, world (in its worlding) and things (in their thinging), difference brings them together, brings them into relation, carries them home, safe and sound, so that they correspond to each other, are appropriate and appropriated. They are appropriated by this very placing apart, and are not only appropriated but reconciled, reunited *in* difference itself, whose proper name is pain.

But what is pain? Pain rends. It is the rift. But it does not tear apart into dispersive fragments. Pain indeed tears asunder, it separates, yet so that at the same time it draws everything to itself, gathers it to itself. Its rending, as a separating that gathers, is at the same time that drawing which, like the pen-drawing of a plan or sketch, draws and joins together what is held apart in separation. Pain is the joining agent in the rending that divides and gathers. Pain is the joining of the rift. The joining is the threshold. It settles the between, the middle of the two that are separated in it. Pain joins the rift of the difference. Pain is the dif-ference itself. (*PLT*, 204)

I will limit myself to emphasizing the double movement that it itself structured into a single, uniting movement. First, *scheiden*, to cut or separate (since *Scheide* is a case, a sheath, and also a vagina, we must not forget), is to gather together by the very fact of separating. Then, and at the same time, tearing (it is also a tracing, a design – *Aufriss*) is a drawing *toward* the self, toward this very feature in which the differents are united (making it perhaps an

attraction of opposites), united not as likenesses (they are maintained at an extreme distance from one another), but jointed, folded into a single fold that *is* the very difference that, like a threshold or a between, keeps the differents at once separated and reunited. The possibility of a single support comes from “pain,” which acts as a pulling (*Zug*) and a relation (*Bezug*) but is *one* and has the very oneness of a support, and therefore a sort of subject. of course, this is not a human subject, although, even if Heidegger refuses to consider it psychologically, that it is substantialized or nominalized, pain would be open only to the beings that are capable of experiencing Being as such (animals have a “poor” experience of world). More important than this possibility of a subject hidden behind the name “pain,” more important even than the oneness of difference, is the final movement of reconciliation of the differents *in* difference itself. In the end, if difference expropriates (*PLT*, 206; *On Time and Being*, 29) the thing by delivering it to its other (the world), this expropriation, writes Heidegger in a way that recalls what he said about *Ereignis* in *On Time and Being*, removes, steals nothing from the thing: it removes the thing into its Proper: that a world remains. The essential word is “removes” (*enthebt*), in which we can hear an echo of *aufheben*.<sup>337</sup> We could translate it as “to depose.” But this time it is a question of a deposition as a deposit one makes at the bank.

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<sup>337</sup> “To depose” could be used to translate *Aufheben* to the extent that it unites a double sense that is both positive and negative. First, in the negative sense, to depose is to relieve someone (a kind, a prince, or a principal) of his duties. And it has a positive meaning, since to depose under oath is swearing to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”; it is to testify. It is just that the deposition is neither a positive nor a negative procedure because it does not aim to occupy or *take* another position. To take position is to take *a* position, to take it from the other, as in a war of “positions” or principles. But what does not change in this “taking” position is the position itself. The same thing takes place as in Nietzschean anti-metaphysics, when we (and we could include Heidegger in this “we”) summarily represent it as a “reverse Platonism.” The reverse is simply an other place, an other who *pretends* more than the other that he wants to move out of his position to retain the right to be there as head or leader.

The thing is delivered, placed in its Proper; from now on, you can count on it. Nothing will be lost of it, so we can sleep well.

The question remains: where does the central place given to man stem from in such a game? Does not the cohabitation of Being and the human, even if it not ontic, furnish the possible foundation of metaphysics? The human is close to Being, and vice versa, since it is to the human alone that the event (of presence) addresses itself. And if it already addresses itself in utterances, and even *as* speech, are we not back at the privilege that gives that definition, the *proper* name of the human: the being who “has” the gift of speech? Is not proximity, drawing near, the reign of language? Is it not what the metaphor of the “near” as “proper” betrays in turn? But is this really a metaphor, and what is a metaphor *properly speaking*? It could be said that the privilege of the human being does *not* reside in the fact that, among animals, humans are closer to what is.

On the contrary, Heidegger has shown since 1929 that *Dasein* is a “Being of the far away,” marked by distance. It is precisely in the opening of such a distance (of which death is the “proper,” that is to say, *also* the metaphorical, figure) that presence and proximity can concern humans, approach them more than any other being that is *caught* in the circle of the world-of-life. We might well ask what an experience of death as death signifies for a being that is never *in the first place* defined by its belonging to life. We must also recognize that it is only by way of this de-positioning of the “proper” name of the human into that necessarily more metaphorical or poetic name “mortals” that the cohabitation of the human and death can be understood. It can be understood thus, even though “death” escapes all comprehension, escapes all meaning, and thus, contrary to what Heidegger posited in *Being and Time*, escapes all more or less



hermeneutic “approaches.” That “death” makes no sense, does not adhere to common sense, at least, opens the possibility for an other sense, but only *as* possibility, eventuality. And at bottom (but there is not bottom, no foundation here, nothing for us to take hold of and to stem from), possibility is greater than reality, even though possibility *possesses* nothing either by right or in reality. Possibility is richer than reality in that the less it is realized; the bigger it grows, bearing a child in a certain way, but without a womb. Such *is*, maybe (for we *may* no longer say anything but *maybe*), the extent that tends toward these parts of the near and distant, when wanting-to-say is suspended in order to *want* only that: “maybe” may be said, may be (said) – without Being (being said).

## Chapter 18

### THE NAME OF BEING

That which is the most difficult to find is, as the proper and the near, what we must look for the longest. And as long as it is being looked for, it is never lost. Any hasty and hurried search is not a search but a wild wandering about from one thing to another. The constant suspense of meditation belongs to the search. Meditation is like the withheld breath of modesty facing the awaited marvel. The search properly speaking is a constant hesitation, not the hesitation of someone who is simply perplexed and indecisive, but the hesitating of someone who is simply perplexed and indecisive, but the hesitating of someone who dwells a long time, takes his time, looks in front of and behind himself, because he is seeking and dwelling in experience. The discovery and the appropriation of the proper are one with the dwelling of the step. (GA 52, 123-24)

Heidegger brought back a testimony from his brief stay in Greece that has recently been published under the title *Aufenthalte*, “Sojourns.”<sup>338</sup> It is an atypical text in which from the very first page descriptions that are reduced to the essential alternate with reflections guided by a fixed idea. Heidegger cites four lines from Hölderlin’s elegy “Bread and Wine” and asks “why Hölderlin did not need such an experience,” a “real” experience of the “world of the islands,” that is, of Greece. Hölderlin, who began with *Hyperion* (subtitled *The Hermit of Greece*), nonetheless writes clearly in the foreword to the novel, “As

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<sup>338</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sojourns*, bilingual edition, ed. & tr. F. Vezin (Paris: Le Rocher, 1992). Page references are to the German text, and citations have been retranslated from the German to English. I could not recommend too highly reading the translator’s afterword. It begins as follows: “By its intimate, ‘familiar’ character..., *Sojourns* is a text that surpasses commentary” (89). I suppose that is why we have the right to thirty pages of “notes.”

for the theater of action, it is not new, and I admit to having once had the naïveté to think of displacing it" (SW<sub>3</sub>, 5). If he did not do so, it is because he was persuaded that Greece was still the only *theater* "that was suitable for the elegiac character of Hyperion," in short, for "technical" reasons, literary conventions (SW<sub>3</sub>, 5). The "law of genre" imposed the Greek "canon," which was certainly not new, but for this very reason was proven and appropriate.

This is as much as to say that for the poet Greece is a *fiction*. This fiction serves principally to make "reality" – *German* reality – seen in its true light, that is to say, "as" someone Greek landed in modern times might see it (somewhat as Hölderlin asked, "How can one *be* German?"). The result is catastrophic indeed:

[They have been] barbarians for a long time, rendered more barbarian by their zeal, their science, and even their religion, which is profoundly incapable of *feeling* the Divine,...empty and discordant like the debris of a discarded vase. (SW<sub>3</sub>, 153)

Hölderlin did not need to see Greece, though not at all for the reason invoked by Heidegger: he had already "seen" Greece, recalled it through the coming of the "approaching god." No, what Hölderlin knew was that Greece – such as it *determines* our whole world in its advance – *does not* exist, has never been anything other than *our* invention. And he knew that it is from this fiction that *we* must be liberated in order to learn to make free use of the "proper," that is to say, of the *Greek in us*.

From the beginning, we are kindly reminded that "Heidegger was never a tourist." And yet it is indeed a *tour* – an organized cruise – of Greece that the thinker finds himself offered in the guise of a present by his faithful companion. It is a question of going "to see" and of going on a "tour" in Greece, in other

words, in advance, of a *return* [*re-turn*], a return to the sources of the “thought of being.” Heidegger did not decide to go and see this without reticence. He was afraid of being disappointed. Not that he expected a revelation, an exotic, foreign world. He did not go there to “disorient” himself. On the contrary, he went principally to verify his own experience, to encounter “ancient” Greece such as he imagined it but which he refused to believe was only pure invention, for then the “path of thinking” (*Denkweg*) would have been but a “path of mistakes” (*Irrweg*).<sup>339</sup>

We can be reassured that after a deceptive and even alarming beginning illumination will come. In Venice, the cultural and touristy place that remains “quite incapable of showing a path,” “everything was aged but not ancient.”<sup>340</sup> Everything was past, but there was no *Gewesenes*, nothing that remains for an expectation, a future. For if despite the fleeing of the gods and the devouring of its world Greece can still shine through its ruins with an incomparable brilliance, it is in accordance with that expectation, the glance thrown in front (*Vorblick*) that for Hölderlin metamorphosed what had been in a present, or, in his language as it is understood by Heidegger, in a tending-toward (*Gegenwart*). Expectation thus reigns over this voyage from the beginning. But expectation has its own roads. Here, it is not directed toward a future but toward a past, which is in itself already strange enough. What is sought is not situated

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<sup>339</sup> “Pure invention” translates *ein bloss Erdachtes* (*Sojourns*, 12). *Erdenken* has approximately the same meaning as *erdichten*, “to imagine.” Why would “imagination,” fiction, or invention belong to thought or poetry *less* than “pure” *Denken* or *Dichten*? And can we conceive of a thought *pure* of all “invention”?

<sup>340</sup> Venice becomes “tantalizing imagery for writers short on subjects” (*Sojourns*, 3) – more precisely, for disabled (*ratloser*) writers. This characterization is aimed at the author of *Death in Venice*, Thomas Mann, held in contempt for having preferred the United States to the rigor of the *Heimat* (home country).

in front of us but behind us. A glance that directs itself backward (*Rückblick*) is thus necessary, even though it is nothing other than the anticipatory glance.

How is that possible? It is position if what the glance is drawn toward and what is thus expected always already remains “in” view because it is at the very origin of the sight. Sight calls what is to be seen and makes it come, all the while giving it seat and foundation. The glance is drawn toward pre-sense, the already-seen [*déjà-vu*]: “We can, at any rate, only look for what we already know, be this in a veiled manner” (*Sojourns*, 2). This experience is in no way an adventure: we have come here only to seek confirmation of what we already know. And as a result, knowledge (since the Greeks) has always expressed itself as a having-seen, in advance, a re-cognition. Sight constitutes much more than a simple medium. It is rather the horizon at the heart of which Greece will be able to appear as what it was, this having-been that addresses itself at once as origin (but veiled, deformed by what has come after: technology) and the recourse to a possible “turning,” when the glance makes itself memory (*Andenken*) and not forgetting. In fact, what expectation is directed toward is not only already in view, but resides entirely *in* the view, or rather in what makes it possible, what bestows it. This is an essential nuance, for it makes the distinction between pure and simple description and experience, properly speaking. The whole question is thus *to see* – what seeing is.

Corfu, the first island “in sight,” offers nothing worthy of being seen: the first glance (*Anblick*) did not “want to coincide with what the poet figured in book VI of *The Odyssey*”: what had been felt and expected did not appear (*Sojourns*, 5). The landscape seems more Italian than Greek. The same disappointment returns at Ithaca: is *that* Ulysses’ home? Once again, what shows itself does not stick to the “image” (*Bild*) that the reader of Homer had

“before his eyes” (*vor dem Blick*) for a half century. But is it not therefore time to revise this image, to start seeing the thing itself directly, forgetting all presuppositions? Is that not the condition of all phenomenological experience? It is not a question of an “ideal landscape” or a “historical painting” (*Geschichtsbild*) that is just as ideal or bookish, but of a “world,” of a specific *Dasein*. As the phenomenological “principle of principles” puts it, then, to grasp the phenomenon, we must not only suspend all presuppositions, but put the observer between brackets, even if this is never totally possible. This is necessary, however, on the condition that we think in terms of observation. But that is what Heidegger refuses to do from the start.

There is no question of being an observer, even a faithful, competent, and cultivated one; sometimes he refuses to get out in order to “go and see.” In a certain way, he does not need to, since he has already seen or already has in view what he is going to see. But he does not need to because we are not dealing with the same vision. To observe is in advance to take what is going to appear in the field of vision as object, placed there-before for the subject. Thus, the observer sees nothing of what is op-posed to him except what he has proposed to himself. He sees nothing of the thing itself, sees nothing but pre-formed views-of-the-world. There is but a step from the observer (even the scrupulous, “objective” viewer) to the tourist, who sees nothing other than what is placed at his disposition by the (technical) device of putting-in-place.

Heidegger is not a tourist and does not want to be one. There is certainly a fair a fair bit of pride in this will to be separate from the herd. But Heidegger does not remain blind to tourism, which appears to him not only a plague of the era of masses, but first of all a sign of the technical transformation of our world. Still, it is through such a world that he himself sized up that he intends to

encounter the properly Greek world and *Dasein*. Far from putting himself at a distance from modern desolation, Heidegger consecrates long meditations to that desolation, meditations that appear displaced in such a framework, especially for an aesthete who would rather deal with nothing but the authentically Greek. From the perspective of a recollecting thought, of all its distance, which alone permits the proximity to what has departed but remains no less present in its own way, the aesthete and the tourist are but the two opposite and complementary faces of a single phenomenon, a bit like subject and object. Neither tourist nor aesthete, Heidegger intends to see Greece *itself*, such as it first was for itself and not for us, even though, by the same token, an “us” becomes accessible only through it. Ithaca still disappoints expectation, since instead of the Greek, “there we are in the presence of a piece of the Orient, of Byzantine” (*Sojourns*, 7) in the figure of the priest. Will Olympia, that magic place of celebrations “gathering all of Greece together,” be the site in which the encounter takes place? “But we have stumbled upon a completely ordinary village that new, half-finished buildings, American tourist hotels, disfigured still more” (*Sojourns*, 8).<sup>341</sup> This is a regrettable entry into [the] matter, all the more so since almost nothing remains of the site, only a few “powerful columns overturned by a superhuman force” (*Sojourns*, 8). This is an occasion to send the archaeologists back to their excavations: they cannot reach what was built there because, for the Greek world, building in no way signified

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<sup>341</sup> At Ithaca, on the contrary, it is not tourists who are welcomed by the natives but rather “the German guests” – not with open arms, to be sure, but with “a reserved smile.” Is it in remembering his stay in German, “in bygone days,” that the mayor shows himself so benevolent? In bygone days – should we say in better times, times when “guests” were at home *everywhere*, when Greece was “German”? Then the threat came from “tourists,” those Americans Heidegger described in 1942 as being like nihilists ready to destroy the *Heimat* (home country). But where does he come from, this most “disquieting of all guests” (*dieser unheimlichste aller Gäste*), whom Nietzsche described as being already at our door, deceitfully, perhaps having already *entered* into the most holy of holy places – our *home* or *Heim*?

constructing, piling even gigantic stone blocks one upon the other, but first of all meant blessing, consecrating. But the Sacred is not a matter of archeology, or, at least, is a matter of another archeology, that of a *logos* attentive to the *arche*, the initial *Anfang*, the great “beginning.”

A first flash of the awaited apparition shows itself not in the place itself but in the museum. But we know that the museum destroys presence through the (re)presentation that transforms it into a simple spectacle. Heidegger gives a precise example of this alienation: the pediments of temples were not meant to be seen face to face and at the height of humans but “from below and at a great height.” Thus, they were not for men, but “their appearing in a flood of calm addressed itself as an offering to the glance of the invisible god” (*Sojourns*, 10). Or is this glance of the invisible rather that of thought, a thought that chooses what it pleases to consider as properly Greek? It will disdain the Hermes of Praxitele, which is, however, of the highest quality, because it is no longer archaic but already close to the decline. Moreover, it is thought and thought alone that opens not only the glance but, first, the “horizon” (literally the circle-of-view, *Gesichtskreis*) within which the works and gestures of the Greek people must appear. Thus, even if he was not a sculptor, Parmenides makes the appearance of the temple possible.... Why? That will become clear soon. The glance is guided by thought, and thought is bestowed by the glance, but an other glance. Theater is one aspect of it, the theater of Epidauros, which is nonetheless reduced to silence. Moving back in time, the voyage arrives at the island of Crete. But there again, it is not the Greek that appears, but the “Oriental-Egyptian way of being” (*Sojourns*, 14). Ornamentation is associated with the enigma, so that Heidegger says, disconnected, “perhaps there is a direct relationship between the labyrinth and luxury” (*Sojourns*, 14). He responds with one of his constant resources, the recourse to the origin of words. “As adjective



*luxus* means that something is disturbed from its place, displaced and disconnected" (*Sojourns*, 15): dislocated. This dis-placement also presides in the "maze" (in German, *Irrgarten* – literally, a garden of mistakes in which one becomes lost). Cretan luxury, which we could reproach for its baroque spirit, though in removing the tormented character from the Baroque, wants to shine for itself: it is a pure brightness that has nothing to disclose or conceal.

At Rhodes, Heidegger straight out refuses to disembark. He wants to meditate, above all, on the proximity of the "Asian" and what it brought to the Greek world – an "obscure fire" "of which the flame was placed in clarity and measure" by the couple *Dichten-Denken*. This fire, for Heraclitus, animates the *kosmos*, which Heidegger, conforming to the origin of the word, thinks first of all as "finery," "the brightness that leads something to appear" (*Sojourns*, 17). This brightness is the gold of presence, of Being. But it itself, and with it what was waited for, the "great beginning," does not appear except at the moment in which the voyager disembarks on the island of Delos. Is it this island that instigates this "flash of (en)light(e)ning"? But Delos is desolated, nothing but ruins.<sup>342</sup> However, this abandonment is not a pure decline (*Verfall*). For a word, a demand (*Anspruch*), rises up, a statement that addresses – the awaited destiny. A promise. This statement is nothing other (we read with a certain astonishment) than the very name of the island that reveals itself as doubly proper, as the proper name of the Proper itself:

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<sup>342</sup> Another voyage, toward another Greek island, could leave us hanging: Baudelaire's "Voyage to Cythera": "What is this sad, black island? – It is Cythera,... Look, after all it is a poor earth." It is true that Heidegger did not see his image *hanged* upon a "symbolic gallows," and that he could not have seen (not even in a painting or poem) that "ridiculous hanged man" whose "eyes were two holes," not to mention his "collapsed chest" or guts "absolutely mutilated by a bird's pecking."

The island is named Delos (Ἄϐῆϊò): the Manifest, the  
Appearing, that which gathers everything together in its Open,  
that by its appearing conceals everything again in one present  
(*Gegenwart*). (*Sojourns*, 19)

It is not without use to recall the paragraph of *Being and Time* in which the pre-concept of phenomenology is determined: *legein ta phainomena*, “speak the phenomenon,” is according to Aristotle, *deloun* (ἀϑῆϊί), formed from the word *delos*, “manifest.” To say is to manifest. And this is what the island of Delos, in that it “is” what it says (in its proper name), manifests to the highest degree, on the condition, obviously, that we accept the etymology of the island at face value. But an ill-humored spirit who would once again denounce the recourse to false etymologies (as with the name of truth, ὕϑῆϊῃῃ) in order to make a bid for philosophical power would only demonstrate his own blindness in view of the blinding evidence manifested by the proper name, in its accordance with thought’s preliminary view. The awaited encounter took place because for once the name is *suitable*, is in accordance with what manifests “itself.” Olympia was no longer in any way Olympian, all the less so since the name had been misused and obscured by the modern “Olympic Games” that for Heidegger no longer had anything to do with the pan-Hellenic celebrations gathering the people together around their gods and not simply their athletes. Crete remained pre-Hellenic. Rhodes was the “island of roses,” but the roses are in no way specifically Greek or onto-logical. Ithaca was indeed the name of Ulysses’ island, but that was only a bookish reference.

To be a proper name, the name cannot simply designate in the manner of a signpost, remaining external to its signified; it must *be* the designated phenomenon. And it is all the more convincing or manifest that the name Delos is given as the name of phenomenon itself (the name of the Manifest). That this

be a sleight of hand, even that of a counterfeit, is of little importance: does not the homonymy suffice to sanction the discovery?

This is not, however, pure and simple nominalism. It is not because the noun means “manifest” that it manifests the “thing” as the manifest. There is neither cause nor effect here, but an encounter, an affinity that for a long time has been the very sign of truth. But is adequation (of the thing with the name or representation) not a concept derivative of truth and, as such, rejected as inessential in relation to the original truth, *aletheia*, which manifests precisely the onomo-logical manifestation of Delos? Or, rather, have we force the trait too much in accusing the name, and it alone, of being an opening-sign, of making a sign toward and thus disclosing the thing itself? Is it not Heidegger himself who writes that we are “barely” able to think “what conceals itself in the names of the island”? Is it not as sacred name that the island is the “sacred island,” the “Milieu of Greece”? What withdraws itself is a duality, a duplicity that nonetheless comes to crown itself in a single Fold, that of disclosing and of concealing, in the image of the double birth of Apollo and Artemis: brother and sister, in the adverse unity of a single, divided origin. Both the clairvoyant god, who all at once sends off his luminous trait, and his sister, who on the contrary, is at home, dwelling in obscure wildness, but no less lets her trait fly against whoever would attempt to see her naked, both have a unique way of being present: “powerful approach and sudden disappearance in the distance” (*Sojourns*, 19). Their common *Heimat* (home) is that of the trait, of the arrow that signs and shows (*Zeigende*). Shows what? In order to say that, we would need a “glance thrown in front,” beyond even what is given, present. This glance, which only poets and thinkers will have deployed, is accomplished as nomination: *Aletheia*. For it is *Aletheia* that looks, that is, addresses the glance and gives sight and thus the capability to name to all thought and poetry.

All poeticizing (*Dichten*) and thinking (*Denken*) is looked at (*angeblickt*) by it in advance. In this it is itself included in the looking ahead (*Vorblick*) of the mortal. *Aletheia* is glanced at (*erblickt*) but not properly thought in its Properness. Consequently, *Aletheia* remains unthought, unquestioned as to its provenance. (*Sojourns*, 20)

What were the Greeks lacking to think *Aletheia* in its properness? They indeed named it, and this name is itself the “authentic name” of Greek *Dasein*, the word properly speaking, since it is also the word for saying, be it *mythos* (here translated by *Sage*), then *logos*, which is itself concealing, “keeping the fundamental trait of *aletheuein*” (*Sojourns*, 20). But this trait is itself not truly thought; it remains out of the field... of sight, or of speech? After having identified *Aletheia* with the “hearth of the world,” after having linked this hearth to the Heraclitean “fire” that shines as a *kosmos* (the brightness and order of appearing) – which comes down to concentrating everything, what will later be called “truth, beauty,” and being, in the same horizon (that of the Same) – Heidegger, who has just found confirmation of his “long meditations” at Delos and thus can return satisfied, nonetheless feels the need to linger longer. His long preparation is finally going to open the glance and thus accord dwelling properly speaking: not in such or such a place (even though this is in its way a locality, a place-name: the very place of naming), but in the true locality of all place, the “dwelling in *aletheia*.” This experience holds a big surprise for us.

To make the experience of dwelling in *Aletheia* and of this latter as that which accord dwelling means the disclosing of the glance as the invisible in all things, which liberates every present in simply placing it in visibility and perceptibility and maintaining it there, in that invisibleness that, like unconcealing concealing, abstains from all sensible-materialization. (*Sojourns*, 22)

The dwelling of dwelling, the place of place, *Aletheia* is also the sense of sense, and of that sense perfection that is sight. As such, it is indeed the invisible in all beings, but also what makes all beings visible. But then, we do not see what the difference between it and the Platonic *idea*, it too invisible in that it is the source of all seeing, might be. In what would it differ from what modern philosophers call the *a priori*, and what I call pre-sense: what is in advance present in everything present, in that it gives sense and, here, visibility and perceptibility to everything? Does it not lead back to the ultimate metaphysical distinction of the sensible and the non-sensible (the “intelligible,” which means perceptible only by the meta-phor of the eye of the *nous*, of thought)? In what way would even the translation of *idea* as “idea” be unfaithful if such perception “abstains from all sensible-materialization [*Versinnlichung*]”?

Do these questions concern the “secret” of *Aletheia* or do they only show why this secret must escape even the Greeks, that is, that people that nevertheless had openly made its dwelling in the Open? What remains unthought in the Open? Its “provenance,” Heidegger says. But how can one ask “where” the “from where” of everything that comes (into presence) comes from? Can this retrocession toward the origin of the Origin only be envisages, and from what point of *view*? In what seeing does the invisible show itself? We get a first response in the oracular speech that has already been cited many times, that of the god of Delphi through the “mouth” of Heraclitus (fragment 93). Heidegger translates it thus: “it neither reveals nor conceals but shows.” “Showing,” *Zeigen*, is the key to the enigma because it is a “making seen that, as such, veils and keeps what is veiled” (*Sojourns*, 21). The important thing is this “as such”: to make seen is not to reveal the thing itself. It is to veil it in the given “view,” but at the same time this is not hiding either, sine what is given to

be seen is indeed the thing itself and no-thing else. The thing hides itself and shows itself at the same time; just as it itself is, like its open view, manifest. To hide would be the “Egyptian” mode in which everything refers to something else and in which sense finally always remains withdrawn, incapable of being found, like the exit from the labyrinth (which precisely has no outside: everything is labyrinthine).

On the contrary, for the Greek mode of existence everything is outside, exposed in an “open-view” (*Aussehen*), which at the same time permits the inside to be purely sheltered, invisible because *in* the visible, and nowhere else, the in-visible in everything (visible), and that is nothing other than the being-manifest of the manifest (the “as such”). But where the in-visible is most manifest (and thus most guarded) is in speech, precisely because it is in speech that exposed sense comes to *re-g(u)ard* itself without ever going elsewhere. Speech re-g(u)ards in that it indicates in its very saying what has already come out, manifest. But if everything is manifest, it is *as such* (as manifest) that it remains veiled. Speech, and moreover nomination, carries out this veiling, preserving the secret of unveiling. A name does not reveal what it names, but does not dissimulate it either. Rather, it “shows.” A name installs and *retains* what has come into Being in the light of the “as such” in which it can sojourn, stay, shine.

In Heidegger’s “sojourns,” this mysterious power of the name again finds a notable place, when upon leaving Athens the boat draws alongside the island of Egine. The name of the temple will be a guide:

Already the name of the arche-ancient divinity *A-phaia* – the non-appearing, withdrawing herself from appearance, the Disappearing – names what *Aletheia* says. Thus the goddess *Aphaia* keeps / guards the enigma of *Aletheia*. (*Sojourns*, 29)

The name keeps the secret. *Aphaia* is probably a terrestrial divinity, and the earth itself is thought by Heidegger as what refuses to appear, the Concealed. In “The Origin of the Work of Art,” the “truth” is said to be essentially terrestrial. A bit later, Heidegger cites a line from the poem “Greece,” where Hölderlin evokes Delphi in the figure of the “navel of the earth.” Nothing but ruins of Delphi, of its site, remain, Heidegger says: “The region itself discovered itself under the high heavens... as *the* temple of this place” (*Sojourns*, 31). The region opens the space in which mortals can institute their works because it keeps the secret: it is that a-part that makes sharing possible (*chora*).

Heidegger does not content himself with calling Greece the “world of islands.” Even though attached to the continent, Greece is entirely a single island. It is the magic moment of the departure that metamorphoses it thus: *Der Abschied von ihm wurde zu seinem Anknunft*, “the departure (the separation that takes leave of Greece) becomes its coming (its arrival)” (*Sojourns*, 33). Greece comes to dwell, that is, to situate itself in a delimited figure. Greece is an island in that it is separated from the rest of the world not by mountains but by the *departure* or sending of a destiny, the first destiny “as such” and therefore the only “great beginning.” This sharing has been assigned, that is to say, properly, marked by the Sign, the sign of the sign, marked “as such.” And it dwells and remains a sign even though the gods have departed. Greece opens the secret of a dwelling beyond the realm of technical equipment because the secret is *dwelling*, our future by the very fact that the glance remained suspended and thus kept there.

*Aletheia* is suspended forgetting: stopped, held in a stance, a stature or a statue, an erection. If we compare *A-phaia* and *A-letheia*, it appears that appearance is a theft, a disappearance. The presence of the most present, the Greek gods, is that of the ephemeral Greek “miracle,” of what is departed, of the deceased who precisely cannot come except in his departure, *Abschied*. Inversely, if *Aletheia* holds itself back from appearing, it is thus that it maintains itself: but for what destiny? That is nowhere said. And it must not be said, if saying signifies making-appear. Thus saying is a reserve in a double sense: a prohibition (to unveil the “secret” of disclosing) along with the resource that keeps the same secret in its a-phasic purity, a secret for which there is no place to be said and whose saying will not take place. The secret must not be said because this saying fails, if I may say so. But we will only be able to fail the word and thus betray the word’s lack, like its already exposed secret, as the most manifest, manifestness itself, Being. *Being is the name of the secret, as the name is the Being of the secret*. And the secret is nothing other than the name of Being, a name all the more secret for saying nothing, nothing other than what must be (secret) and fails Being (the Secret).



Chapter 19

EPILOGUE: THE UNITY OF HEIDEGGER'S THOUGHT

There is a certain plausibility in seeing the later Heidegger as essentially a poetic thinker. His own lectures on Hölderlin repeatedly draw attention to the kinship between poetry and thinking, even asserting that “thinking is a co-poetizing” – and, of course, the lectures on Hölderlin themselves demonstrate Heidegger's view that philosophy has important business amongst the poets. Not only this, but Heidegger's own thinking becomes increasingly “poeticized,” as in his description of the jug that, in the act of pouring, makes present the Founfold. In “The Thinker as Poet” (from the collection *From the Experience of Thinking*) Heidegger presents some of his characteristic thoughts in poetic form:

In thinking all things  
Become solitary and slow.  
(*PLT*, 9)

writes the thinker, in words that once more provoked Adorno's sarcasm.<sup>343</sup>

Also relevant in this context is Heidegger's translation of the Parmenides fragment, and the concern expressed in his discussion of its grammatical form to make us aware of modes of speaking and writing that elude the net of propositional logic (yet which, Heidegger claims, are not thereby unthinking or lacking in rigor).

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<sup>343</sup> T. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, tr. K. Tarnowski and F. Will (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 52.

In a very broad, sense, then, it might seem justifiable to see the later Heidegger as a poetic rather than as a narrowly philosophical thinker, whose genius (if genius it is) is to evoke, to suggest, to hint and to lure rather than to argue or to assert. Ambiguity and inconclusiveness are, in this perspective, not so much signs of Heidegger's failure to think clearly as part of the script. Two comments from Gerald L. Bruns nicely capture the quality I am trying to suggest.

His writings on language and poetry do not represent the unfolding of a theory. They are rather a lingering with a subject matter, where lingering means holding back, not seeking advancement or mastery, refusing to determine the subject conceptually, acknowledging Parmenides' judgment "that everything that lies before us is ambiguous."<sup>344</sup>

The folly of trying to follow closely... his later writings, comes out very forcefully when you try to stop, because there is no natural stopping place, no place of arrival, where everything falls into place and you can say, "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."<sup>345</sup>

If that judgment stands it will, of course, put Heidegger beyond consideration for some philosophers, and bring him into the orbit of deconstruction (as Bruns in fact argues).

Yet if the later Heidegger not only concerns himself with poetry but also lectures and writes in away that is, however loosely, describable as "poetic," this does not mean the simple neglect of philosophy. It is not as if Heidegger

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<sup>344</sup> G.L. Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings*. (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 150.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

has given up philosophy in order to devote himself to poetry. Rather, the move to a more poetic subject matter and form of expression is itself positioned by his understanding of the history and crisis of philosophy.

Does it follow from this that we must now change tack and, instead of categorizing Heidegger as a poet, charge him with subordinating poetry to philosophy? Is Heidegger, after all, simply re-enacting the Hegelian trope of seeing in art the “merely” external or sensuous form of inner, spiritual truth? Or, more subtly, the Schellingian approach that, while elevating the aesthetic intuition above all form of ratiocinative reflection, nevertheless turns art itself into a kind of philosophy? In other words, does positioning art philosophically inevitably mean deciding in advance on the question as to whether art and art’s figurative mode of expression are simply another way of expressing the same thing as philosophy?

Heidegger, however, consistently refuses to adopt any kind of hierarchization. The poet is not “higher” than the thinker or the statesman, or vice versa. All are equal but different. How, then, can we articulate that difference?

Heidegger’s way is, at this point, characteristically circular. Art may, at first, seem to be the more original, since it is art that, as active bringing-forth, first gives thinking its matter, i.e., something to think about. Language is the matter of thinking and the aim of thinking is to let language itself speak, but the essence of language, language’s own primordial speaking, is to be heard precisely in poetic diction. Yet – and this is where the argument turns back upon itself in a self-supporting circle – poetic diction is what it is as thought, since we could never say that there was a kind of poetry that was not already thinking. Poetry is never thoughtless in the manner of an animal or a stone,

although, as we have seen, the full meaning of the poetic word overreaches the poet himself. It is not something he possesses but is something spoken by him. In this respect the thinker has the possibility of understanding the poet better than he understands himself.

Heidegger, we know, had no problems with circular procedures in thinking, so we may not be able to hold out much hope of getting out of this particular circle. Nevertheless, we may take it to another level by recalling how, for Heidegger, thinking is always governed by what is unthought, and this in two ways. Firstly, all serious thinking is an attempt to reach beyond that with which we are already familiar, that which we already know, and to grapple with what we have not yet understood. Thinking, in other words, is aroused by puzzlement, by *aporia*. But, secondly (and this may be regarded as a particular application of the previous point) the unthought is what governs interpretation, in that the thinking interpretation of a great thinker does not seek merely to extract and reformulate the content of the work under consideration, but to look beyond the work itself to the original puzzlement that inflamed the thinker's own passion for thought. So, too, in the case of poetry. The thinking interpreter is not concerned solely with what the poet says nor even the how of its being said. What matters is the attempt to think what the poet himself did not think and did not say in the poem, what overreaches the poet's self-consciousness and the formal content of the work.

It might be objected that, even if this does not lead to a subordination of poetry to thinking à la Hegel or Schelling, it may nevertheless end by giving philosophy the last word. This is how Veronique F6ti, a stern critic of Heidegger's approach to poetry, sees it. "[Heidegger's] insistence on the essential unsaid as the unitary source of textual configuration repudiates

unreadability, the antidote to totalization.”<sup>346</sup> For Fóti it seems that the poetic element in poetry has to do precisely with the way in which poetry challenges our assumptions about meaning and “readability.” This is why, for example, poetry is the best language we have for addressing the tragic and for posing the possibility of the radical and irreconcilable rupture in consciousness highlighted by tragedy. It is for such reasons that she sees Heidegger’s failure to rise to the challenge of Auschwitz as symptomatic - a failure epitomized in his non-meeting with Paul Celan. Heidegger’s totalizing view, she says, insures in advance against any such fatal rupture in meaning.

Her remarks are, intentionally, hostile; but, looking at it from the side of philosophy, might we not argue, by analogy with Kant’s assumption concerning the intelligibility of the world as a whole, that philosophy does indeed have a duty to humanity and to itself to press the claims of readability and to refuse the opt-out of allowing in advance for any lacunae, any moments of sheer nonsense in discourse? And if this conjures up the shades of rationalistic hubris - we should not immediately conflate this insistence on meaningfulness with totalizing rationalism in a narrow sense. To insist on the principle of wholeness and to claim to have comprehended the totality are two very different things.

In this connection it is important once more to note that Heidegger’s distinctive way of defining the role of the thinker in relation to poetry focuses on the thinker’s search for what is unthought in the work, and this already puts a block on any simplistic reduction of the complexity and ambiguity of the work to any determinate system of meaning, idealistic or materialistic as the case may be. For the unthought, as we have heard Heidegger claim, is immeasurably

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<sup>346</sup> Veronique M. Fóti, *Poiesis-Sophia-Techne: Between Heidegger and Poets*. (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 1995), 46.

deep, and, as he also insists, every revealing is at the same time also a concealing: truth is untruth. The process of interpretation, then, cannot be brought to a halt by producing a final philosophical “truth” as the “true” meaning of the work. Every interpretation is provisional, but – and this, I think, expresses Heidegger’s philosophical commitment in a positive sense – the infinite delay in reaching an end to interpretation does not mean that we simply surrender the possibility of meaning. Thought is led ever onwards by the guiding conviction that there is something to be thought, something to understand in each and every poem or human production, in every experience of the world. Philosophy in the narrow sense of what is currently practiced in university departments of philosophy, will not, of course, be able to do all the work of interpretation, which will inevitably devolve upon the various disciplines, especially the interpretative disciplines of the humanities. Philosophy can, however (and, arguably, must) seek to stimulate the conscience, the will to meaningfulness, of the interpretative disciplines, to say “never give up on the effort to make sense, to understand, no matter how obscure, how uncharted, how tedious, or how impossible the search may seem.”

Seeing it like this brings Heidegger close to deconstruction, with its practice of breaking open any and every closed system of meanings, but it also suggests why Heidegger cannot be counted as a simple deconstructionist (and, perhaps, why deconstruction itself, or any theory or practice of sheer difference, cannot dispense with some kind of relation, however polemical, to the principle of meaningfulness). As Bruns puts it, if the later Heidegger is closer to Derrida than we often suspect (particularly when Heidegger is caricatured as the oracle

of a colossally inflated principle of Being), Derrida is also closer to Heidegger than many Derridians allow.<sup>347</sup>

In 1975, just a year before his death, the publication of a complete edition of Heidegger's works began. This edition will eventually comprise not only all of his previously published writings, but also a considerable number of unpublished manuscripts from various periods in his philosophical career and the lecture series that he presented at the universities of Marburg and Freiburg in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Since the first volume of this edition appeared, a considerable number of these lecture series have been published, and they constitute a resource of the first importance for anyone, and not just graduate students and scholars, interested in the evolution of Heidegger's thought. This is especially the case for those lecture series that fall into the period in which Heidegger was working out of the position he presented in *Being and Time* (1927), as well as those presented in the years immediately thereafter. In the present study of Heidegger's thought, I have drawn extensively on these new publications, and it is the main thesis of this chapter.

As the chapter title indicates, that thesis has to do with the unity of Heidegger's thought; by this I mean the unity of his thought through the "turning," or *Kehre*, that is usually supposed to separate the thought of the later period from that of *Being and Time*. It has become common practice among interpreters of Heidegger's philosophy to base themselves mainly on the writings that follow this turning, and even to push the divorce of the later from the earlier writings to the point of consigning *Being and Time* to a suppositious "Cartesian and Kantian" period in Heidegger's philosophical career.

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<sup>347</sup> G.L. Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings*. (New Haven CT and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 198.

There was, however, no such period; and it is my contention that if we misconstrue *Being and Time* by assimilating its distinctive theses to those of modern transcendental subjectivism, we will not be able to understand the character of the reorientation of Heidegger's thought that did in fact take place from the mid-1930s onward. In asserting the unity of Heidegger's thought, I am not, therefore, denying that such a reorientation took place. What I am saying is that the discontinuity that this reorientation involves can be understood only against the background of an even deeper continuity that runs through all the periods of Heidegger's thought. I also try to show that the central concepts of *Being and Time* survive that reorientation instead of simply being replaced, as is now often assumed, and that it is the way the relationship between certain of these concepts is reconstrued that accounts for the sharply different tonalities of the later writings. There were, I argue, serious difficulties connected with the ontological theses of *Being and Time*; and Heidegger, who was certainly never very open about the emendations of his own theses that he undertook, appears to have responded to these tensions within his own conceptual scheme by shifting the weight of emphasis from one term to another within his central distinctions. He did not, however, abandon the distinctions themselves or – what would have amounted to much the same thing – the requirement that each term in these distinctions be linked to the other. It is this fact that obliges us to reject the prevailing interpretations of the *Kehre* as a replacement of one set of concepts by another.



### A. The Unity of *Dasein*

*Being and Time* begins with an evocation of the question of Being, and it is made clear that it is the concept of Being as such that the book as a whole is to be concerned with. In the portions of the book that were published, however, Heidegger was concerned mainly with another matter that was said to be a necessary preliminary to the question of Being, and this was the question about the character of the entity that ask the question of Being. This was the entity to which Heidegger gave the generic name "*Dasein*." The analysis of *Dasein* is the topic with which the first of the two sections of Part I that we have deals. Even the second, which is entitled, "Dasein and Temporality" and in which the concept of temporality was to prepare the transition from *Dasein* to Being as such, really extends that analysis without making it all clear how the transition itself would take place. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that Heidegger's references to Being as such in *Being and Time* have been treated as unredeemed promissory notes, or that many commentators have concluded that the concept of Being could not be reached by the route through *Dasein* that Heidegger chose to follow in *Being and Time*. Once this conclusion is accepted, it is taken to explain Heidegger's failure to complete that work; and his subsequent writings come to be viewed as setting forth a conception of Being that is altogether independent of *Dasein* and that can be approached only by a quite different route of thought. The trouble with this view is that by treating Being as something that lies beyond the horizon of *Being and Time* as we have it, it runs the risk of confusing what Heidegger means by "Being" with various traditional concepts of being that he explicitly repudiates. In fact, there are a number of characterizations of being as such in *Being and Time*, and these make it quite clear that what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks of being as such is

something radically different from the traditional notions that the term is most likely to bring to our minds.

The distinctive features of Heidegger's construal of Being as such in *Being and Time* can best be delineated in terms of the contrast between Being and entities that he establishes there. He tells us that, for his purposes at least, Being is always the being of entities, but that it is not itself an entity. When he says that Being is always the Being of entities and amplifies this statement by saying that Being is what determines entities as entities, it would be natural to suppose that Being must be the defining and thus the essential property of entities – that which *makes* them entities. It seems quite clear, however, that when Heidegger denies that Being itself is an entity, he is also excluding the possibility of its being understood as what we ordinarily mean by the notion of a property of an entity. From the lectures of the period we also know that Being as such is prior to the fateful distinction that Western philosophy has made between Being as essence and Being as existence – a distinction that, in Heidegger's view, preempts any further inquiry into the unitary sense of Being as such that it presupposes.

But if Being as such is not itself an entity or a property of an entity, in what sense can it be the Being of entities as Heidegger insists it is? *Being and Time* does not contain an explicit answer to this question. What Heidegger does say is that we must approach Being as such through an inquiry into a certain kind of entity that is privileged in its relation to it. This entity is *Dasein*; and it is extremely important to understand that while this is the generic name for a kind of entity, there are indefinitely many entities that belong to this kind. These are the same entities – extensionally – that we ordinarily refer to as human beings. If there ever was an real question about the plurality and individuality of the

entities to which Heidegger applies the term “*Dasein*,” that question is unequivocally settled in the lecture by the man locutions – among them *ein Dasein* – that Heidegger uses there and that make sense only on the assumption that there are many such entities.<sup>348</sup> What is of most immediate relevance with respect to the character of this entity, however, is the fact that it not only asks the question of Being, but does so out of a prior inarticulate familiarity that it has, Heidegger tells us, with Being as such.

This claim on his part is subject to serious misconstrual if we assume that “being” here is to be taken in some traditional sense as essence and that Heidegger is therefore asserting that we have a preconceptual understanding of the *summum genus* under which the entities that make up the world – ourselves included – fall as so many kinds. What he is really saying is quite different, and it is something that is both logically prior to and presupposed by any such typically metaphysical claims as this. What is distinctive of the kind of entity that *Dasein* is, is in the first instance the fact that other entities are there for it in a way in which no entity – Heidegger’s example is a chair and a wall – is ever there for another such entity that is not of the *Dasein* type. His way of expressing this foundational fact about *Dasein* – itself an expression that means “being-there” – is to say that *Dasein* is in the world in the mode of spatial inclusion do not. To this, it should be added that the entities that are there for *Dasein* are there *as entities*, and it is this fact that is of primary importance for any effort to understand the sense in which being as such is the Being of entities. The fact that they are there as entities is something that can be understood only by reference to the special character of *Dasein*, which is such

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<sup>348</sup> Textual references illustrating Heidegger’s use of “*Dasein*” as the name of a particular can be found in *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* by Frederick A. Olafson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 62, 269.

that it “uncovers” or “clears” entities, and it is as so uncovered or cleared that they become part of the world in the very special sense of that term that Heidegger employs. The world in this sense is not just the totality of entities as it is ordinarily held to be. It is the totality of entities as uncovered or “present.” This notion of presence is the most general term that Heidegger uses to convey the status that accrues to entities that are uncovered or cleared, and in his lectures from the period of *Being and Time* he uses the terms *Praesenz* and *Anwesen/Anwesenheit* for this purpose. The first of these later drops out of use, but the latter was to remain a central concept of Heidegger’s philosophy in all its periods and, it must also be said, a prime source of confusion as to his intentions in his use of the concept of Being as such.

The formulation that I have found most helpful in trying to express what I take to be the main thesis of *Being and Time* is to say that existence as the mode of Being of *Dasein* is the ground of presence as the mode of Being of the world and of entities understood as forming part of the world in Heidegger’s sense of that term. The term “existence” is also being used here in a very special sense that draws heavily on its Greek etymology, which has to do with standing out or outside. In this sense of “to exist,” not all actual entities can be said to exist. But only those entities that have a world and uncover themselves as so uncovering other entities can be said to exist in this sense, a sense that is substantially the same as that of the concept of transcendence, which Heidegger also introduces in this context. Just how this dependence of presence upon existence is to be understood is a complex matter, and it is made more so by the active and free character of the entity that is *Dasein*. The world or *Dasein* is the milieu not just of presence but of possibility as well and, more specifically, of the possibilities that correspond to the choices a particular *Dasein* can make and to the action it can perform. Precisely because *Dasein* is conceived in these terms, it might

seem tempting to suppose that among other things that it does is its grounding of presence. Such a claim, however, would invite a dangerous confusion between the ontic and the ontological levels of *Dasein*'s agency – the kind of object confusion in fact that makes it seem proper to speak of that grounding as a kind of creation or production of presence by *Dasein*. The point here is that *Dasein* has no choice at all about its Being-in-the-world or about its active character – it's unavoidably having to do this or that if only through inaction – and so, although choice and action are central to the way existence grounds presence, *Dasein* grounds presence no matter what it does. It does not, in other words, have the option of *not* being in the world and thus of not choosing or acting and not grounding presence, so it is inappropriate to speak of these ontological features of *Dasein* as though they were ontic matters and as though grounding presence were comparable to this or that action which it undertakes or not as it pleases. Or to make the same point in still another way, it is made quite clear in *Being and Time* that a certain kind of entity – *Dasein* – is always and necessarily linked to something that is not an entity at all, namely, presence.

In *Being and Time* it was already evident that Being, as Heidegger interprets it there, is tied to *Dasein* and thus to existence in much the same way as the world, again in Heidegger's sense of the terms, is. As he puts it, "Being is only in the understanding of those entities to which an understanding of something like being belongs"; and these entities are, of course, those to which the concept of *Dasein* applies (*Being and Time*, 228; *Basic Problems*, 19; GA 24, 25). This thesis is asserted with the greatest possible emphasis in the lectures of the period; in fact, Heidegger goes so far as to speak of Being itself as "existing," that is, as having the mode of being of *Dasein*. He even declares that "Being is grounding in an entity, namely *Dasein*" (*Basic Problems*, 229; GA 24, 318). It is also made explicit in the lectures that Being itself is presence,

the presence of entities to the kind of entity whose mode of being is existence and that therefore grounds the presence of those entities. Now this thesis that equates Being with presence has given rise to a good deal of confusion, because it has not been distinguished from another formulation of what sounds very much like the same thesis but in fact is not and serves quite different purposes. I am referring here to the fact that Heidegger on occasion cites the equating of Being with presence (*Anwesenheit*) as a misconception of Being that he accordingly rejects. Thanks to the publication of the lectures from 1927, which contain the substance of what Heidegger evidently intended to include in the crucially important third section of Part I of *Being and Time* – the section called “Time and Being” that was never published – we are now in a position to understand how both these positions taken by Heidegger are compatible. The equating of Being with presence on the part of the Greeks was faulty because they did not have any understanding of the temporal character of Being. They simply equated presence with the present tense and the Now; and the conception of time that was worked out by Aristotle, and that determined the course of all subsequent Western thinking about time, construed time as a manifold of Nows. As Heidegger tries to show in a long analysis of the Aristotelian theory of time that introduces his own treatment of time and being, this altogether obscures the distinctive character of the Now, which is at once a “having been” and an “about to be,” and is thus closely bound up with both the past and the future.

I will not try to do justice here to the richness of Heidegger's constructive account of what he calls the “phenomenological chronology of Being.” What is of fundamental importance in it for the purposes of this study is the notion that Being cannot be identified with the “is” of the present tense, no matter how disguised, or with the mode of presence that corresponds to it. Instead, Being is

complexly articulated in the way that the system of tenses expresses, and there is no possibility of simplifying this complex ordering in favor of a single one of its modalities. The analysis of this articulation of Being into its various modalities is ontology; and perhaps the most radical claim that Heidegger makes is that ontology has an essentially temporal character. This is because the distinctions it explicates among the modalities of Being – between the “is” and the “is not” and between “is possible” and “not possibly” – have to be understood in temporal terms. The articulated structures of Being are thus inextricably bound up with the distinctions of the past, present, and future that are comprised in our own temporality as this was characterized in *Being and Time*. What “is,” is thus necessarily what will have been; and what is, is also what has or has not been and what will or will not be. But these temporal qualifications of the articulations of Being also articulate presence, which is, therefore, not just a matter of the static immediacy of the present tense. To put this point in a maximally paradoxical way, presence also comprises absence. It takes the form of the “has been” and “will be” as well as of the “is,” and the Being of the entities that form part of the world of *Dasein* is understood in just this ecstatic mode that characterizes the temporality of *Dasein*. In psychological terms, we would speak here of “memory” and “expectation,” but it is just this psychological mode of description that Heidegger avoids because it obscures what most needs attention for the purposes of ontology. Instead, he speaks of the presence of such entities as the presence-to-the entity – *Dasein* – that is itself temporal in the way that makes this presence possible. This presence is also declared to be the *Being* of those entities, once it is accepted that the concept of Being is complexly articulated in the manner that has been described and that corresponds to the set of temporal distinctions that *Dasein* itself deploys.

It may be helpful at this point to relate these theses of Heidegger to a controversy that has been going on for a good many years in our own philosophical province. This concerns the issue as to whether the world is made up of things or of facts. The more widely accepted view at the present time is, I think, that the world is an aggregate of things or, as Heidegger would say, of entities, and that facts or states of affairs are not to be included among the contents of the world but rather viewed as being in some sense the artifacts of language. Since the "is" that is an essential constituent of facts and states of affairs is assumed to belong most naturally in a proposition, and propositions, for these purposes at least, are taken to be somehow outside the world that is an aggregate of things, it is thought proper to deny any such prepositional character to the world and to the things that make it up. There is reason to think that the notion of "language" as it occurs in this context may be a pseudonaturalistic stand-in for the transcendental and thus extramundane subject that philosophers are now unwilling to acknowledge as such but nevertheless continue to cultivate under more discreet terms of reference such as these. However that may be, it is clear that Heidegger holds just the opposite view, namely, that the world is made up of states of affairs, usually of highly pragmatic character, and that the very possibility of presence is bound up with something's *being* something or other. He also denies with great vigor any suggestion that this "is"-character is in any way a projection, linguistic or otherwise, of a subject that would thus have to be understood as having a prior familiarity with mere things; and he does so in a way that is somewhere reminiscent of Sellar's insistence on the rock-bottom prepositional character of the datum.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> See, e.g., his essay, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality*, (New York: Humanities Press, 1963).



Whatever one's stand on this issue, it must be acknowledged that it is extremely difficult to adhere with absolute consistency to one or the other of the two rival views. There are, after all, considerations on both sides that cannot be simply dismissed. Even Heidegger himself turns out in the lectures to be less than completely consistent in his espousal of the view that the world is the totality of pragmatic involvements (*Bewandtnisse*) – these are surely states of affairs – and he goes so far as to speak of entities or things as coming into the world and taking on the character of instrumentality, or *Zuhandenheit*, that is, a becoming part of states of affairs. Clearly no one could speak in this way without some kind of understanding of entities as independent of any being – any “is” – that may supervene upon them. But if we so understand them, they can hardly be denied a place, if not in “the world” as Heidegger wants to use that term, then in the world as it is ordinarily understood. It should also be noted that if he wants to speak in this way, Heidegger must have been using both concepts of world without acknowledging that this is the case, and that would amount to a grave incoherency in his scheme.

A discussion of these matters occurs in a lecture series from 1929-30 published as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitariness*. This discussion is of quite exceptional interest because in it Heidegger takes up the question of the independence of Being from, and its dependence on, *Dasein* in terms of just this contrast between entities and entities qualified by the “is.” This contrast itself is first placed in the closest possible relationship to what Heidegger calls “‘is’-saying” (*“ist”-Sagen*), that is, to saying that “this is such and such, [that] that is, [that] that is not so and that is” (GA 29/30, 518). This “is”-saying expressly includes both saying *what* something is and saying *that* it is, and the “is” occurring in both is therefore more fundamental than the distinction of essence and existence that emerges

from it. The distinction between Being and entities is thus constantly made use of by us, but without our having any explicit understanding of what this distinction really involves. From this Heidegger concludes, “it is now *we* [who] bring about [*vollziehen*] this distinction; instead it happens [*geschieht*] with us as the primal happening [*Grundgeschehen*] of our *Dasein*” (GA 29/30, 518-19):

If this distinction did not happen, then we could not even, in obliviousness to the distinction, devote ourselves, initially and for the most part, to entities alone. For precisely in order to experience *what* and *how* an entity in each case *is* in itself as the entity that it is, we have to understand already, even though not conceptually, matters like the What-ness [*Was-sein*] and the That-ness [*Dass-sein*] of entities. This distinction not only happens continuously; but it must [also] have already happened if we desire to experience entities in their being-such-and-such [*So-und-so-sein*]. We do not learn – and certainly not subsequently – anything about Being from entities, wherever and however we come at them, stand *already in the light of Being*. Taken metaphysically, the distinction thus stands at the beginning of *Dasein* itself.... Man thus always stands in the possibility of asking: What is that? And is it really or is it not? (GA 29/30, 519).

The essential point these passages make is that Being, in the distinction between Being and entities, is coordinate and coeval with *Dasein* and that *Dasein* is accordingly always already conversant with the What and the That as implicit articulations (*Gliederungen*) of entities and thereby of its world. Plainly, Being, so understood, is in no sense the creature or the handiwork (*Gemächte*) of *Dasein* or man, and in this sense Being may be said to enjoy the independence vis-à-vis *Dasein* that Heidegger is so concerned to preserve. The status thus accorded to Being, moreover, does not require any duplication of the presence or clearing that is constituted by *Dasein*. It is also evident that within the one clearing – the one world – that is effected by the “happening” of this

distinction between Being and entities, the truth character of Being stands in an intimate relationship to the articulation that the “is” in all its modalities brings to entities. This is not because, as might ordinarily be supposed, truth is a property of propositions and thus presupposes the logical form of the latter. Heidegger’s claim is rather that, in the world as the milieu of presence in which we have to do with them, entities always already *are*, in the several modalities of which the verb “to be” that eventually expresses them is susceptible. Truth, as the presence of entities in what might appropriately be called their “be-ing,” is thus both prepredicative and prelogical in the sense of being prior to language and judgment. It is not, in other words, as though, apart from language, presence could only be a beam of light playing over an unstructured entity or thing. What is present is always an entity as such and such, and it is as be-ing such and such that it is understood. This apple, for example, is understood as being here in front of me and not in the bag I left in my car, and this pencil as not making a dark enough mark on the paper. The difference between an entity and an entity’s be-ing, whether in the mode of the What or the That, is thus not one that arises with the insertion of entities into propositions by language. It is one that is implicit in any form of presence as such. In presence, something is *there* and it there as a such and such. Neither its being there nor its being such and such – what we eventually conceptualize as its existence and its essence – can be simply identified with the entity in question itself. The picture of a presence to which “logical form” would have to be subsequently added with the advent of language is therefore mistaken, at least in the sense that it treats such form as something wholly new for which there is no analogue in presence as such.

What I find so impressive in this discussion is the sensitivity Heidegger shows to the considerations that motivate both sides in the controversy about

Being and entities or, in our dialect, between facts and things. The view he defends here is essentially the same one that he formulated in *Being and Time*, but it is expressed with more care and with a notable avoidance of those adaptations of ontic verbs like “to project” (*entwerfen*) to ontological purposes that tended to give a *Nietzschean* flavor to so much of what was said about the various functions of *Dasein* in that work. I, for one, could wish that Heidegger had persevered in this kind of ontological analysis rather than resorting to the quite different strategies he was to adopt in his later period for avoiding just these excesses and the ambiguities to which they give rise. I will say more on this point later, and I will try to show what the significance of these considerations was for the evolution of Heidegger's later manner. What I want to emphasize first, however, is that quite apart from this source of potential difficulty, and even if Heidegger had maintained the eminently balanced style of the lectures I have just referred to, there were serious difficulties in the way of the position he had set forth in the period of *Being and Time*. The source of these difficulties lies in the period of *Being and Time* that the rapprochement of Being as such with existence, and thus with *Dasein* as the entity whose mode of Being is existence, had become so close as to be virtually complete. The extent of that rapprochement is indicated not only by the fact that both Being and truth are declared to *exist* and are thereby assimilated to the mode of Being of *Dasein*, but also that they are both characterized as finite and so akin to *Dasein* in this fundamental respect as well. It is, in other words, quite possible that there should not be any being or any truth; and if there were no *Dasein*, there could not be. But if there is no gap between Being as such and *Dasein*, how can it any longer be maintained that Being is not an entity as *Dasein* is? Notice, by the way, that the same question arises in the case of Heidegger's treatment of the concept of the world, which is also said not to be an entity and nevertheless is explicitly made an ontological appendage of *Dasein* – that is, dependent upon

the existence of the latter as a kind of entity. It is important to not in just this connection, where the dependence of the world upon *Dasein* is so unambiguously asserted, that Heidegger is at some pains in his lectures to make it clear that the dependence runs the other way as well, and that man (*der Mensch*) would not be man in the sense of *Dasein* unless he had a world, world being defined more as one's experiential totality.

Even so, in the period of *Being and Time* it is the dependence of Being as presence upon *Dasein* – an entity – that is far more emphatically insisted upon, and what that emphasis does is to endanger the status of Being as not itself an entity. More specifically, the source of the difficulty in both these cases is that Being as such is singular and common (*koinon*) as the world also is, while *Dasein* is plural and particular; and if Being is to retain these characters, it quite obviously cannot be identified with each individual *Dasein*. If each *Dasein* itself constituted Being as such and thus its own milieu of presence, there would be a plurality of such milieus and the sense in which singularity and commonness could qualify Being as presence would become wholly mysterious. One alternative here would be to say that Being in Heidegger's sense is independent of *Dasein* as such. Being as presence does not, after all, begin to exist with the birth of a particular human being, and it survives the death of each one of us, as long as we are replaced by others. It is a real question, however, whether in *Being and Time* Heidegger had developed the conceptual instruments he would need to give an account of the dual status of Being as both independent of individual *Dasein* and dependent on *Dasein* generically and collectively. Such an account would have to rest on a much more strongly developed theory of *Mitsein*, or "being-with," than Heidegger ever actually developed, and though I have tried to show that the elements of

such a theory are in fact present in the writings and lectures of that period, they were not developed in this direction.

### B. Heidegger's Theoretical Difficulties

It thus appears that the fundamental difficulty facing Heidegger in attempting to effect the turn to the theory of Being as such was that he had associated Being too closely with individual *Dasein* and as a result was unable to reconcile the singularity and unity of the one with the plurality of the other. But to this difficulty there was added another, to which I have already alluded. The Heidegger of *Being and Time* had made the world and thus Being as presence a space of possibilities and of possibilities that were coordinate with the *Selbstheit* – the “selfness” – of *Dasein*, and Being as such therefore had to be understood in the closest possible connection with the projects of individual *Dasein*. The freedom in which such projects are generated, and the indefinitely extensive variety of content by which these are characterized, unquestionably add a further dimension to the problem of safeguarding the unity and singularity of Being as presence, although it does not seem that this would be an insuperable difficulty for a deeply conceived theory of *Mitsein*.

As things turn out, however, Heidegger dealt with this difficulty by simply dropping the active and projective character of *Dasein* from his theory of Being as presence from the mid-1930s onward. This profound and fateful shift was never acknowledged or explained, and this circumstance makes it very difficult not to conclude that the reasons for it lay in Heidegger's life as it intersected the events of the time rather than in any necessity revealed by philosophical reflection. It is certainly significant that the shift toward the

quietism of the later period came immediately after the one deplorable sortie that Heidegger made into the public world; and it has seemed obvious to those who, like Hannah Arendt, were close to Heidegger that this new quietism was his reaction to the inevitable disappointment of his naïve expectations that the Nazi revolution would somehow proceed under the banners of resoluteness and authenticity. In philosophical terms, however, his way of dealing with the difficulties generated by his conception of presence as grounded in existence was to distance the former from the latter. This meant reorienting his conception of Being in such a way as to assert as complete an independence of Being from entities as possible. More specifically, it mean making Being as presence independent of kind of entity – *Dasein* – in whose mode of Being – existence – it has been grounded

If this is the way the turning through which Heidegger's thought passed is to be understood, then one could appropriately formulate its import as the thesis that presence is the ground of existence rather than the other way around. What is of most fundamental importance, however, although it seems to have been largely missed in the critical literature, is that the concept of Being does itself change. From the *An Introduction to Metaphysics* in 1936 to *Time and Being* in 1962, Being as such is identified with presence. It follows that the whole picture of Heidegger's philosophical evolution that represents him as having tried to reach Being as such by the route of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*, and then, after failing in that effort, setting out again by another route, is simply wrong. The change that occurs is that Heidegger from the mid-1930s on tries to conceive Being as presence in such a way as to keep it clear of just those features of entities – that is, of *Dasein* – that would endanger its unity and singularity and commonness. This is a momentous shift, but one that is compatible with and

ensures the kind of continuity in his thought that I have in mind in speaking of the unity of Heidegger's thought.

One of the things that make it harder to discern what is going on in Heidegger's later writings and often effectively obscures the central difficulty I have just described is the philosopher's preoccupation with another related but nevertheless quite different theme. In *Being and Time* it was argued that there is a constitutional disposition on the part of *Dasein* to avoid acknowledging the distinctive character of its own mode of Being, and to do so by assimilating itself to the mode of Being of entities within the world. As Heidegger puts it, *Dasein* understands itself as a special kind of "spiritual thing." This effort of self-obscuration is associated with an ontology of substance, and especially of mental substance, that has the serious disadvantage of making the existence of an "external" world problematic, since the only immediate objects of "consciousness" – another concept that goes with the contrast between the outer and the inner that this ontology generates – are the inner states of this mental substance, which are supposed to represent that external world, but without our ever being able to be sure whether or not they really do. What has just been described is, of course, the Cartesian scheme of which the cornerstone is the "worldless subject." It is this "interpretation of the Being of consciousness" that *Being and Time* criticized and replaced with a radically different conception of the subject – the "existing subject," as Heidegger puts it – as *Dasein*. There was, however, nothing in this powerful critique of Cartesian subjectivism to suggest that human agency was in any way the source of the special locus of this kind of subjectivism; as has already been pointed out, in *Being and Time* such agency plays a central role in the project character of Being as presence.



From the mid-1930s onward Heidegger greatly expands his conception of philosophical subjectivism, and he does so in such a way as to include within it every conception of human agency as having any such role in the constitution of the Being of entities. Such conceptions are now associated with the modern aspiration to be the final judge of what is and what is not, and thus to create or produce Being itself. Heidegger does not, of course, say that this is what he himself came close to doing in *Being and Time*, but in some of his rather cryptic remarks about the reasons for not completing that work he seems to imply as much. It looks very much as though Heidegger, in a period of sharp disillusionment with human agency, resorted to quite drastic expedients to avoid these ambiguities. Instead of working out more carefully the relevant distinctions within a theory of *Dasein* as coeval with Being as presence along the lines sketched in his lectures entitled *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, he appears to have simply severed the ties that link agency to the understanding of Being and to have made the relationship of human beings to Being as presence entirely a matter of receiving something that agency has no part in constituting. Moreover, human agency in almost all its forms – especially those of modern technology – is now described in a way that associates it with the obscuration of Being as such through the substitution for it of all the many surrogates that modern thought has proposed: the Will to Power, the World Spirit, and so on. Characteristically, even this perverse exercise of human agency is not finally allowed to retain the character of an action imputable to human beings. Instead, Heidegger insists it is a part of the history not of man (*Mensch*) but of Being itself, which in a certain epoch – our own – announces itself by withholding itself; and it does so in a way that is quite beyond our control.

Although all of these matters – especially the many facets that the eclipse of Being assumes – dominate most of the later writings, they by no means exhaust the philosophical significance of the later writings. It is evident that Heidegger was still struggling with the problem of the unity and singularity of Being as presence in its relation to the plurality of the entities that understand Being or, in the language he favored in his later period, *think* it. There are immense problems associated with any attempt to conceive Being as presence as somehow radically independent of and prior to the entities that are now held to receive it; a careful study of the language Heidegger devises for the purpose of rendering the character of this relationship clearly shows the strain that this task imposes on his language. One famous crux for such inquiries is the passage in the “Introduction” to *What Is Metaphysics?* Which Heidegger first published in 1944, long after the work to which it was an introduction had appeared (GA 9, 306, nn. 2, 3). In the first edition of the “Introduction,” in the course of a discussion of the relation of Being as such to entities (which of course include *Dasein*, although it is not explicitly mentioned) Heidegger stated that Being might well be (*west*) without entities, and that would mean without *Dasein* as one such entity. In subsequent editions, however, this was changed to its opposite, and it was said that Being *never* is without entities. This is only an especially dramatic example of the difficulty that Heidegger was quite evidently having in replacing the thesis that existence is the ground of presence with the thesis that presence is the ground of existence. The evidence for this is so pervasive that it seems that one can say that in those works Heidegger is testing the limits of the independence of Being as presence from *Dasein* – even though the semiprophetic tonalities of many of these writings do not exactly suggest that any kind of experiment is going forward. The pattern that emerges from a close analysis of these writings is one in which a strong initial assertion of the independence of Being as presence is subsequently qualified in quite substantial

ways which in effect reintroduce the element of dependence upon *Dasein* that was initially denied. These qualifications are very similar to those that, in the period of *Being and Time*, limited the independence of *Dasein* by showing that it was as dependent upon Being as presence and upon the world as they were upon it. It as though two radically different metaphors – neither wholly satisfactory for its purpose – were both being qualified in way that points to an eventual equivalence of what is to be said by means of them although there is not linguistic instrument that expresses the convergence itself.

### C. Language as Access To Being

By way of illustrating and justifying the claim that I have just made, I want to take up one major theme of Heidegger's later thought and show how the continuing tensions of which I have written manifest themselves in that domain. The theme I have chosen is that of language. Although language was a dominant interest of Heidegger's throughout his career, it unquestionably assumed a special importance in the later period. It is, moreover, this aspect of his later thought that has commanded the widest interest among our twenty-first century contemporaries. Some of the theses about language attributed to Heidegger have been taken up by critics and theorists of literature and are still central to the controversies going on in that area of thought. The theory of literature has recently been passing through a time of pronounced revulsion from the concept of the subject in all its classical manifestations. Just as in contemporary philosophy, from which this attitude seems to have passed to literature, language has come to be regarded as one medium in which the matters that have been traditionally been dealt with in the vocabulary of the subject can be treated without incurring unwelcome philosophical

commitments. Language, after all, has the advantage of not being private in principle as so many mental functions have been supposed to be, and because it is not controlled by purely individual decisions and preferences, it lends itself to a form of generalizing description of the rules to which individual speakers must be subject if they are to use language at all. In a sense, one could say that in language a kind of reconciliation is brought about between the plurality of speakers and the singularity of the medium in which, as speakers, they move. It also appears that this takes place in a way that accords to the latter a marked precedence over the former – a precedence that would be, at least superficially, in keeping with the orientation of Heidegger's later thought. In what follows, I will try to show that in spite of its great importance in Heidegger's later thought, it is by no means the case that language simply replaces existence or *Dasein*, as is often assumed to be the case. What happens is rather that in the shift from existence as the ground of presence to presence as the ground of existence, language comes to be incorporated into Heidegger's ontology in a different way that corresponds to this new order of priority. It can be shown, however, that even in this new ordering the tensions between existence and presence maintain themselves, and that any thought of a complete independence of the one from the other – of presence from existence or of language from speech – is not something that one can attribute to Heidegger.

The question that Heidegger raises again and again in his later discussions of language is whether we really understand at all adequately what language is. We assume that we do and that language is a kind of datum with which everyone is familiar at the outset. The words for language in the Western European languages show that the understanding we claim to have is one that associates primarily with the production of speech (*stimmliche Verlautbarung*) by certain parts of our bodies and with the communication that is thereby

achieved. Understood in this way as a certain form of human activity, language quite naturally comes to be thought of as something that we bring into being or create. It is this view of language that Heidegger is most concerned to discredit. It is therefore essential that he show that language has some status other than that of the “utteredness” (*Hinausgesprochenheit*) of discourse or speech, which he had declared it to be in *Being and Time*. This might suggest that it is Heidegger’s own earlier views of language that are being corrected, but this is true only up to a point. Discourse, and derivatively language, were unambiguously described in *Being and Time* as a modality of the uncovering of entities as entities. The whole strategy of the treatment of language there was to show that at every point it is embedded in and presupposes existence as the mode of Being of the entity – *Dasein* – that is itself conversant with being understood as the uncoveredness (or unconcealedness) or presence of entities as entities. There is no reason to suppose that in his later writings on language Heidegger wanted to repudiate these theses of *Being and Time* or to conflate them with crudely naturalistic conceptions of language. It looks, instead, as though within this general conception of the uncovering character of discourse and language, it was the earlier notion of the way discourse and language are related to one another that was found to be in need of revision.

It is true that the term “discourse” (*Rede*) drops out of the later writings in favor of the word “language” (*Sprache*). With the former, the picture of the individual human speaker and of language as what he produces by his speech or discourse also disappears, and it is replaced by a picture of language as that out of which such an individual speaker speaks and upon which he depends in multiple ways that need describing. This might seem to be itself a conventional enough picture; but any notion of language as a syntactic or semantic system that has to be in place if individual speech acts are to be as the background

against which the latter take place. Language understood as that upon which discourse depends is described by him as a “showing” (*Zeige*) that “reaches into all regions of presence and lets what is in each case present appear and mis-appear [*verschienen*] out of them” (GA 12, 243). This is in marked contrast to the view taken in *Being and Time* that discourse contributes to uncovering entities as entities but only as a further articulation of an uncoveredness that has already been realized independently of it. In behalf of language as contrasted with discourse, Heidegger now makes the much stronger claim that it is the “the word” that “first brings a thing into its ‘is’” and “lets a thing be as a thing” (GA 12, 177, 220).

This conception of language as realizing our primary access to Being is one that contemporary thought finds deeply congenial in the many contrasting version in which it has been proposed. But this apparent consonance of Heidegger's position with current predilections can prove to be very misleading. This is because the language that Heidegger characterizes in this way is not, in the first instance, a language with a grammar and a vocabulary such as English or Chinese is; and it is not, therefore, to the constraining influence of such features of language that Heidegger is attributing our apprehension of Being. Instead, the enlarged significance that he now attributes to language is due primarily to his seeming description of presence and thus Being in terms that assimilate both to language, it is also equally language itself that is being understood in terms of presence. What this comes to is a claim that the unitary presence of entities as entities is best understood as a kind of “saying” (*Sagen*) and that, as this “saying,” language is, in its unitary essence, prior to all individual speakers and all natural (and artificial) languages in the same way that presence itself is prior to all particular perceptions, memories, choices, and so on. Extravagant as such a claim will inevitably seem, it has been

anticipated by remarks that were made earlier about presence as having, not to be sure a prepositional character, but one that might be called proto-propositional in the sense that it constitutes the milieu of truth within which what an entity *is* can eventually find expression in an assertion of some kind.

At the same time, it must be conceded that the mistrust with which this dramatic expansion of the domain of language meets is understandable. There have been so many naïve theories of the identity of word and thing, and of a natural language that is somehow laid down in the order of creation, that one inevitably approaches with a good deal of caution any theory that, like Heidegger's, may sound as though it were invoking conceptions of this order. It may be helpful, therefore, to approach Heidegger's later treatment of language via theses from the earlier period that prepare the ground for the much closer association of presence with language in the later period. One clue is provided by the thesis defended in *Being and Time* that meaning is an essential character of the world and that, as such, meaning is prior to both discourse and language understood as deriving from discourse. If, independently of any act of interpretation (in Heidegger's sense) or discourse, we understand how to ride a bicycle or to catch a fish, our world to that extent bears the instrumental meaning that corresponds to these forms of understanding and competence on our part. This meaningful character of the world can then be expressed as its "saying" something to us. Such a "saying" is obviously silent or mute because there is no speaker in the ordinary sense that is no "act" of expression or communication. But if it is admissible to speak of the meaningfulness of the world as a kind of silent "saying," then it will also be appropriate to describe the relationship of human beings to that "saying" as one of "hearing." In his later writings on language, Heidegger assigns great importance to this notion of hearing and goes so far as to assert that the speaking of human beings is always

and necessarily preceded by a “hearing” in this sense. This is a “hearing” of the “saying” in which presence is realized; and because language in the broadest sense is just this presence and this saying, Heidegger can say not only that “language itself speaks” but that “we hear the speaking of language” (*das Sprechen der Sprache*) (GA 12, 243).

The difficulty for this way of understanding Heidegger's conception of a language as in some radical way prior to expression and communication on the part of human beings is that in the later writings where this conception is put forward, the notion of *Zuhandenheit* as the instrumental meaningfulness of the world is in abeyance. Indeed, the notion itself of the world, on the occasions when it is employed at all, is understood as what Heidegger now calls “the Foufold” (*das Geviert*) or “World-Foufold” that is made up of “the earth,” “the sky,” “man,” and “the gods.” This conception is developed in a way that one can only call mythic, and its philosophical import is therefore far from clear. The pairing of sky and earth would seem to correspond to the contrast between the openness of Being as presence and the closure of things, and “man” who defines himself as such in some sort of relationship to “the gods” is, instead of being the ground of the world, incorporated into the “play” of all these elements in the Foufold with one another. There is no reason to suppose that Heidegger no longer recognizes the kind of prior instrumental meaningfulness of the world that was so central to his account of *Dasein*, but it now appears to be encompassed within the wider “play” of the elements of the Foufold. Heidegger also describes the later as *Gegeneinander-über* – a reciprocity of linkages in which “each of the regions of the World-Foufold is open for the others – open as if hiding itself” (GA 12, 199). In the later writings, it is this play of reciprocity among the regions of the Foufold that is understood as the “saying” by which man is addressed and to which any utterance of his must be



understood as responding. This is really another way of saying that man is addressed not just by the world in the earlier sense of that term in which he was its ground, but by being as that which lets what is present be present and, in the case of “the earth,” present precisely as that which close itself off from presence. It is as though man, instead of being spoken to only by the ontic (but implicitly ontological) instrumentalities of his world, were also being addressed by the explicitly ontological “saying” of the world – the Foufold – as such. To say “explicitly ontological” here does not mean that this “saying” is a bit of philosophical ventriloquism in which man is the real speaker. The case is rather that the elements in what is said themselves do the “saying.” It is what they “say” that man “hears,” and he can hear what they say because he can understand Being as that which “lets-be-present.” He does not himself organize the world as a Foufold any more than he constitutes the distinction between Being and entities. Instead, because “we human beings have been admitted to the domain of language [*das Sprachwesen*],” we cannot step out of it so as to view it from some other standpoint; as a result “we catch sight of [*erblicken*] language only insofar as we are regarded [*angeblickt*] by it” (GA 12, 254).

Although there is much that is unclear and problematic in this notion of the Foufold, it is only the notion of language as prior to human utterance as such that will be examined here. In evaluating that claim, there can be no doubt that in speaking of our understanding of language as having to shift from language as something we do to language as something by which we are sustained in some sense encompassed, Heidegger is expressing in his own way the sense that all students of language must have of the element of dependency that characterizes the relationship between the individual speaker and the language he speaks. This dependency is usually associated with the rule-governed character of language, and our sense of submitting “blindly” to those

rules can become so strong that it is as though out language were speaking us rather than we, the language. That is an idiom that Heidegger himself uses, but he does not do so as a way of testifying to the rule-governed character of language. The language that itself speaks is not one that is ordered by syntactical and semantic rules; it would be a serious mistake as well as an encouragement to mystification to apply what Heidegger says about language as the play of the Foufold to natural languages as conceived in naturalistic terms. As he uses it, the notion of language as that out of which we speak expresses that our utterance is possible only within the milieu of presence, and that the structure of presence as the Foufold forms the indispensable context for every natural or constructed language and thus for the utterances of those who speak each such language. Indeed, Heidegger is even willing to go so far as to declare that “language is the house of Being and it is by dwelling (in this house) that man ek-sists” (GA 9, 333). He adds that this house of Being has also “come to pass [*ereignet*] and been fitted together [*gefügt*]” by Being itself. Although the priority of language to man thus appears to be asserted in the strongest possible form, it is notable that in the same context man is spoken of as the “shepherd of Being,” and it is stated that as he dwells within language as the house of Being, he also “protects the truth of Being to which he belongs” (GA 9, 333). Since the notion of protection immediately suggests that of a need – in this case, as before, a need on the part of Being for man – it is evident once again that the relationship between Being as presence and existence, which, in the course of Heidegger’s discussion of language, may appear to be so one-sidedly a dependency of the former on the latter, is a good deal more ambiguous than at first appeared.

The question is thus whether, if language is somehow prior to human utterance, it must also follow that language and its “saying” are independent of

man. This in turn is really just a new version of the question about the possible independence of presence from existence. In this new form that ties it to language, it sounds more than usually strange because, as has been pointed out, we imagine that the language that might be prior to or independent of man is a language like English or French or some common distillate of all such natural languages, and this idea of there being such a language independently of the existence of human beings seem too incongruous to be taken seriously. But even when we are clear that the “language” we are talking about here is not a language in this sense, but rather the ontological context of presence that is required for language as more familiarly understood, the question still remains. Fortunately, it is one to which Heidegger directly addressed himself:

And the saying itself? Is it something separated from our speaking [*Sprechen*] [and] which we could reach only by throwing a bridge over to it? Or is the saying rather the stream of silence that itself connects its banks – its saying and our resaying – as it forms them? Our usual conceptions of language fall short here. Are we not running the danger, if we try to conceive the nature of language [*das Sprachwesen*] on the basis of “saying,” that we will raise language up into a fantastic being that exists in itself but that we can find nowhere as long as we reflect soberly on language? After all, language remains unmistakably bound to human speech. Certainly. But of what type is this bond? Whence and how does its binding character obtain? Language requires [*braucht*] human speech and it is nevertheless not the mere creature [*Gemächte*] of our speech-activity. (GA 12, 244)

This passage makes clear that although Heidegger's way of describing language often makes it sound as though some stronger kind of independence of language from human speech were intended, the kind he is really talking about is consistent with language's being bound to human speech. We have here, in other words, much the same pattern as before of an apparent assertion of a

radical form of priority – in this case, of language, as formerly of Being as presence – that is then qualified by an acknowledgement of a dependence on something human. It thus emerges that what is really important is the special character of the dependence that is only apparently being denied. It is, in the first place, reciprocal, since without language man could not be man any more than language could be language. This is also a dependence that is such that what is dependent – in this case language – is nonetheless not created by that on which it is dependent and is not subject to any arbitrary form of control that that latter would like to assert over it. The fundamental articulation of the World-Foufold is one that all speech and every natural language necessarily register and preserve just as, according to the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, discourse and thus language presupposed the structure of Being-in-the-world. Just how this independence within dependence is to be understood may not be altogether clear, but it is not to be explained by any notion of language as a thing in itself. It is interesting in this connection that Heidegger says that not just language as the silent play of the World-Foufold, but language as what is uttered by human beings can come to *look* as though it were separated from speaking and speakers and did not belong to them. In both cases, however, this appearance is misleading and there can no more be a language without speakers than there can be a Foufold without man.

What I have been trying to suggest in the course of this closing examination of the way Heidegger deals with language in his later writings is that it is in terms of an interdependence of language and speech that we should understand the distinctive difference between these writings and those of the period of *Being and Time*. Writ large, this would also be the interdependence of presence and existence, and the thesis of this epilogue is that the unity of Heidegger's thought must be understood as his continuing effort to find a

satisfactory way of bringing that interdependence to conceptual expression. Whether he was successful in this effort is another question. Clearly, the unity of which I write is more a matter of philosophical intention than it is of full realization, and it is constantly threatened by the sharp incompatibilities between the antithetical strategies that he deployed at different times. It also has to be conceded that matters are not made easier by Heidegger's rooted unwillingness to acknowledge the revisionary character of some of his successive approaches to this matter. In my view, one of the main sources of the difficulties he encounters is his failure to follow up some of the clues that suggest a much stronger role for intersubjectivity – for *Mitsein* – in the way the interdependence of existence and presence is to be conceived. But that is a topic for another study. What I have proposed here is a way of understanding Heidegger's philosophical career in terms of a kind of unity that we will inevitably fail to grasp as long as his concept of Being is construed otherwise than in terms of the concept of presence with which he associated it from the beginning. I would also suggest that if this unitary interpretation of the problematic of Heidegger's thought were to inform our understanding of what he represents within philosophy, both philosophy and we would stand to gain.

One further concluding comment. Whatever else may be said for or against him Heidegger was a spellbinding teacher. Many of his works, perhaps the majority, come to us as the texts of lectures. His commitment to teaching and, especially, to university teaching, even if this became the occasion of his greatest miscalculation, distinguished him from many of the writers and thinkers who stamped his own thought: Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Hölderlin and those early thinkers who lived before the foundation of the

academy. In this connection, much of what Heidegger says about thinking, about philosophy and about hermeneutics need not, or need not only, be read as signposts pointing us towards the ontological heights, but as extremely pithy, quite practical and almost commonsensical instructions for students in any discipline. Take for example his insistence on the point that a great thinker thinks only one single thought: true or not, do we not, as teachers, continually encourage our students to seek a unitary, cohesive approach in their study of any great thinker, rather than merely listing “twelve important points” in the teaching of Plato, Kant or Heidegger? Is this so very far from being a practical expression of what Heidegger proposes as a fundamental principle? And – just maybe – expressing it as a fundamental principle might actually be the best way to get students to adopt it as a practical directive.

Perhaps Heidegger's pedagogical instructions culminate in the maxim that we should never settle for second-hand opinions but should learn to think, slowly, carefully and in dialogue with the great thinkers of the past, yet also to think for ourselves: and this, of course, is above all true when we are faced with a teacher as imposing as Heidegger.

In the end, Heidegger is able to have it both ways, to see past and present together, and to see time in its pure state. At these moments of presence, we have two probes in time the way we have two feet on the ground and two eyes watching space. What would otherwise be a meticulously analytic explanation in his earlier thought is suddenly set in motion and brought to life through *Ereignis*, the site of Being's revelation, as Being appropriates man and makes him *Dasein*. The experience of time becomes iridescent, like a soap bubble, like the plumage of certain birds, like an oil film on water. This enlarged double vision of the world projected in time embodies a parallax view: it provides a

sense of depth resulting from a displacement of *Dasein* himself, until finally, what arises from the heightened reality is a world that glistens in time.

## *B i b l i o g r a p h y*

This bibliography includes (I) German editions of Heidegger's works to which I refer in this book; (II) important English translations of works by Heidegger; (III) recommended secondary works in English; (IV) other works cited in this book, and (V) is a topically arranged bibliography, with some repetition from I-IV.

In I and II, I have indicated the date of the composition of the text when this date is significantly earlier than the publication date. I have briefly noted the contents of some works that are not discussed in this study or whose contents are not apparent from their titles.

In III, I concentrate on the best older studies, commentaries on *Being and Time*, recent monographs likely to be helpful to beginners and important anthologies. I have supplied a brief comment on each text.

The inclusion of a work about Heidegger in IV rather than III does not necessarily mean that this source is *not* recommended, but simply that it is less useful to the beginner than sources cited in III.

Finally, in V, I present a topical bibliography that includes the research that went into this study.

For a very complete older bibliography, see H-M. Sass, *Martin Heidegger: Bibliography and Glossary* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1982). Two more recent bibliographies of writings by and about Heidegger in English are J. Nordquist, *Martin Heidegger: A Bibliography* (Social Theory: A Bibliographic Series, 17) (Santa Cruz, California: Reference and Research Services, 1990) and Martin Heidegger (*II*): A Bibliography (Social Theory: A Bibliographic Series, 42) (Santa Cruz, California: Reference and Research Services, 1996).



## I. Heidegger in German

A. Volumes of Heidegger's *Gesamtausgabe*, or collected edition (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976- ). These are designated throughout this book by "GA" and the volume number. Readers interested in textual history should be aware that the *Gesamtausgabe* is an "edition of the last hand" rather than a critical edition: that is, it includes changes that Heidegger made to his manuscripts after their original composition, without indicating these changes as such.

GA 1, *Frühe Schriften* (1978). (Written 1910-16)

GA 4, *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (1981). (Written 1936-68)

GA 13, *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (1910-1976) (1983). A collection of short pieces.

GA 21, *Logik: Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (1976). (Written 1925-26) An important exploration of unconcealment.

GA 27, *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1996). (Written 1928-29) Investigates the relationships among science, philosophy, and worldviews.

GA 31, *Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit. Einleitung in die Philosophie* (1982). (Written 1930)

GA 39, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (1989). (Written 1934-35)

GA 42, *Schelling: "Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit"* (1809) (1988). (Written 1936)

GA 49, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus. Zur erneuten Auslegung von Schelling: "Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände"* (1809) (1991). (Written 1941)

GA 52, *Hölderlins Hymne "Andenken"* (1982). (Written 1941-42) GA 55, *Heraklit* (1979). (Written 1943-44)

GA 56/57, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie* (1987). (Written 1919) Important early reflections on theory and life.

GA 61, *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles: Einführung in die phänomenologische Forschung* (1985). (Written 1921-22)

GA 63, *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)* (1988). (Written 1923)

GA 65, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1989). (Written 1936-38)

GA 66, *Besinnung* (1997). (Written 1937-39) Like GA 65, to which it forms a kind of sequel, this is a long and wide-ranging series of private reflections.

GA 77, *Feldweg-Gespräche (1944-45)* (1995).

GA 79, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge* (1994). (Written 1949 and 1957)

### **B. Other works in German cited**

*Lógica: Lecciones de M. Heidegger (semestre verano 1934) en ellegado de Helene Weiss*, bilingual German-Spanish edn, intro. and tr. v. Farías (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1991).

*Martin Heidegger; Elisabeth Blochmann: Briefwechsel, 1918-1969*, } W. Storck (ed.) (Marbach-am-Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 1989).

*Martin Heidegger-Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel, 1920-1963*, W. Biemel and H. Saner (eds) (Frankfurt-am-Main: Klostermann/Piper, 1990).

Heidegger, M. *Parmenides*, tr. A. Schuwer and R. Rocjcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

Heidegger, M. *Schellings Abhandlung über das Wesen des Menschlichen Freiheit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1971).

*Sein und Zeit*, 14th edn (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1977). First edition in *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Phänomenologische Forschung*, E. Husserl (ed.) **8** (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1927) and as *Sein und Zeit: Erste Hälfte* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1927).

Heidegger, M. *Sojourns*, bilingual edition, ed. and tr. F. Vezin (Paris: Le Rocher, 1992).

## II. Heidegger in English

*Aristotle's Metaphysics È 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*, tr. W. Brogan and P. Warnek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). (GA 33, written 1931) An original exploration of potentiality and actuality in Aristotle.

"Art and Space," tr. C.H. Seibert. *Man and World* 6 (1), 1973, pp. 3-5. (Written 1969)

*Basic Concepts*, tr. G. Aylesworth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). (GA 51, written 1941) A short, powerful presentation of some theses on Being.

*The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, tr. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). (GA 24, written 1927)

*Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, tr. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). (GA 45, written 1937-38) An exploration of truth as unconcealment.

*Basic Writings*, 2nd edn, D.F. Krell (ed.) (San Francisco, California: Harper- San Francisco, 1993). An excellent starting point for reading Heidegger, this anthology contains various pieces first published in German between 1927 and 1964, including "What is Metaphysics?", "On the Essence of Truth", "The Origin of the Work of Art", "The Question Concerning Technology", and "Letter on Humanism".

*Being and Time*, tr. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). (First published 1927)

*Being and Time*, tr. J. Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996). (First published 1927)

*The Concept of Time*, tr. W. McNeill, bilingual edn (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992). (Written 1924) An important early lecture on *Dasein*'s temporality.

*Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning)*, tr. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). (GA 65, written 1936-38)

*Discourse on Thinking*, tr. J. M. Anderson and E. H. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). Contains part of a dialogue written 1944-45 and a public lecture written 1955, both about releasement.

*Early Greek Thinking*, tr. D.F. Krell and F.A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1975). (Written 1943-54) Four essays on pre-Socratic thought.

- Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, tr. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000).
- The End of Philosophy*, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). (Written 1941-54) Difficult essays on the history of Being.
- The Essence of Reasons*, tr. T. Malick, bilingual edn (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969). (Written 1929)
- The Essence of Truth*, tr. T. Sadler (London: Athlone, 1998). (GA 34, written 1931-32). Interesting lectures on Plato's allegory of the cave and *Theaetetus*.
- Existence and Being*, W. Brock (ed.) (Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1949). (Written 1929-43) A selection that today is useful primarily for its translations of two essays on Hölderlin.
- The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, tr. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). (GA 29/30, written 1929-30)
- Hegel's Concept of Experience*, tr. J.G. Gray and F.D. Wieck (New York: Harper and Row, 1970). (Written 1942-43)
- Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. P. Ernad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). Also, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). (GA 32, written 1930-31)
- Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, with E. Fink, tr. C. Seibert (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993).
- History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, tr. T. Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). (GA 20, written 1925) A valuable discussion of phenomenology, and a draft of part of *Being and Time*. The title is misleading.
- Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, tr. W. McNeill and J. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). (GA 53, written 1942) Includes an interpretation of an ode from Sophocles' *Antigone* as well as readings of Hölderlin.
- Identity and Difference*, tr. J. Stambaugh, bilingual edn (New York: Harper and Row, 1969). (Written 1957) Short but challenging reflections on the relation between *Dasein* and Being.
- An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. R. Manheim (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959). (Written 1935, revised 1953)

*Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. G. Fried and R. Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000). (Written 1935, revised 1953) This version is closer to the original than the Manheim translation.

*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. R. Taft, 4th edn (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). (Written 1929) Includes an account of Heidegger's disputation regarding Kant with Ernst Cassirer in 1929.

"Kant's Thesis about Being", in *Thinking about Being: Aspects of Heidegger's Thought*, R.W. Shahan and J.N. Mohanty (eds) (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984). (Written 1962)

*Logic: The Question of Truth*, tr. T. Sheehan and R. Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). (GA 21, written 1925-26)

*The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, tr. M. Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). (GA 26, written 1929) An interpretation of Leibniz and an exploration of the ontological preconditions of logical necessity.

*Nietzsche*, tr. D.F. Krell (ed.) [4 vols] (New York: Harper and Row, 1979-87), *Nietzsche I: The Will To Power as Art* (1979); *Nietzsche II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (1984); *Nietzsche III: The Will To Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics* (1987); *Nietzsche IV: Nihilism* (1982); [2 vols] (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991) *Nietzsche: Volumes one and two* (1991); *Nietzsche: Volumes three and four* (1991). (Written 1936-46)

*On the Way to Language*, tr. P.D. Hertz and J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). (Written 1953-59)

*On Time and Being*, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972). (Written 1962-64)

"Only a God Can Save Us", *Der Spiegel's* 1966 interview with Heidegger, is translated in the anthologies ed. Sheehan, Wolin, and Neske and Kettering listed in III below. The version in Neske and Kettering includes some phrases that were deleted by *Der Spiegel* when the interview was first published in 1976.

*Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, tr. J. van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999). (GA 63, written 1923)

*Parmenides*, tr. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992). (GA 54, written 1942-43)

*Pathmarks*, W. McNeill (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). An important collection of essays. (GA 9, written 1919-1958)

*Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). (GA 25, written 1927-28)

"Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation", tr. M. Baur, *Man and World* **25**, 1992, pp. 355-93. (Written 1922) An early effort to express Heidegger's approach to interpreting concrete human life.

*The Piety of Thinking*, tr. J.G. Hart and J.C. Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976). A selection of essays from the 1920s to the 1960s relevant to theology.

*Plato's Sophist*, tr. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). (GA 19, written 1924-25) Heidegger's most detailed reading of Plato and of Book VI of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Knowledge of Greek is almost indispensable.

*Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). (Written 1950-59)

*The Principle of Reason*, tr. R. Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). (Written 1955-56)

*The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). (Written 1938-1955) Reflections on science, nihilism, and technology.

*Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, tr. J. Stambaugh (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985). (Written 1936-1943)

*Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, tr. T. Sadler (London: Athlone, 1998). (GA 56/57, written 1919) Important lecture courses that document Heidegger's early critique of the theoretical attitude.

*What is a Thing?* tr. W.B. Barton and V. Deutsch (Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Company, 1967). (Written 1935-36) A study of Descartes, Kant, and the nature of modern philosophy and science.

*What is Called Thinking?* tr. F.D. Wieck and J.G. Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). (Written 1954)

*What is Philosophy?* tr. W. Kluback and T. Wilde (New Haven, CT: College and University Press, 1958). (Written 1955)

"Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?" in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, T. Sheehan (ed.) (Chicago, Illinois: Precedent, 1981). (Written 1934)

### III. Recommended Secondary Works.

Biemel, W. *Martin Heidegger: An Illustrated Study*, tr. J.L. Mehta (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976). This introductory work by a student of Heidegger successfully combines photographs, personal observations, and analyses of some important texts.

Blitz, M. *Heidegger's Being and Time and the Possibility of Political Philosophy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981). One of the more careful approaches to the political dimension in Heidegger. Also serves as a clear review of the major ideas of *Being and Time*.

Caputo, J.D. *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). A post modern critique by a formerly faithful Heideggerian.

Cooper, D.E. *Heidegger* (London: Claridge Press, 1996). A very good although compressed survey. Sensible remarks on many important topics.

Dreyfus, H.L. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991). A detailed work, influential in the English-speaking world. Stresses practical "coping" as the basis of intelligibility; presents Division II as an "existentialist" side of Heidegger that is separable from Division I.

Dreyfus, H.L. and H. Hall (eds). *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992). A collection of careful, closely argued essays. Most interpret Heidegger in terms of "everyday practices."

Gadamer, H-G. *Heidegger's Ways*, tr. J.W. Stanley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994). Essays by one of Heidegger's most important students.

Gelven, M. *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, 2nd edn (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989). A helpful, plain-spoken analysis. Holds that Heidegger is not urging his readers to exist authentically.

Guignon, C.B. *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett, 1983). An unusually clear exposition of Heidegger in general, with special attention to the problems of Cartesianism and epistemology.

- Guignon, C.B. (ed.). *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). An broad collection of essays by leading scholars on a wide variety of topics. Most are helpful for beginners. Guignon's introduction provides an overview of Heidegger's work.
- Hölderlin, Friedrich. *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1941-).
- Inwood, Michael. *Heidegger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). A short but generally helpful survey of some central ideas, written in a lively style. The focus is *Being and Time* and "The Origin of the Work of Art."
- Kaelin, E. *Heidegger's Being and Time: A Reading for Readers* (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida State University Press, 1988). An interesting if sometimes obscure analysis. Stresses the structure of Heidegger's text and its relevance for literary criticism.
- Kisiel, T. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1993). The most detailed account available of Heidegger's development through the writing of *Being and Time*. Difficult but very valuable.
- Kisiel, T. and J. Van Buren (eds). *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays on his Earliest Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994). A good resource for students exploring this topic.
- Kockelmans, J.J. (ed.). *A Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1986). A collection of excellent essays on topics relevant to *Being and Time*. Not all are directly about *Being and Time*.
- Kockelmans, J.J. *Heidegger's "Being and Time": The Analytic of Dasein as Fundamental Ontology* (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1989). This careful, reliable commentary stays quite close to Heidegger's own language.
- Marx, W. *Heidegger and the Tradition*, tr. T. Kisiel and M Greene (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1971). Compares Heidegger to Aristotle and Hegel. Challenging but enlightening.
- Mehta, J.L. *Martin Heidegger: The Way and the Vision* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of Hawaii, 1976). An extensive, faithful survey of Heidegger's work; emphasis on *Being and Time*.
- Mulhall, S. *The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time* (London: Routledge, 1996). A compact commentary on *Being and Time*. Does



not cover other texts. Tends to misinterpret Being-in-the-world in terms of having concepts.

Murray, M. (ed.). *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978). Interesting and diverse essays.

Neske, G. and E. Kettering (eds). *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, tr. L. Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990). Contains important original documents by Heidegger (including his 1933 Rectoral address, his 1966 interview with *Der Spiegel*, and his 1969 television interview with Richard Wisser) as well as a range of interesting essays, many of which defend Heidegger.

Ott, H. *Heidegger: A Political Life*, tr. A. Blunden (New York: BasicBooks, 1993). The most complete historical study of Heidegger's political involvement; paints an unattractive picture of his personality and behavior.

Pöggeler, O. *Martin Heidegger's Way of Thinking*, tr. D. Magurshak and S. Barber (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1987). A classic German study of Heidegger's development, rich in references to intellectual history.

Pöggeler, O. "Heidegger on Art," in Harries and Jamme (eds.) (1994).

Richardson, W. J. (SJ). *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, 3d edn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974). This monumental work discusses Heidegger's entire career, but the emphasis is on texts published during the second half of his life. Includes a letter from Heidegger to Richardson on the development of his thought.

Rockmore, T. and J. Margolis (eds). *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1992). A sampling of approaches to the question of Heidegger's politics.

Safranski, R. *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*. Tr. E. Osers (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998). The most thorough biographical study; includes thoughtful observations about Heidegger's philosophy as well as about his personality and actions.

Sallis, J. *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). Challenging essays by one of the more influential American readers of Heidegger.

Sallis, J. (ed.). *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). Wide variety of essays, most quite good, from a conference on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Heidegger's birth.

- Schmitt, R. *Martin Heidegger on Being Human: An Introduction to Sein und Zeit* (New York: Random House, 1969). Carefully discusses critical objections to key claims in *Being and Time* about ready-to-hand entities, language, phenomenology, and understanding. Also discusses Heidegger's relation to Husserl. Best for readers who have already studied *Being and Time* and who have some background in analytic philosophy.
- Shahan, R.W. and J.N. Mohanty (eds). *Thinking about Being: Aspects of Heidegger's Thought*. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984). An interesting collection. including Heidegger's 1962 essay "Kant's Thesis about Being."
- Sheehan, T. (ed.). *Heidegger: the Man and the Thinker* (Chicago, Illinois: Precedent, 1981). This fine anthology includes Heidegger's 1934 essay "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?" and his 1966 interview with *Der Spiegel*.
- Steiner, G *Heidegger*, 2d edn (London: Fontana, 1992). An interesting short study, good on stylistic analysis and Heidegger's relationship to his culture at large, but sometimes unreliable.
- Waterhouse, R *A Heidegger Critique: A Critical Examination of the Existential Phenomenology of Martin Heidegger* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981). Includes a good summary of *Being and Time* with special attention to Husserl and the hermeneutic tradition, as well as criticisms of Heidegger that are worth considering.
- Wolin, R. (ed.). *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993). Contains important original documents by Heidegger as well as interesting essays by others relevant to the question of Heidegger's politics.
- Young, J. *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). A well-argued and vigorous defense of Heidegger's thought.
- Zimmerman, M. E. *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, 2nd edn (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986). A very clear discussion of Heidegger's views on resoluteness and releasement. Holds that understanding Heidegger requires a personal transformation and authentic existence.

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- Barash, J.A. *Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985).
- Bataille, G. *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, tr. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights, 1990).
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## V. Topical Bibliography

A complete, up-to-date bibliography of works by and about Reidegger would be a vast undertaking. Rans-Martin Sass's 1975 bibliography, which covered the period from 1917 to 1972, included entire chapters called "Reidegger in Japan" and "Literature on Reidegger in the Soviet Union" and already contained more than 3,700 entries! Fortunately, some excellent bibliographies are available listing writings on Reidegger up to 1980 or so. This bibliography is therefore quite selective, emphasizing recent works in English most likely to be helpful to students and non-specialists. John Raugeland, who put together a complete bibliography of recent articles and books in English on Reidegger, has been most helpful in pinpointing some especially useful articles. In general, the bibliography that follows focuses on recent books and multi-authored collections, though a number of influential classics are also included. As a rule, when an essay has been reprinted in a collection, it is not listed again separately.

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Sheehan, Thomas, ed. *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*. (Chicago: Precedent, 1981). This valuable collection contains, in addition to important works by Heidegger and by scholars writing about him, a bibliography matching original writings to translations and a detailed bibliography of writings about Heidegger.

### SELECTED WORKS IN GERMAN

In 1974 the German publisher Vittorio Klostermann (Frankfurt am Main) began preparations for the publication of Heidegger's collected works (*Martin Heidegger: Gesamtausgabe*). Around 100 volumes are planned. The series will consist of four divisions: (I) published writings, 1910-70; (II) lectures from Marburg and Freiburg, 1923-44; (III) unpublished papers, 1919-67; and (IV) notes and fragments (including notes on previously published works, letters, summaries, notes on seminars, et cetera). The publisher anticipates that twenty to thirty years will be needed to complete the project. Heidegger, who worked extensively with the editors of the *Collected Works* during the final years of his life, specified the form he wanted the volumes to have (e.g., no volume may contain an index). There is, however, some question whether these volumes will be the definitive edition for Heidegger scholarship. Those familiar with the project have suggested that Heidegger made revisions to the earlier manuscripts without this fact being explicitly noted in the texts. On this subject, see Thomas Sheehan, "Caveat Lector: The New Heidegger," *New York Review of Books*, December 4, 1980, pp. 39-41.

As of November 2001, the publication schedule for the *Collected Works* was as follows (volumes already published have publication dates in brackets):

#### Division I

1. *Frühe Schriften* (1912-16). ed. F-W. von Herrmann (1978).
2. *Sein und Zeit* (1927). ed. F-W. von Herrmann (1977).
3. *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1929). ed. F-W. von Herrmann (1991).
4. *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (1936-68). ed. F-W. von Herrman (1991).

5. *Holzwege* (1935-46). ed. F-W. von Herrmann (1977).
6. Vol. I, *Nietzsche I* (1936-39); Vol. 2, *Nietzsche II* (1939-46).
7. *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (1936-53). ed. F-W. von Herrmann.
8. *Was heisst Denken?* (1951-52).
9. *Wegmarken* (1919-61). ed. F-W. von Herrmann (1976).
10. *Del Satz vom Grund* (1955-56).
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13. *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens* (1910-76). ed. Hermann Heidegger (1983).
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17. *Del Beginn der neuzeitlichen Philosophie* (winter semester, 1923-24). ed. F-W. von Herrmann [1993].
18. *Aristoteles: Rhetorik* (Summer semester, 1924).
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*A p p e n d i x*

Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin

**In Lovely Blueness...**

*In lovely blueness with its metal roof the steeple blossoms.*

*Around it the crying of swallows hovers, most moving  
blueness surrounds it. The sun hangs high above it and  
colors the sheets of tin, but up above in the wind silently  
crows the weathercock. If now someone comes down beneath  
the bell, comes down those steps, a still life it is,  
because, when the figure is so detached, the man's  
plasticity is brought out. The windows from which the bells  
are ringing are like gates in beauty. That is, because  
gates still conform to nature, these have a likeness to  
trees of the wood. But purity too is beauty. Within, out  
of diversity a serious mind is formed. Yet these images are  
so simple, so very holy are these, that really often one is  
afraid to describe them. But the Heavenly, who are always  
good, all things at once, like the rich, have these, virtue  
and pleasure. These men may imitate. May, when life is all  
hardship, may a man look up and say: I too would like to  
resemble these? Yes. As long as kindness, which is pure,  
remains in his heart not unhappily a man may compare himself*

*with the divinity. Is God unknown? Is He manifest as the sky? This rather I believe. It is the measure of man. Full of acquirements, but poetically, man dwells on this earth. But the darkness of night with all the stars is not purer, if I could put it like that, than man, who is called the image of God.*

*Is there a measure on earth? There is none. For never the Creator's worlds constrict the progress of thunder. A flower too is beautiful, because it blooms under the sun. Often in life the eye discovers beings that could be called much more beautiful still than flowers. Oh, well I know it! For to bleed both in body and heart, and wholly to be no more, does that please God? Yet the soul, it is my belief, must remain pure, else on pinions the eagle reaches far as the Mighty with songs of praise and the voice of so many birds. It is the essence, the form it is. You beautiful little stream, you seem touching, as you flow so clear, clear as the eye of divinity, through the Milky Way. I know you well, but tears gush out of my eyes. A serene life I see blossom around me in shapes of creation, because not unfittingly I compare it to the solitary doves of the churchyard. But the laughter of men seems to grieve me, for I have a heart. Would I like to be a comet? I think so. For they possess the swiftness of birds; they blossom with fire and are like children in purity. To desire more than that, human nature cannot presume. The serenity of virtue also deserves to be praised by the serious spirit which*

*wafts between the garden's three columns. A beautiful virgin must wreath her head with myrtle, because she is simple both in her nature and in her feelings. But myrtles are to be found in Greece.*

*If someone looks into the mirror, a man, and in it sees his image, as though it were a painted likeness; it resembles the man. The image of man has eyes, whereas the moon has light. King Oedipus has an eye too many perhaps. The sufferings of this man, they seem indescribable, unspeakable, inexpressible. If the drama represents something like this, that is why. But what comes over me if I think of you now? Like brooks the end of something sweeps me away, which expands like Asia. Of course, this affliction, Oedipus has it too. Of course, that is why. Did Hercules suffer too? Indeed. The Dioscuri in their friendship, did not they bear afflictions too? For to fight with God, like Hercules, that is an affliction. And immortality amidst the envy of this life, to share in that, is an affliction too. But this also is an affliction, when a man is covered with freckles, to be wholly covered with many a spot! The beautiful sun does that: for it rears up all things. It leads young men along their course with the allurements of its beams as though with roses. The afflictions that Oedipus bore seem like this, as when a poor man complains that there is something he lacks. Son of Laios, poor stranger in Greece! Life is death, and death is a kind of life.*

Translated by Michael Hamburger

**Greece**

*O you voices of destiny, you ways of the wanderer!  
For amid the [eyes'] blue school,  
From afar, amid the uproar of heaven  
Rings out like the blackbird's song  
The clouds' [secure] serene mood, well  
Tempered by the existence of God, by the thunderstorm.  
And calls, like looking out, for  
Immortality and heroes;  
Recollections are many. Where ringing out  
On it, as the calf's hide,  
The earth, proceeding from devastations, temptations of the holy ones,  
For in the beginning the work forms itself,  
Pursues great laws, knowledge  
And tenderness and the width of heaven, pure covering, later  
Appearing, sings clouds of song.  
For firmly fixed is the earth's  
Navel. For captive in green banks of grass are  
The flames and the common  
Elements. But above pure meditation lives the aether. But silver*

*On clear days  
Is the light. As a sign of love  
Violet-blue the earth.  
[But like the round dance  
To a wedding,]  
A great beginning can come  
Even to the humble.  
Everyday but wonderfully, for the love of men,  
God has put on a garment.  
And his face is concealed from the knowing  
And covers the skies with art.  
And air and time cover  
The terrible one, so that not too much one  
With prayers may love him  
Or the soul. For long already like leaves,  
Or lines and angles,  
Nature stands open to learn  
And yellower the suns and the moons,  
But at times  
When the ancient form of earth wants  
To go out, amid histories, what has been,  
And boldly fencing, as on high places God  
Leads the earth. Unmeasured paces, though,  
He limits, but like blossoms golden  
Then the soul's powers, the soul's affinities, come together,  
So that more willingly  
Beauty dwells on earth and a spirit of some kind  
More communally joins itself to men.*

*Sweet it is then to dwell under the high shade  
Of trees and hills, sunny, where the way  
Is paved to the church. To travelers, though,  
To him, whose feet, from love of life,  
Measuring all along, obey him,  
More beautifully blossom the ways where the land*

Translated by Keith Hoeller

**“As When On a Holiday...”**

*As when on a holiday, to see the field  
A countryman goes out, at morning, when  
Out of the hot night the cooling lightning flashes had fallen  
The whole time and the thunder still sounds in the distance,  
The river enters its banks once more,  
And the fresh ground becomes green  
And with the gladdening rain from heaven  
The grapevine drips, and gleaming  
In quiet sunlight stand the trees of the grove:*

*So in favorable weather they stand  
Whom no master alone, whom she, wonderfully  
All-present, educates in a light embrace,  
The powerful, divinely beautiful nature.  
So when she seems to be sleeping at times of the year  
Up in the heavens or among plants or the peoples,  
The poets' faces also are mourning,  
They seem to be alone, yet are always divining.  
For divining too she herself is resting.*

*But now day breaks! I awaited and saw it come,  
And what I saw, may the holy be my word,  
For she, she herself, who is older than the ages  
And above the gods of Occident and Orient,  
Nature is now awakening with the clang of arms,  
And from high Aether down to the abyss,  
According to firm law, as once, begotten out of holy Chaos,  
Inspiration, the all-creative,  
Agains feels herself anew.*

*And as a fire gleams in the eye of the man  
Who has conceived a lofty design, so  
Once more by the signs, the deeds of the world now  
A fire has been kindled in the souls of the poets.  
And what came to pass before, though scarcely felt,  
Only now is manifest,*



*And they who smiling tended our fields for us,  
In the form of servants, they are known,  
The all-living, the powers of the gods.*

*Do you ask about them? In the song their spirit blows,  
When from the sun of day and warm earth  
It awakens, and storms that are in the air, and others  
That more prepared in the depths of time  
And more full of meaning, and more perceptible to us,  
Drift on between heaven and earth and among the peoples.  
The thoughts of the communal spirit they are,  
Quietly ending in the soul of the poet.*

*So that quickly struck, for a long time  
Known to the infinite, it quakes  
With recollection, and kindled by the holy ray,  
Its fruit conceived in love, the work of gods and men,  
The song, so that it may bear witness to both, succeeds.  
So, as poets say, when she desired to see  
The god, visible, his lightning flash fell on Semele's house  
And ashes mortally struck gave birth to  
The fruit of the thunderstorm, to holy Bacchus.*

*And hence the sons of the earth now drink  
Heavenly fire without danger.  
Yet us it behooves, you poets, to stand*

*Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,  
To grasp the father's ray, itself, with our own hands,  
And to offer to the people  
The heavenly gift wrapt in song,  
For only if we are pure in heart,  
Like children, are our hands innocent.*

*The father's ray, the pure, does not sear it  
And deeply shaken, sharing a god's suffering,  
The eternal heart yet remains firm.*

Translated by Keith Hoeller

***“Homecoming / To Kindred Ones”***

*1*

*Within the Alps it is still bright night and the cloud,  
Composing poems full of joy, covers the yawning valley within.  
This way, that way, roars and rushes the playful mountain breeze,  
Steep down through the fir trees a ray of light gleams and vanishes.  
Chaos, trembling with joy, slowly hurries and struggles,  
Young in form, yet strong, it celebrates loving strife  
Amidst the rocks, it seethes and shakes in its eternal bounds,  
For more bacchantically morning rises within.  
For the year grows more endlessly there and the holy  
Hours, the days, are more boldly ordered and mingled.  
Yet the bird of the thunderstorm notes the time and between  
Mountains, high in the air he hovers and calls out the day.  
Now in the depths within, the little village also awakens and  
Fearless, familiar with the high, looks up from under the peaks.  
Divining growth, for already, like lightning flashes, the ancient  
Waterfalls crash, the ground steaming beneath the falls,  
Echo resounds all about, and the immeasurable workshop,  
Dispensing gifts, actively moves its arm by day and night.*

*2*

*Meanwhile the silvery heights gleam peacefully above,  
Up there the luminous snow is already full of roses.  
And still higher up, above the light, dwells the pure  
Blissful god rejoicing in the play of holy rays.*

*Silently he dwells alone, and brightly shines his countenance,  
The aetherial one seems inclined to give life  
To create joy, with us, as often, when, knowing the measure,  
Also knowing those who breathe, hesitant and sparing, the god  
Sends true good fortune to towns and houses and gentle  
Rain to open the land, brooding clouds, and then you,  
Dearest breezes, you gentle springtimes,  
And with patient hand brings joy again to those who mourn,  
When he renews the seasons, the creative one, refreshes  
And seizes the silent hearts of aging men,  
And works down to the depths, and opens and brightens up,  
As he loves to do, and now once again a life begins,  
Grace blooms, as once, and present spirit comes,  
And a joyous courage spreads its wings once more.*

3

*Much I spoke to him, for whatever poets meditate  
Or sing, it mostly concerns the angels and him;  
Much I asked for, for love of the fatherland, lest  
Unbidden one day the spirit might suddenly fall upon us;  
Much also for you, who have cares in the fatherland,  
To whom holy thanks, smiling, brings the fugitives,  
Countrymen! For you, meanwhile the lake rocked me,  
And the boatman sat calmly and praised the journey.  
Far out on the surface of the lake was One joyous swell  
Beneath the sails, and now the town blooms and brightens  
There in the dawn, and the boat is safely guided*

*From the shady Alps and now rests in the harbor.  
Warm is the shore here and friendly the open valleys,  
Beautifully literature up with paths, gleam verdantly toward me.  
Gardens stand together and already the glistening bud is beginning,  
And the bird's song invites the wanderer.  
All seems familiar, even the hurried greetings  
Seem those of friends, every face seems a kindred one.*

4

*But of course! It is the land of your birth, the soil of your homeland,  
What you seek, it is near, already comes to meet you.  
And not in vain does he stand, like a son, at the wave-washed  
Gate, and sees and seeks loving names for you,  
With his song, a wandering man, blessed Lindau!  
This is one of the land's hospitable portals,  
Enticing us to go out into the much-promising distance,  
There, where the wonders are, there, where the divine wild game,  
High up the Rhine breaks his daring path down to the plains,  
And forth from the rocks the jubilant valley emerges,  
In there, through bright mountains, to wander the Como,  
Or down, as the day changes, to open the lake;  
But you are more enticing to me, you consecrated portal!  
To go home, where the blossoming paths are known to me,  
There to visit the land and the beautiful valleys of the Neckar,  
And the forests, the green of holy trees, where the oak  
Likes to stand amidst silent birches and beeches,  
And in the mountains a place, friendly, takes me captive.*

5

*There they welcome me. O voice of the town, of my mother!  
O you touch me, you stir up what I learned long ago!  
Yet they are still the same! Still the sun and joy blossom for you,  
O you dearest ones! And almost more brightly in your eyes than before.  
Yes! Old things are still the same! They thrive and ripen, yet nothing  
Which lives and loves there abandons its faithfulness.  
But the best, the real find, which lies beneath the rainbow  
Of holy peace, is reserved for young and old.  
I talk like a fool. It is joy. Yet tomorrow and in the future  
When we go outside and look at the living fields,  
Beneath the tree's blossoms, in the holidays of spring,  
Much shall I talk and hope with you about this, dear ones!  
Much have I heard about the great father and have  
Long kept silent about him, and reigns over mountain ranges,  
Who will soon grant us heavenly gifts and call  
For brighter song and send many good spirits. O do not delay,  
Come, you preservers! Angels of the year, and you,*

6

*Angels of the house, come! Into all the veins of life,  
Rejoicing all at once, let the heavenly share itself!  
Ennoble! Renew! So that nothing that's humanly good, so that not a  
Single hour of the day may be without the joyful ones a that also  
Such joy, as now, when lovers are reunited,  
As it should be, may be fittingly hallowed.  
When we bless the meal, whom shall I name and when we*

*Rest from the life of day, tell me, how shall I give thanks?  
Shall I name the high one then? A god does not love what is unfitting,  
To grasp him, our joy is almost too small.  
Often we must be silent; holy names are lacking,  
Hearts beat and yet talk holds back?  
But string-music lends its tones to every hour,  
And perhaps brings joy to the heavenly who draw near.  
This makes ready, and care too will almost be  
Appeased, which came into our joy.  
Cares like these, whether he likes it or not, a singer  
Must bear in his soul, and often, but the others not.*

Translated by Keith Hoeller

## **Remembrance**

*The northeast blows,  
Of winds the dearest  
To me, because a fiery spirit  
And a good voyage it promises to mariners.  
But go now and greet  
The beautiful Garonne,  
And the gardens of Bordeaux  
There, where along the sharp bank  
Runs the path and into the river  
Deep falls the brook, but above  
Gaze out a noble pair  
Of oaks and white poplars;*

*Still I remember this well, and how  
The broad treetops of the elm wood  
Lean over the mill,  
But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows.  
On holidays there too  
Walk the brown women  
On silken soil,  
In the month of March,  
When night and day are equal  
And over slow paths,  
Heavy with golden dreams,  
Lulling breezes drift.*



*But someone pass me,  
Full of dark light,  
The fragrant cup,  
So that I may rest; for sweet  
Would be the slumber in the shade.  
It is not good  
To be soulless with mortal  
Thoughts. But a  
Conversation is good and to say  
The heart's intention, to hear much  
About days of love,  
And deeds which occurred.*

*But where are the friends? Bellarmin  
With his companion? Many  
Are shy of going to the source;  
For richness begins namely  
In the sea. They,  
Like painters, bring together  
The beauty of the earth and disdain  
Not the winged war, and  
To dwell alone, for years, beneath  
The leafless mast, where through the night gleam neither  
The holidays of the town,  
Nor lyre-music and native dancing.*

*But now to the Indies  
The men have gone,  
There to the windy peak  
On vine-covered hills, where down  
The Dordogne comes  
And together with the magnificent  
Garonne as wide as the sea  
The river flows out. But it is  
The sea that takes and gives memory,  
And love too fixes attentive eyes  
But what remains is founded by the poets.*

Translated by Keith Hoeller

## **Remembrance**

*The north-easterly blows,  
Of winds the dearest to me,  
Because a fiery spirit  
And happy voyage it promises to mariners.  
But go now, go and greet  
The beautiful Garonne  
And the gardens of Bordeaux  
To where on the rugged bank  
The path runs and into the river  
Deep falls the brook, but above them  
A noble pair of oaks  
And white poplars looks out;*

*Still I remember this, and how  
The elm wood with its great leafy tops  
Inclines, towards the mill,  
But in the courtyard a fig-tree grows.  
On holidays there too  
The brown women walk  
On silken ground,  
In the month of March,  
When night and day are equal  
And over slow footpaths,  
Heavy with golden dreams,  
Lulling breezes drift.*

*But someone pass me,  
The fragrant cup  
Full of dark light,  
So that I may rest now; for sweet  
It would be drowse amid shadows.  
It is not good  
To be soulless  
With mortal thoughts. But good  
Is converse, and to speak  
The heart's opinion, to hear many tales  
About days of love  
And deeds that have occurred.*

*But where are the friends? Where Bellarmin  
And his companion? Many a man  
Is shy of going to the source;  
For wealth begins in  
The sea. And they,  
Like painters, bring together  
The beautiful things of the earth  
And do not disdain winged war, and  
To live in solitude, for years, beneath the  
Defoliate mast, where through the night do not gleam  
The city's holidays,  
Nor music of strings, nor indigenous dancing.*

*But now to the Indians  
Those men have gone,  
There on the airy peak  
On grape-covered hills, where down  
The Dordogne comes  
And together with the glorious  
Garonne as wide as the sea  
The current sweeps out. But it is the sea  
That takes and gives remembrance,  
And love no less keeps eyes attentively fixed,  
But what is lasting the poets provide.*

Translated by Michael Hamburger