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The Descent of the Logos

Seminar Notes

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Contents

1. Introduction

I would like to begin this seminar with a look at the interview Heidegger granted the German weekly *Der Spiegel* on September 23, 1966 and which was published, according to his wishes, only after his death, in 1976.[1] Heidegger had wanted to address some of the charges that had been made in connection with his involvement with National Socialism, especially his brief rectorate of 1933-1934. Much of what he has to say in that interview repeats what he had already written down in 1945, shortly after the end of the war. I do no want to go into most of the interview here.[2] In this interview Heidegger was asked about a notorious remark found in the *Introduction to Metaphysics,* where he had insisted that what today is offered as philosophy of National Socialism has nothing to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely with the encounter of planetary technology and modern man).[3] The Spiegel introduced its question with a remark that Heidegger got caught up in the politics of "this supposed new departure … by way of the university."

> SPIEGEL: After about a year, you gave up the function again that you had assumed in this process. But in a lecture in 1935, which was published in 1952 as "An Introduction to Metaphysics" you said: "The works that are being offererd around today," today being 1935 "as the philosophy of National Socialism, but have nothing to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely with the encounter of planetarily determined technology and modern human beings) are fishing for big catches in the murky waters of "value" and "wholes.'" Did you add the words in parentheses in 1953, when it was printed — perhaps to explain to the readers of 1953 what you thought of as National Socialism, in 1953 — or was this parenthetical remark already there in 1935?
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> HEIDEGGER: It was in my manuscript and corresponds exactly to my conception of technology at the time, but not yet to my later interpretation of the essence of technology as con-struct [*Gestell*]. The reason I did not read the passage aloud was because I was convinced my audience

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1 "Spiegel Interview with Martin Heidegger," trans. Lisa Harrries, in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, introduction by Karsten Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 41-66.

2 See "The Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts", trans. Lisa Harries, *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism,* 13–32.

3 Martin Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, *Gesamtausgabe* [abbreviated as GA, followed by volume] (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983) vol. 40, 208. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Garden City: Anchor Books. 1961, 166. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Mit Heidegger gegen Heidegger denken. Zur Veröffentlichung von Vorlesungen aus dem Jahre 1935," *Philosophisch-politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971) 67-75.
Introduction to Metaphysics, GA 40. 208, original ed. 152, trans., 166.

> would understand me correctly. The stupid ones and the spies and the snoopers understood it differently — and might as well have, too.[4]

Heidegger goes on to speak of our un-free relationship to technology. To gain a free relationship, we would have to stand outside the technological world. As it is, we do not have it in our control. Technology is neither tool nor instrument:

> SPIEGEL: It is striking that throughout time human beings have been unable to master their tools; look at the magician's apprentice. Is it not somewhat too pessimistic to say that we will not be able to master this certainly much greater tool of modern technology?
> HEIDEGGER: Pessimism, no. Pessimism and optimism are positions that fall too short of the realm we are attempting to reflect upon here. But above all modern technology is not a "tool," and it no longer has anything to do with tools.
> SPIEGEL: Why should we be so overpowered by technology...?
> HEIDEGGER: I do not say overpowered. I say we have no path that corresponds to the essence of technology as of yet.
> SPIEGEL: One could naïvely object: What do we have to come to terms with here? Everything functions. More and more electric power plants are being built. Production is flourishing. People in the highly technological parts of the earth are well provided for. We live in prosperity. What is really missing here?
> HEIDEGGER: Everything functions. That is exactly what is uncanny. Everything functions and the functioning drives us further and further to more functioning, and technology tears people away and uproots them from the earth more and more. I don't know if you are scared; I was certainly scared when I recently saw the photographs of the earth taken from the moon. We don't need an atom bomb at all; the uprooting of human beings is already taking place. We only have purely technological conditions left. It is no longer an earth on which human beings live today. I recently had a long conversation with René Char in Provence–as you know, the poet and Resistance fighter. Rocket bases are being built in Provence, and the country is being devastated in an incredible way. The poet, who certainly cannot be suspected of sentimentality or a glorification of the idyllic, said to me that the uprooting of human beings which is going on now is the end if thinking and poetry do not acquire nonviolent power once again.[5]

Heidegger emphasizes that technology has to rob us of the earth, has to make us rootless. To the extent that we live in the technological age we have become displaced persons:

> HEIDEGGER: From our human experience and history, at least as far as I am informed, I know that everything essential and great has only emerged when human beings had a home and were rooted in a tradition. Today's literature is, for instance, largely destructive.[6]

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[4] *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, 54.
[5] *Ibid.,* 55-56.
[6] *Ibid.,* 56.

I want to underscore what is here claimed: the destructiveness of modern literature is tied by Heidegger to technology. This raises two questions:

1. What is the proper place of literature (and more generally of art) in our technological age?

2. In what sense is such literature destructive (as opposed to *erbaulich* **[edifying]**?)?[7]

The Spiegel interviewer then raises the question: what if anything can the individual still do to prevent the loss of our humanity to technology? Heidegger's notorious answer gave the *Spiegel* the title for its interview:

> HEIDEGGER: Those questions bring us back to the beginning of our conversation. If I may answer quickly and perhaps somewhat vehemently, but from long reflection: Philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all merely human meditations and endeavors. Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god.[8]

The *Spiegel* returns to the question of National Socialism which, in its way, according to Heidegger, sought to address the problem facing modernity:

> SPIEGEL: It has, of course, always been a misunderstanding of philosophy to think that the philosopher should have some direct effect with his philosophy. Let us return to the beginning. Is it not conceivable that National Socialism can be seen on the one hand as a realization of that "planetary encounter" and on the other as the last, most horrible, strongest, and, at the same time, most helpless protest against this encounter of "planetarily determined technology" and modern human beings? Apparently, you are dealing with opposites in your own person that are such that many by-products of your activities can only really be explained in that you, with different parts of your being that do not touch the philosophical core, cling to many things about which you as a philosopher know that they have no continuity — for instance to concepts like "home" [*Heimat*], "rootedness," and similar things. How do planetary technology and "home" fit together?

Heidegger's answer reaffirms the direction in which National Socialism went even as he criticizes it:

> HEIDEGGER: I would not say that. It seems to me that you take technology too absolutely. I do not think the situation of human beings in the world of planetary technology is an inextricable and inescapable disastrous fate; rather I think that the task of thinking is precisely to help, within its

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[7] Here it might be interesting to bring in Nietzsche's understanding of decadence. See especially *Götzendämmerung*.

> bounds, human beings to attain an adequate relationship [*zureichendes Verhältnis*] to the essence of technology at all. Although National Socialism went in that direction, those people were much too limited in their thinking to gain a really explicit relationship to what is happening today and what has been under way for three centuries.[9]

Heidegger finds occasional hints of attempts to prepare for this presence or absence of God in the United States and wonders whether in Russia or China ancient traditions might awaken and help grant us a freer relationship to the technological world. The Germans are told to look to the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin.

> HEIDEGGER: It is not for me to decide how far I will get with my attempt at thinking and in which way it will be received and productively transformed in the future. In 1957 I gave a lecture entitled "The Principle of Identity" for the anniversary of the University of Freiburg. In it I last risked showing, in a few steps of thought, the extent to which a thinking experience of what is most characteristic of modern technology can go. I attempted to show that it may go so far as opening up the possibility that human beings of the technological age experience the relationship to a demand that they can not only hear but to which they also belong. My thinking has an essential connection to Hölderlin's poetry. But I do not think Hölderlin is just any poet, whose work is a subject, among many others, for literary historians. I think Hölderlin is the poet who points toward the future, who expects the god, and who therefore cannot remain simply a subject for Hölderlin research in the literary historical imagination.[10]

Heidegger here insists that his thinking stands in a relationship to Hölderlin's poetry which is not to be gotten around: a remarkable statement for a philosopher to make. It reminds one of what a medieval philosopher might have said about the relationship of his thinking to the Bible. But can a philosopher today claim this sort of thing without surrendering all claims to be considered a philosopher (Consider, for example, Plato's relationship to Homer in *The Republic)* ? And how can Heidegger attribute to the hymns of the half-mad Hölderlin a significance comparable to that of Scripture?

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8 *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism,* 56–57.
9 *Ibid.,* 61.
10 *Ibid.,* 62.

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This is a claim that Heidegger could not always have made. The *young theologian* could not have made it: his thinking then also stood in an essential relationship to a text, a text believed to be the word of God. The *young logician* could not have made it. He placed his work in the service of a timeless logos. The Heidegger of *Being and Time* could not have made it, as we shall see later. Nor could the Heidegger of 1933.

To be sure, Heidegger had encountered Hölderlin much earlier than any of those milestones:

> In 1910, Norbert von Hellingrath, who was killed in action before Verdun in 1916, first published Hölderlin's Pindar trannslations from the manuscripts. In 1914, there followed the first publication of Hölderlin's late hymns. These two books hit us students like an earthquake. Stefan George, who had first directed Hellingrath's attention to Hölderlin, now in turn received decisive inspiration from those first editions, as did Rilke.[11]

At that time, Heidegger was engaged in the study of logic. He then insisted on the need to liberate logic from grammar in a way that invites comparison with the work of Wittgenstein or Frege. It would be interesting to compare the language of these logical writings to that of his poems of the time, such as "Abendgang auf der Reichenau." The language of his dissertation is by its very nature translatable. *Gesang,* on the other hand, is untranslatable.

To understand what lets Heidegger claim that his thinking stands in an absolutely essential relationship to the poetry of Hölderlin we must gain not only a deeper understanding of Hölderlin's poetry, but also an understanding of the progress of Heidegger's thinking, more especially the evolution of his thinking of *logos* (*Rede*). We have to take seriously Heidegger's self-description in a letter to Löwith (August 19, 1921) as a "Christian theo-*logian.*"[12] It points to what Heidegger, from the very beginning, sought in "logic." As Theodore Kisiel points out, "One could easily write a whole book characterizing Heidegger's entire career as that of a 'logician.'"[13] Such a book would have to consider carefully Kisiel's study of the *Genesis of Being and Time* and what is said in it about the submissive dedication demanded of the phenomenologist: "a nonreflective categorial immersion or absorption *(Hingabe*) rather than an

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11 Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language" in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 78.

12 Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time (Berkeley: University of California Press1993), 7, 78, 287.

13 *Ibid.*,398.

inspection (*Hinsicht*)."[14] Kisiel points to Emil Lask, who used *Hingabe* "to describe our immediate experience of forms of life (like values), in which we are already 'given over' (*hingegeben*) to them."[15] But without denying Heidegger's profound indebtedness to Lask, we must also acknowledge that the term is quite ordinary German and such submissive self-surrender is demanded by Heidegger already in these first publications — not yet of the phenomenologist, to be sure, but of the logician. Such a book on Heidegger as logician would also have trace the necessities of thought that led Heidegger to his progressive temporalization of the *logos* and its incarnation in the work of some prophetic genius, where, as "*Hingabe*" suggests, what is at issue is freedom and what might bind its excessive projection of possibilities: from beginning to end, problems of logic for Heidegger are also problems of ethics. In this seminar I shall take a few steps that may eventually lead to such a book.

But for now, let me return to Heidegger's relationship to Hölderlin. It is significant that Hölderlin becomes crucially important to Heidegger just as he begins to distance himself from National Socialism. Hölderlin fills a space opened up by this disappointment: In WS 1934/35 Heidegger offers his first course on Hölderlin, a lecture course on the hymns "Germanien" and "Der Rhein." The prefatory remark deserves to be quoted:

> He still has to be passed over in silence for a long time, especially now that the "interest" in him is rising and literary history looks for new themes. One writes about "Hölderlin and his gods." This may well be the most extreme misinterpretation by means of which one pushes the thinker whom the Germans still need to confront into irrelevance under the guise of finally doing him justice. As if this work needed that, especially from the bad judges that do their work today. One takes Hölderlin "historically" and thus misunderstands what is alone essential, that standing beyond time and place his work has already surpassed our historical busy-work and has founded the beginning of another history, that history which begins the battle that will decide the advent or flight of God.[16]

The apocalyptic overtones are difficult to overlook.

> In the prefatory first paragraph of the lecture course we find this claim:
> Hölderlin is one of our greatest thinkers, that is the *thinker* who belongs most to the future (*unser zukünftigster Denker*), because he is our greatest *poet*. The poetic turn to his poetry is possible

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[14] *Ibid.*, 499.

[15] *Ibid.,*

[16] Martin Heidegger, GA39. *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* (WS 1934–1935), 1.

> only as the confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with the *revelation of being* (*Offenbarung des Seyns*) which has been achieved in his poetry [17]

In opening himself to Hölderlin, Heidegger opens himself to a historical transformation that lets, in his eyes, everything that is now occurring seem insignificant. But in opening himself to this future, he also claims to be opening himself to the ground of his own Dasein. That is to say, the encounter with Hölderlin's poetry *renders us* "*authentic*," a concept to which we will return. Commenting on a letter Hölderlin wrote to his brother on New Year's Day of 1799 in which Hölderlin speaks of art as being much more than mere play although it presents itself to us in the guise of mere play, that it is a self-recollection in which all our powers are alive, Heidegger writes:

> Poetry — not play; the relationship to it not playful relaxation that lets one forget oneself, but the awakening and the forcing together (*Zusammenriß*) of the individual's (*des Einzelnen*) ownmost essence, by means of which he reaches back into the ground of his Dasein.[18]

Poetry, Heidegger claims here, to be encountered as such, requires *authenticity*.

Taking up this hint I shall try to show that Heidegger's turn to Hölderlin is indeed prepared for by the understanding of authenticity we find in *Being and Time,* more especially by his struggle with the question: *what is it to use language authentically*? And that inevitably intertwines with that other question: *what is it to think authentically*? Seminars 4 and 5 will address these questions in detail.

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But let me return to the claim that Hölderlin is our greatest poet, and because he is that, is also our greatest thinker, who belongs most to the future. What is the relationship between poetry and the greatness of thinking? Heidegger 's remark recalls Nietzsche's understanding of thinkers who are *unzeitgemäß,* that is, untimely. Nietzsche himself may be understood as such an *unzeitgemäßer Denker* who, just because of this, had to move to poetry. That such thinkers pose special problems of interpretation stands to reason. Do they not deny us the maps on which we like to rely?

Let me explain what I have in mind by looking away for a minute from Heidegger and Hölderlin to Nietzsche, or more precisely to what Arthur Danto has to say about Nietzsche's style. In the preface to his book we read:

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[17] Ibid., 6.

> His language would have been less colorful had he known what he was trying to say, but then he would not have been the original thinker he was, working through a set of problems which had hardly been charted before. Small wonder his maps are illustrated, so to speak, with all sorts of monsters and fearful indications and cartographic embellishments.[19]

This suggests that the special color of Nietzsche's discourse, its appeal to us as literature, is inseparable from the author's failure to know what he was trying to say, a failure Danto links to Nietzsche's originality as a thinker. Writing from the perspective of contemporary analytical philosophy, Danto to be sure insists that we "know a great deal more philosophy today." He admits that his way of reading Nietzsche from a contemporary perspective "may precipitate some anachronisms," but claims that the progress of philosophy has placed us in a position to understand what is philosophically important in Nietzsche's texts better than he himself was able to do: that to read Nietzsche as a philosopher, we have to do violence to his texts, where such violence, Danto suggests, is the price we have to pay if we are to grasp what in Nietzsche's work remains philosophically alive. But what sort of life is this?

It is of course possible to read Nietzsche from the standpoint of contemporary analytical philosophy. But the style of the latter cannot do justice to Nietzsche's style, which has to call the analytical approach into question. Not that other approaches, say a Heideggerian approach, would prove more adequate. The difficulty is bound up rather with the very attempt to domesticate Nietzsche's texts by translating them into a philosophical idiom with which we are more at home and therefore comfortable. Such translation or translating interpretation may well help us to appropriate what Nietzsche has written. In this sense it may helps us to "explain" what he meant. But we must ask ourselves whether such "explanation" is not also a defense against a style of thinking that calls the philosophy guarded over by professional philosophers into question and invites discussion about what it is to do philosophy. Is not all original philosophy inseparable from a radical questioning that cannot turn for its answers to already available maps, to the established and accepted?

We begin to see here a connection between the end of philosophy and the triumph of technology:

> SPIEGEL: We have already named Kant, Hegel, and Marx as great movers. But impulses came from Leibniz, too — for the development of modern physics and therefore for the origin of the modern world in general. We believe you said just now that you do not expect such an effect today

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[18] Ibid., 8.

[19] Arthur C. Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher (New York: Columbia University Pres, 1980), 13–14.

> any more.
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> HEIDEGGER: No longer in the sense of philosophy. The role philosophy has played up to now has been taken over by the sciences today. To sufficiently clarify the "effect" of thinking, we must have a more in-depth discussion of what effect and effecting can mean here. For this, careful differentiations need to be made between cause, impulse, support, assistance, hindrance, and cooperation. But we can only gain the appropriate dimension to make these differentiations if we have sufficiently discussed the principle of sufficient reason. Philosophy dissolves into the individual sciences: psychology, logic, political science.
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> SPIEGEL: And what takes the place of philosophy now?
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> HEIDEGGER: Cybernetics.
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> SPIEGEL: Or the pious one who remains open?
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> HEIDEGGER: But that is no longer philosophy.
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> SPIEGEL: What is it then?
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> HEIDEGGER: I call it the other thinking. To the extent that the rationality presupposed by modern science and technology is the measure of reality, no space would seem to be left for a thinking that would reach beyond that map.[20]

Philosophy for Heidegger has in an important sense come to an end. It has been overtaken by science. Of what use then is a thinking such as Heidegger's? The *Spiegel* raises this question:

> SPIEGEL: We understand that very well. But because we do not live three hundred years from now, but here and now, we are denied silence. We, politicians, semi-politicians, citizens, journalists, et cetera, we constantly have to make some sort of decision or other. We must adapt ourselves to the system under which we live, must try to change it, must watch for the narrow door to reform and for the still narrower door to revolution. We expect help from the philosopher, even if, of course, only indirect help, help in roundabout ways. And now we hear: I cannot help you.
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> HEIDEGGER: I cannot.
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> SPIEGEL: That has to discourage the nonphilosopher.
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> HEIDEGGER: I cannot because the questions are so difficult that it would be contrary to the meaning of this task of thinking to make public appearances, to preach, and to distribute moral grades. Perhaps I may risk this statement: The secret of the planetary predominance of the unthought essence of technology corresponds to the preliminariness and inconspicuousness of the thinking that attempts to reflect upon this unthought essence.
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> SPIEGEL: You do not count yourself among those who, if they would only be heard, could point out a path?

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[20] *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism,* 58–59.

> HEIDEGGER: No! I know of no path toward a direct change of the present state of the world, assuming that such a change is at all humanly possible. But it seems to me that the attempted thinking could awaken, clarify, and fortify the readiness we have already mentioned.[21]

How then are we to understand Heidegger's characterization of Hölderlin as a great thinker? Presumably he represents what Heidegger calls the "other thinking," *das andere Denken*. But can we even make sense of such a thinking given Heidegger's understanding of the age as the age of technology? For that reason it is important to confront what Heidegger has to say about Hölderlin as a great thinker with Hölderlin's erstwhile friend and roommate Hegel's comments on the place of art in the modern age, which would seem to deny any artist, more especially Hölderlin, such a role. This is why the Epilogue to "The Origin of the Work of Art" becomes so important for us. I shall return to it in a later session. But here already I would like to call attention to the main claims:

> In the most comprehensive reflection on the nature of art that the West possesses — comprehensive because it stems from metaphysics — namely Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, the following propositions occur:
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> "Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth may obtain existence for itself."
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> "One may well hope that art will continue to advance and perfect itself, but its form has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit."
>
> "In all these relationships art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation something past."
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> The judgment that Hegel passes in these statements cannot be evaded by pointing out that since Hegel's lectures in aesthetics were given for the last time during the winter of 1828-29 at the University of Berlin, we have seen the rise of many new art works and new art movements. Hegel never meant to deny this possibility. But the question remains: is art still an essential and necessary way in which that truth happens which is decisive for our historical existence, or is art no longer of this character? If, however, it is such no longer, then there remains the question why this is so. The truth of Hegel's judgment has not yet been decided; for behind this verdict there stands Western thought since the Greeks, which thought corresponds to a truth of beings that has already happened. Decision upon the judgment will be made, when it is made, from and about the truth of what is. Until then the judgment remains in force. But for that very reason, the question is necessary whether the truth that the judgment declares is final and conclusive and what follows if it is.[22]

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[21] *Ibid.,* 60.

[22] GA 5, Holzwege, 68-69; trans. Albert Hofstadter, Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," Poetry, Language, Truth (NewYork: Harper and Row, 1971), 79-80.

Any attempt to confront Heidegger's confrontation with Hölderlin turns inevitably also into a confrontation with Hegel, as with the thinker whose confidence in the reason of his age is so great that it leaves no room for that other thinking, *das andere Denken*, of which Heidegger speaks. Let me therefore conclude this session with Hegel's Heidelberger *Antrittsrede* :

> Man, since he is spirit, may and should consider himself worthy even of the highest; he cannot think the greatness and power of his spirit great enough; and with this faith nothing will be so stubborn and hard as not to open itself to him. The essence of the universe, hidden and closed at first, has no power which could offer resistance to the courage of knowledge; it must open itself to him and lay its riches and depths before his eyes and open them to his enjoyment.[23]

This leaves no room for the mysteries that lead Heidegger from philosophy to poetry, from Hegel to Hölderlin. But in order to approach Hölderlin, and not only through Heidegger, I shall spend the next two sessions just on Hölderlin.

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[23] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, *Jubiläumsausgabe,* ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1937), vol. 17, 22.

2. Hölderlin and Hegel

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Reminding you of Heidegger's pronouncement that only a god can save us and of his proclaimed essential relationship to Hölderlin, I would like to begin today's session with an observation Nietzsche makes in the *Antichrist*:

> Among Germans I am immediately understood when I say that philosophy has been corrupted by theologians' blood. The Protestant parson is the grandfather of German philosophy. Protestantism itself its *peccatum originale*. Definition of Protestantism: the partial paralysis of Christianity—and of reason. One need only say 'Tübingen Seminary' to understand what German philosophy is at bottom, an insidious theology. The Swabians are the best liars in Germany: they lie innocently.[24]

This much at least must be granted: any thorough investigation into the prehistory of transcendental idealism has to include some consideration of the Tübinger Stift, where Hegel and Hölderlin, both born in 1770, and the precocious Schelling, born in 1775, became friends, sharing religious concerns, including their unhappiness with Protestant orthodoxy and chiliastic expectations; their enthusiasm for the French revolution, which for a short time seemed to promise a secular version of the golden age; also an interest in Plato, Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant, and Fichte, their love of antiquity and poetry, an interest in myth—and their distaste for the ministry for which they were ostensibly preparing themselves.[25] Philosophers like Dieter Henrich,[26] Otto Pöggeler,[27] Christoph Jamme,[28] and Takako Shikaya[29] have demonstrated the importance of Hölderlin's contribution to the development of German idealism. But despite that contribution, Hölderlin himself left no doubt about his allegiance to poetry: in a letter to his friend Neuffer he thus called philosophy "a hospital" in which a shipwrecked poet can honorably

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24 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1959), 10.

25 The substance of this and the following seminar was published as Karsten Harries, "The Epochal Threshold and the Classical Ideal: Hölderlin contra Hegel," The Emergence of German Idealism, ed. Michael Baur and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 147 – 175.

26 Dieter Henrich, "Hölderlin über Urteil und Sein" in *Hölderlin-Jahrbuch,* vol. 14 (1965-1966), 73–96.

27 See especially Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 2nd. ed. (Freiburg: Alber, 1993).

28 Christoph Jamme, "Ein ungelehrtes Buch" in *Die philosophische Gemeinschaft zwischen Hölderlin und Hegel in Frankfurt 1797 - 1800*. *Hegel-Studien*, *Beiheft* 23 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983).

29 Takako Shikaya, "Hölderlin, Dichter jenseits des Idealismus" in *Idealismus mit Folgen. Die Epochenschwelle um 1800 in Kunst und Geisteswissenschaften* (München: Fink, 1994), 263–272.

seek refuge.[30] Heidegger seems to me right when he insists that if Hölderlin continues to present philosophy today with an important challenge, it is not as a philosopher, but a poet,[31] where inseparable from that challenge is the challenge poetry presents to philosophy.

When considering Hölderlin's influence, we should not forget that while today his place among the world's great poets is assured, for a hundred years he remained pretty much unknown. There were, to be sure, exceptions, such as Gustav Schwab, Clemens von Brentano, Bettina and Achim von Arnim, but when the fifteen-year-old Nietzsche proclaimed Hölderlin his *Lieblingsdichter,* his favorite poet, he also remarked that the majority of his compatriots had not heard of him.[32] And if Hölderlin was of only marginal significance for the development of nineteenth-century poetry, no one in the nineteenth century would have thought of him as having made a significant contribution to the emergence of German idealism — certainly not Hegel, who could be said to have outgrown Hölderlin shortly after 1800. Soon, Hegel was to "criticize the art of his day as 'dreaming' and Hölderlin's Empedocles, a kind of self-portrait, as a 'beautiful soul,' fleeing life."[33] Hegel's description of the beautiful soul in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* as a consciousness concerned to save its purity of heart, condemned to unhappiness by its refusal to realize itself in the world, may be read as also a description of Hölderlin.[34] As the spirit's progress in the *Phenomenology* has to leave the beautiful soul behind, has to leave art behind, so Hegel's progress leaves Hölderlin behind. The mature Hegel buried Hölderlin in silence. This to be sure constitutes also a very personal failing. But there is a sense in which Hegel had to leave Hölderlin behind to become Hegel.

A challenge to Hegel is thus implied by Heidegger's claim that Hölderlin, precisely "because he is our greatest *poet,*" is also "one of our greatest, that is most futural *thinkers*," a thinker whose work is said to present all of us, but especially the German people, with a profound challenge, where part of that challenge, as Heidegger understands it, is the continuing

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30 Hölderlin, "Letter to Christian Ludwig Neuffer of Nov. 12, 1798," in *Hölderlin, Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Günter Mieth (München: Hanser, 1973) vol. 2, 728.

31 Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlins Hymnen 'Germanien' und 'Der Rhein'" in *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 39 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), 6.

32 See *Dichter über Hölderlin* , ed. Jochen Schmidt (Frankfurt: Insel, 1969), 109.

33 Shikaya, p. 264. See Herma Nohl, ed., *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen, Mohr, 1907), 285 f.

34 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hofmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 463.

challenge presented by Greece. [35] Heidegger's high estimation of Hölderlin — where his focus is, as it should be, on the late hymns — was of course not original to him. Crucial, as he acknowledges, was Norbert von Hellingrath's Hölderlin edition, especially its fourth volume, which, appearing in 1914, for the first time made these hymns available. For his Hölderlin understanding, Heidegger then, like so many of his contemporaries, for example Rilke, is indebted to the enormously influential circle around Stefan George, to which von Hellingrath belonged. Heidegger himself has been quite explicit about this debt.

When Heidegger celebrates Hölderlin, not just as a great poet, but also as a great thinker, he places his own thinking in self-conscious opposition to the metaphysical thinking of the mature Hegel, who, in the spirit of considerations presented already in Plato's *Republic*, was unable to take poetry seriously as a rival claimant to truth. This is not to call into question the importance of the countless discussions in which Hölderlin and Hegel engaged, first in Tübingen (Hölderlin and Hegel became friends in 1790; the following year Schelling joined the circle) and later, from January 1797 to 1800 in Frankfurt. And it was to Hölderlin that Hegel dedicated his best known poem, "Eleusis," written in August 1796, a poem that looks forward to rejoining the friend, whom Hegel here calls *Geliebter*.[36] But soon their thoughts and paths began to diverge and we can say: only *because* Hegel (and something similar can be said of Schelling) was able to leave Hölderlin behind, could German idealism develop as it did.

Heidegger, of course, insists that the confrontation with Hölderlin still awaits us and claims that to understand his own thought, one has to understand it as serving and therefore as standing in an essential relationship to Hölderlin's poetry.[37] Socrates' teaching in the *Republic* is here reversed: the primacy of the poet over the philosopher is explicitly acknowledged. What are we to make of this?

Heidegger's turn to Hölderlin is bound up with his call for a step beyond the entire tradition of metaphysics, a tradition that is said to culminate in the work of Hegel, where that step is also understood as a step beyond modernity. If Heidegger is right, that tradition had to end in nihilism and, just because of this, we need to confront Hölderlin. Be this as it may, this much is clear: Heidegger's Hölderlin reception does not lead one to expect from this poet a

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[35] Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein*," 6.

[36] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke* I, *Theorie Werkausgabe*, *Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), 230.

decisive contribution to the turn from transcendental philosophy to a new metaphysics, but quite the opposite: an invitation to leave metaphysics behind, as the once "timely" philosophers Schelling and Hegel left Hölderlin, this now "timely," then "untimely" poet, behind.

2

Those who want to argue in favor of Hölderlin's importance to the genesis of German idealism can cite a great deal in support. A particularly weighty piece of evidence is the tantalizing fragment that has been published as "Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus," the "Earliest System Programme of German Idealism," dating presumably from late 1796 or early 1797—in January 1797 Hegel joined his friend in Frankfurt and the two engaged in particularly intense philosophical discussions. [38] The author, speaking in the first person, begins with the idea of "myself" as a "free absolute being" and in Fichtean fashion turns next to the world, which is said to appear together with this I, demanding a physics guided by ideas born from the question "how does the world have to be for a moral being?"—a demand that may be thought to foreshadow Hegel's later philosophy of nature. The fragment turns then to the political sphere, where it calls for an abolition of the state as a mechanism incompatible with genuine freedom; it culminates in an appeal to the idea of beauty, taken "in its highest Platonic sense," as to the idea which joins truth and goodness. The highest act of reason is here said to be an aesthetic act: "Our philosophers, who cling to the letter, lack an aesthetic sense. The philosophy of the spirit is an aesthetic philosophy." With this turn to the aesthetic poetry, too, "gains a higher dignity. Poetry will become in the end what she was in the beginning—the *teacher of humanity*; for then there will be no philosophy, no history any longer. The art of poetry alone will survive all the other sciences and arts."[39] The dependence on Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*, where beauty is thought as the mediation of sense and spirit, is evident.[40] And it is worth noting that it was in this connection that Schiller used for the first time the word *aufheben* to mean both: "to abolish" *and* "to preserve"; here Hegel found this key term

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[37] Martin Heidegger, "The *Spiegel* Interview" in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, trans. Lisa Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 62.

[38] *Ibid.,* 234–236.

[39] *Ibid.,* 235.

[40] See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, ed. and trans. with an introduction, commentary, and glossary of term by Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 304–305.

of his dialectic:[41] in Schiller's *Letters* then German idealism has an obvious root. In the "Systemprogramm," not only the masses, but the philosopher, too, is said to be in need of a *sinnliche Religion,* a sensible—or should it be sensuous—religion, where the paradigmatic example of such a religion, not named in the programme, but surely present, is provided by the Greeks: "Monotheism of reason and heart, polytheism of imagination and art, this is what we need."[42] The fragment proceeds to call for "a new mythology, but this mythology must stand in the service of the ideas, must be a mythology of reason. Before we make the ideas aesthetic, i. e. mythological, they hold no interest for the people; and, the other way around, before mythology is reasonable, the philosopher has to be ashamed of it."[43] "A higher spirit, sent by heaven, has to found this new religion among us; it will be humanity's last, greatest work."[44] This higher spirit presumably will not be a pure philosopher, but a philosophizing poet such as Hölderlin thought himself. Sensing the presence of the divine in the world, such a poet would have to find the strength to once again name the gods.

The fragment thus looks forward to a synthesis of the monotheism of spirit and reason and the polytheism of the imagination, that is to say to a synthesis of an enlightened Christianity and Paganism. Such remarks make it tempting to claim the entire text, with its extravagant praise for poetry, for Hölderlin,[45] despite all that suggests, as Otto Pöggeler has once again shown, that Hegel is indeed its author, as the handwriting argues,[46] although Schelling's authorship has also been claimed.[47] But the very fact that a case has been made for each of the three friends shows how close they were in their thinking at that time, how close they were also to Schiller. That Hölderlin, if not the author of the programme, yet had a profound influence at least on its aesthetic second part, which seems to strike a rather different note than the first with

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41 Ibid., 304 - 305.

42 Hegel, *Werke I*, 235–236.

43 Hegel, *Werke I*, 236.

44 Hegel, *Werke I*, 236.

45 As suggested by Wilhelm Böhm (1926), refuted by Ludwig Strauß. For a brief summary of the controversy, see the editorial comment in Hegel, *Werke I,* 628.

46 Otto Pöggeler, "Hegel, Verfasser des ältesten Systemprogramms" in *Hegel-Tage Urbino, 1965*, ed. Hans-Georg Gadamer (Bonn 1969), 17–32. See also Pöggeler, "Philosophie im Schatten Hölderlins" in *Der Idealismus und seine Gegenwart,* ed. U. Guzzoni, B. Lang und L. Siep (Hamburg 1976) 361–377. For the relationship between Hegel and Hölderlin see also Christoph Jamme, *"Ein ungelehrtes Buch*, 354 ff.

47 Franz Rosenzweig, who published the fragment in 1917, recognized Hegel's handwriting of ca. 1796, but argued that the content suggested that its real author was the precocious Schelling. See editorial comment, *Werke*, 628.

its emphasis on freedom, seems difficult to deny. He certainly was thinking along these lines, as is shown by his letter to Schiller of September 4, 1795:

> I seek to develop for myself the idea of an infinite progress of philosophy, I want to show, that the persistent demand which must be made of every system, the unification of subject and object in an absolute — I, or whatever one wants to call it, can indeed be achieved aesthetically, in intellectual intuition, but theoretically only through an infinite approximation, like the approximation of the square to the circle, and that to realize such a system of thought, an infinity is just as necessary, as it is for a system of acting.[48]

This letter was written after Hölderlin's departure from Jena, to which he had been drawn to be nearer to his heroes Schiller and Fichte, also hoping for some appointment in philosophy, but which he soon left, penniless, disappointed in his hopes to find a suitable position, and suspicious of the airy flights of metaphysical speculation. Despite his dense and rather opaque contributions to philosophy and aesthetics, and despite his hopes to get an appointment in philosophy, Hölderlin was hardly a philosopher. For that he had, from the very beginning, too deep a suspicion of reason and too high an opinion of the poetic imagination. It requires little commentary to make it clear that such an elevation of aesthetic intuition above theory, with its attendant suggestion of an elevation of poetry above philosophy, is profoundly incompatible with the philosophy of the mature Hegel. Clear also is the danger such enthusiastic praise of aesthetic intuition poses to philosophical reflection.

3

In keeping with the Systemprogramm's reference to polytheism, Hölderlin's above statement to Schiller invites us to think of German Idealism as the product of an attempt to arrive at a synthesis of a rationalized Christianity and Pagan polytheism, to envision a recovery of the latter on the basis of the former—an impossible attempt perhaps, as is suggested by William Desmond, when he claims that Hölderlin is shattered "in the tension between Greek paganism and Christianity in the tremendous effort to wed together in a perhaps impossible marriage the figures of Christ and Dionysus."[49] The felt need for such a synthesis, which rules out any simple repetition of what the ancients achieved, presupposes an experience of the age, then widely shared, as what Hölderlin in the hymn "Brot und Wein" calls *die dürftige Zeit*, "the destitute

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[48] Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, 667.

[49] William Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986) 109.

age." Such an experience was bound up with a conviction that Christianity, with its one-sided emphasis on inwardness and spirit, was somehow responsible for the poverty of modernity.—This is what lay behind Schiller's argument for the moral and political significance of an aesthetic education, and was bound up also with idealizations of ancient Greece as the unsurpassed exemplar of beauty and full humanity. Winckelmann had interpreted the geography of Greece, which discouraged authoritarian rule, and its mild climate as favorable to a free humanity dwelling in beauty. Both Goethe and Schiller wrote poems that exemplify the kind of literary fare on which the young Hölderlin was raised and which provided him with a framework in which to place what he experienced. Consider, for example, Schiller's "Die Götter Griechenlands" (1788, 1793), which nostalgically looks back to a beautiful, loving world, joyfully presided over by the gods, which the poem significantly calls

> Schöne Wesen aus dem Fabelland!
>
> Beautiful beings from the realm of fable![50]

Schiller contrasts an image of nature—when Helios guided his golden chariot across the sky, when oreads filled the heights, a dryad lived in every tree, and streams sprang from the urns of naiads, when death did not threaten as a gruesome, scythe-rattling skeleton, but life ended gently with a kiss—with the soulless world of today. His lament is characteristic of the romantic classicism inaugurated by Winckelmann.

Schiller also names the power that destroyed this world, whose trace only is preserved in the *Feenland der Lieder*, the fairy land of songs.

> *Einen* zu bereichern unter allen,
> Mußte diese Götterwelt vergehn.
>
> To enrich *one* among all,
> This world of gods had to perish.

The Christian God who suffers no other gods besides himself is here blamed for *Die entgötterte Natur*, for nature denied divinity.

Hölderlin addresses this same theme in one of his late hymns, "Der Einzige", which also begins with an invocation of a Greece full with the presence of the gods, but only to call for Christ:

> Viel hab' ich schönes gesehn,

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50 Where no translator is given, the translation is my own.

Und gesungen Gottes Bild,
Hab' ich, das lebet unter
Den Menschen, aber dennoch
Ihr alten Götter und all
Ihr tapfern Söhne der Götter
Noch Einen such ich, den
Ich liebe unter euch,
Wo ihr den letzten eures Geschlechts,
Des Haußes Kleinod mir
Dem fremden Gaste verberget. (Erste Fassung)

[I] Have looked upon much that is lovely
And sung the image of God
As here among human kind
It lives, and yet, and yet,
You ancient gods and all
You valiant sons of the gods,
One other I look for whom
Within your ranks I love,
Where hidden from the alien guest, from me,
You keep the last of your kind,
The treasured gem of the house.[51]

The Greek world is visible. Christ, however, remains hidden. And yet this hidden Christ, said to be of one race with the gods and the sons of the gods, although unique precisely as the last, the god to end all gods, is the object of the poet's special love.

Mein Meister und Herr!
O du, mein Lehrer
Was bist du ferne
Geblieben? und da
Ich fragte unter den Alten,
Die Helden und
Die Götter, warum bliebest
Du aus? Und jetzt ist voll
Von Trauern meine Seele
Als eifertet, ihr Himmlischen, selbst
Daß, dien' ich einem, mir

Das andere fehlet. (Erste Fassung)

My Master and Lord!
O you, my teacher!
Why did you keep
Away? And when
I asked among the ancients,
The heroes and
The gods, then why were you
Not there? And now my soul
Is full of sadness as though
You Heavenly yourselves excitedly cried
That if I serve one I
must lack the other.[52]

Hölderlin speaks of his love for the invisible Christ, but at the same time considers this love a fault that needs to be remedied

Es hänget aber an Einem
Die Liebe. Diesesmal
Ist nemlich vom eigenen Herzen
Zu sehr gegangen der Gesang,
Gut machen will ich den Fehl
Wenn ich noch andere singe (Erste Fassung)

To One alone, however,
Love clings. For this time too much
From my own heart the song
Has come; if other songs follow
I'll make amends for the fault

Hölderlin speaks of the guilt incurred by such love:

Ich weiß es aber, eigene Schuld
Ists! Denn zu sehr,
O Christus! häng' ich an dir,
Wiewohl Herakles Bruder.
Und kühn bekenn' ich, du
Bist Bruder auch des Eviers, der

[51] The English translation of "Der Einzige" by Michael Hamburger in *Poems and Fragments,* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961),446–461.

An die Wagen spannte
Die Tyger ... (Erste Fassung)

And yet, I know, it is my
Own fault! For too greatly,
O Christ, I'm attached to you,
Although Heracles' brother.
And boldly I confess,
You are the brother also of Evius
Who to his chariot harnessed
The tigers...

Daringly the poet proclaims Christ the brother of Heracles and Dionysus, but one of the sons of the highest, but one manifestation of the divine. A polytheistic pantheism is announced, reminiscent of the call of the "Systemprogramm" for a synthesis of a "monotheism of reason and heart" and a "polytheism of imagination and art."[53] Yet the poem also insists on a decisive difference between Christ, on the one hand, and Heracles and Dionysus. on the other:

Es hindert aber eine Schaam
Mich dir zu vergleichen
Die weltlichen Männer....(Erste Fassung)

And yet a shame forbids me
To associate with you
The worldly men....

Hölderlin's spiritual development makes him ashamed to compare the other-worldly Christ to the worldly gods of Greece. But that very shame is called into question by the poet's profession of guilt, which suggests that Hölderlin feels that he should not thus feel ashamed, that he needs to outgrow such shame.

This charge of personal guilt is underscored by one of Hölderlin's epigrams to which I shall return in concluding this seminar:

Wurzel alles Übels
Einig zu sein ist göttlich und gut; woher die Sucht denn
Unter den Menschen, daß nur *einer* und *eines* nur sei?

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[52] Hamburger, 449.

[53] See Jochen Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen: "Friedensfeier" — "Der Einzige" — "Patmos"* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990) 109-115.

Root of All Evil

To be at one is divine and good; whence then the rage
Among human beings, that *only one* and *one thing* should be?

It is tempting to answer Hölderlin's question with the epigram's own word: isn't it precisely because "To be at one is divine and good" that we seek to raise one thing, person, or god, above all others and thus to gather what is fragmented into a whole?[54] And yet the epigram calls the desire to thus single out one as the only one a *Sucht,* a disease, which the title terms the root of all evil. Evil here is said to have its origin in the idolatrous idealization of some particular person or being so that it becomes the only one and tolerates no equals. Such idealization freezes the heart, prevents it from remaining open to contrary claims.

But the fragment gestures not only backwards, to the pluralism of the Greek gods in which the invisible Godhead is thought to manifest itself, but also forward to a unity no longer based on any particular, to the universal as the only adequate realization of the divine spirit. From this vantage point Christ and the Greek gods are recognized as brothers: at the same time it allows for a recognition of the epochal significance of Christ's death: Christ mediates the divine in a way that left no room for other divine mediators, indeed left no room finally even for himself as a visible presence. [55] His death thus issues in the age of the dead, the absent God: as Hölderlin writes in a later version of the elegy "Brot und Wein":

In Ephesus ein Aergerniß aber ist Tempel und Bild.[56]

But in Ephesus temple and image are a scandal.

The reference is to Paul's visit to Ephesus, which caused people to say, "gods made with hands are not gods" and deposed "the great goddess Artemis ... from her significance."[57] Precisely the death of Christ allows him to be reborn in the spirit in each individual, a thought familiar also to Schelling and Hegel: the plastic principle of the Greeks had to yield to the Christian pneumatic principle. As Jochen Schmidt suggests in his discussion of the hymn: "But Christ is here the appearance of the epochal revolution. On one hand he embodies the form-bound, humanly mediating principle of the Greek pantheon. He is therefore called he who took on 'human form.'

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54 See also Karsten Harries, "The Root of All Evil: Lessons of an Epigram" in *The International Journal of Philosophical Studies,* vol. 1 , no. 1 (March 1993) 1–20.

55 Schmidt, 106.

56 See Schmidt, 135.

On the other hand he represents a pneumatic principle. The consolation through the Holy Spirit, at his farewell, points to this." [58]

4

But unlike Hegel, Hölderlin finds it difficult to accept the loss of the Greek plastic principle, even if preserved in memory and song. "Der Einzige" thus communicates a tragic tension between the poet's love of Greece, which he says he loves more than his *Vaterland*, and his love of Christ. The poem's conclusion, which likens the poet to Christ, opens up the possibility that a new epoch might be beginning, in which not the disembodied spirit, but its incarnation in the living word, not the philosopher, but the poet, assumes the essential task of mediating between the Highest and the people.

Denn wie der Meister
Gewandelt auf Erden
Ein gefangener Aar,

Und viele, die
Ihn sahen, fürchteten sich,
Dieweil sein Äußerstes that
Der Vater und sein Bestes unter
den Menschen wirkete wirklich,
Und sehr betrübt war auch
Der Sohn so lange, bis er
Gen Himmel fuhr in den Lüften,
Dem gleich ist gefangen die Seele der Helden.
Die Dichter müssen auch
Die geistigen weltlich seyn (Erste Fassung)
86, 7 - 8

For as the Master
Once moved on earth,
A captive eagle,

And many who,
Looked on him were afraid,

57 *Acts*, 19: 26, 27.

While the Father did
His utmost, effectively bringing
The best to bear upon men,
And sorely troubled in mind
The Son was also until
To Heaven he rose in the winds,
So too, the souls of the heroes are captive.
The poets, and those no less who
Are spiritual, must be worldly.

The poet-hero is likened to the suffering Christ and thus also to Heracles and Dionysus: he, too, was a son of the highest, receiving from him high thoughts and a great soul. Like the philosopher in the Republic, the poet, although spiritual, has to descend into the world, even if such worldliness is experienced as a kind of imprisonment. This conclusion should be read together with the first stanza, which also had called the poet fettered and imprisoned, although that stanza spoke not of a worldly, but of a heavenly imprisonment. What imprisons the poet in the beginning of the poem is his love of ancient Greece, this transfigured world:

Denn wie in himmlische
Gefangenschaft verkaufft,
Dort bin ich, wo Apollo gieng,
In Königsgestalt,
Und zu unschuldigen Jünglingen sich
Herablies Zeus, und Söhn' in heiliger Art
Und Töchter zeugte
Der Hohe unter den Menschen. (Erste Fassung)
82, 1

For as though into heavenly
Captivity sold,
I am where Apollo walked
In the guise of a king,
And Zeus condescended
To innocent youths, and sons in a holy fashion
Begot, and daughters,
The exalted amid mankind.

58 Schmidt, 135.

This backward looking reference, not to a worldly, but to a heavenly imprisonment, does not oppose world and heaven. The heavenly ones, the Greeks gods, are at the same time worldly. As perfect mediations of sense and spirit they are paradigms of beauty. In them the opposition of heaven and world was healed, a formulation that suggests Hegel's understanding of the classical as the adequate realization of the spiritual in the sensuous, even as it suggests the incarnation—in *Patmos* Hölderlin thus refers to Christ as he "*An dem am meisten die Schönheit hing*," that is, "to whom beauty clung most." But in "Der Einzige" it is the Greek gods who forcibly fetter the poet to blessed shores, far removed from the world of his contemporaries, and make him a stranger in this modern world. Hegel might have commented that precisely because he did not find the strength to break these fetters, Hölderlin was condemned to remain a *schöne Seele*.

Two loves then struggle in Hölderlin: On one hand, a love of beauty and the synthesis that it implies, and, on the other, a love of Christ. Can there be a higher synthesis, a synthesis of these two loves? Hegel might have replied, as we may be tempted to reply: grow up! The art religion of the Greeks is dead and lies behind us. An awareness of the death and therefore the irreality of the Greek world, also of the irreality of the beautiful, so evident in Kant's *Critique of Judgment,* is part of neo-classicism and distinguishes it from other classicisms or perhaps better renaissances, which sought to repeat and if possible surpass the achievements of the ancients. But the late eighteenth century experienced the ancient world as a world that had perished, a world in ruins, not only in the obvious sense that its art and architecture had survived only in fragments, but also in the sense that the spiritual world that once supported it had disintegrated. Nature and time have triumphed over the ideal. The conclusion of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* has symptomatic significance:

> Although in looking at this decline I felt almost like a person who in writing the history of his own fatherland had to touch on its destruction, which he himself had experienced, I yet could not stop following the fates of these works as far as my eye would reach. Just as a beloved girl, standing by the side of the ocean, looks with tears in her eyes after her departing lover, without any hope of ever seeing him again, believing to see his face in the distant sail, we have, as it were, only the shadowgraph of the object of our desire, which for this reason awakens an all the stronger longing for what has been lost...[59]

Such melancholy, which also colors many of Hölderlin's poems, invites us to extend Hegel's characterization of the *schöne Seele* to all of neo-classicism, which thus appears as but one manifestation of romanticism. To do so is to presuppose that the melancholy of neo-classicism is

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[59] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 393.

misplaced, that the death of the Greek world must be affirmed, even admitting the unsurpassed splendor of Greek art: it is a presupposition of the spirit's progress, of humanity's coming of age. This is how Hegel would have us understand the death of classical art; he here follows Herder, who for that reason considered the aesthetic ideal of the Greeks suitable for the innocence of youth.[60] Of the adult a different kind of seriousness is demanded. But Hölderlin, even as he recognizes the strength of such considerations, a strength reinforced by the eschatological understanding of history that was part of his, as of Hegel's and Schelling's, Pietistic inheritance, finds it difficult to relegate the Greek gods to a world that had to perish and lies irrecoverably behind us. He himself claims to have lived in the presence of the gods. What Schiller relegates to a wonderful, but forever lost past, whose trace lives only in the *Fabelland der Lieder*, in the fabulous realm of songs, Hölderlin experienced as reality, opening himself to the charge that he confused, as children or adolescents are wont to do, reality with an aesthetic construction.

How differently did Hölderlin and Hegel respond to the Alps: what the poet experienced as the divinely built castle of the gods, the philosopher saw as a mute wasteland that soon left him bored.[61] Hölderlin could not follow Hegel when the latter transformed the Holy Spirit into the at one and the same time human and divine world spirit and understood nature as spirit alienated from itself, present first of all as an obstacle on the spirit's path, as initially obscure, mute matter to be subdued and comprehended until in the end no longer experienced as a mute given, let alone as a gift coming from without, but as itself the product of spirit, *aufgehoben* in the spirit — an understanding in which, severed from its in Hegel still theological foundation, that is severed from his absolute, we can recognize the understanding of nature that guides our modern science and technology. Logic here triumphs over reality. *Aufhebung* in its more spiritual, Hegelian sense, triumphs over *Aufhebung* in its original aesthetic, Schillerian sense. Hölderlin cannot follow Hegel in his devaluating *Aufhebung* of the particular, both of the sensuous and the individual, of life, in the name of the "absolute spirit," whose throne's "reality, truth, and certainty" the end of the *Phenomenology* identifies with its "recollection and

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[60] See Desmond, 108.

[61] Already the young Hegel dismissed thus the natural sublime, as is made clear by an entry into his *Tagebuch der Reise in die Berner Oberalpen*: "Reason finds in the thought of the permanence of these mountains or in the kind of sublimity that one scribes to them nothing that imposes it, that compels it to respond with wonder and admiration. Seeing the eternally dead masses gave me nothing but the monotonous and, stretched out, boring idea*: this is the way it is* (*es ist so*)." *Werke I,* 618.

golgatha," with "comprehended history."[62] But if Hölderlin cannot follow Hegel, he also is unable to return to Schiller, too aware is he of the tensions that stand in the way of such an aesthetic synthesis. His, then, is a more profoundly tragic understanding of history than that of Hegel, for whom every tragedy ends in a *Versöhnung*, a reconciliation, where the death of Socrates, this tragedy of the Greek spirit, provides the paradigm: communal *Sittlichkeit* and individual subjectivity here collide, but this collision prepares for a higher morality that joins individual and community; for the sake of that synthesis the "beautiful religion" of the Greeks had to perish.[63] The difference between Hegel's and Hölderlin's understanding of tragedy is evident in their different understanding of Sophocles' *Antigone*. For Hegel, Antigone and Creon must perish because the colliding moralities they represents are one-sided, and must perish. Thus justice, thus the progress of morality demands it. According to Hölderlin, what collides in the tragedy is the infinite and the finite: the individual who, in the spirit of God, acts as if *against* God, and thus knows the spirit of God *gesetzlos*, "without a law," and the individual, who, accepting fate, honors God as something that has been posited, "das Ehren Gottes, als eines gesetzten."[64] Not different laws collide here, but law and the lawless, the inevitable singularization or definition of God, and the abysmal essence of God.[65] That collision permits no *Aufhebung,* no reconciliation. Tragic representation thus depends for Hölderlin on the fact that

> the immediate God is completely *one* with the human being (for the God of an apostle is mediated, is highest understanding in the highest spirit), so that *infinite* enthusiasm grasps itself *infinitely*, in oppositions, in consciousness that cancels and preserves (*aufhebt*) consciousness, grasps itself departing in holiness, and God is present in the guise of death.[66]

Kierkegaard comes to mind: Hölderlin's late hymns present history as a tragedy in this sense, balancing the eschatological understanding of history common to both Pietism and Hegel with a Sophoclean openness to the abyss. To show this in some detail I would like to spend our next session on the hymn "Patmos".

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62 Hegel, *Phänomenologie*, 564.

63 Hegel, "Das Verderben der griechischen Sittlichkeit" in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Georg Lasson, vol. 8, *Meiners philosophische Bibliothek*, vol. 171, 638–647.

64 Hölderlin, "Anmerkungen zum Oedipus" in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Paul Stapf (Berlin und Darmstadt: Tempel, 1960), 1064.

65 Cf. Reiner Schürmann, "A Brutal Awakening to the Tragic Condition of Being: On Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*," *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology*, ed. Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994), 89–105.

3. Patmos

1

Let me begin by returning to our last seminar and to Heidegger's insistence that the confrontation with Hölderlin still awaits us and to his claim that to understand his own thought, one has to understand it as serving and therefore as standing in an essential relationship to Hölderlin's poetry.[67] Socrates' teaching in the *Republic*, I pointed out, is here reversed: the primacy of the poet over the philosopher is explicitly acknowledged. How are we to understand this reversal? Heidegger's turn to Hölderlin is bound up with his call for a step beyond the entire tradition of metaphysics, a tradition that, to him, culminates in the work of Hegel . His appeal to Hölderlin thus inevitably forces us also to confront not just Hölderlin, but also Hegel. Christ signifies an epochal revolution for both Hegel and Hölderlin. On one hand he embodies the form-bound, humanly mediating plastic principle of the Greek pantheon. He is therefore called the God who took on human form. On the other hand he represents a **pneumatic** principle. "The consolation through the Holy Spirit, at his farewell, points to this."[68] But unlike Hegel, Hölderlin finds it difficult to accept the loss of the Greek plastic principle, even if preserved in memory and song. The late hymn "Der Einzige" thus communicates a tragic tension between the poet's love of Greece, which he says he loves more than his *Vaterland*, and his love of Christ.

Hölderlin could not follow Hegel when the latter transformed the Holy Spirit into the world spirit, both human and divine at the same time. Nor could he follow when Hegel understood nature as spirit alienated from itself, present first of all as an obstacle on the spirit's path, as initially obscure, mute matter to be subdued and comprehended until in the end no longer experienced as a gift, but as itself the product of spirit, *aufgehoben* in the spirit — an understanding in which, severed from its in Hegel still theological foundation, and severed from his absolute, we can recognize the view of nature that guides our modern science and technology. Logic here triumphs over reality. What separates Hegel and Hölderlin is evident in their different understanding of tragedy. What according to Hölderlin collides in tragedy are not different expressions of the law, but law and the lawless, God as something that has been

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66 Hölderlin, "Anmerkungen zum Oedipus," 1064.

67 Martin Heidegger, "The *Spiegel* Interview" *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, trans. Lisa Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 62.

68 Schmidt, 135.

established or *gesetzt*, and the abysmal, i. e. *gesetzlose* essence of God.[69] That collision permits no *Aufhebung ,* no reconciliation. Hölderlin's late hymns are tragic in this sense, balancing the eschatological understanding of history common to both Pietism and Hegel with a Sophoclean openness to the abyss. To show this in some detail I would like to spend this seminar on the hymn *Patmos*.

2

The first stanza is both, a request, answered by the rest of the poem, and a statement that anticipates much of what is to follow, but expresses it in so concentrated a fashion as to demand a further, explanatory movement. The stanza is made up of four sentences, each successive sentence longer than the one that preceded it. The first, simply but enigmatically, states God's relationship to man:

Nah ist
Und schwer zu fassen der Gott (I, 1 - 2)

Near is
And difficult to grasp, the God[70]

The Nearness of God is the nearness of a threatening abyss. The second sentence, related to the first by sound and rhythm, links danger to salvation:

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst
Das Rettende auch (I, 3 - 4)

But where danger threatens
That which saves from it also grows

The human being is in danger because, although close to God, he finds it difficult to grasp Him. The abyss of course cannot be grasped and so it is not surprising that later versions show that Hölderlin was not quite satisfied with this beginning. One such version thus has:

Voll Güt' ist; keiner aber fasset
Allein Gott.

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69 Cf. Reiner Schürmann, "A Brutal Awakening to the Tragic Condition of Being: On Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie*," *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology*, ed. Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994), 89 - 105.

70 The English translation of "Patmos" by Michael Hamburger, *Poems and Fragments*, pp. 462 - 487. The Roman numeral gives the stanza, the Arabic numeral the line.

Most kind is; but no one by himself
Can grasp God.

Now, knowledge of God must be communal. We sense here a change that has taken place in Hölderlin's thinking. To mark this change one should compare "Patmos" to the earlier backward looking poem: "Da ich ein Knabe war..." . Hölderlin there spoke of having been raised in the arms of the gods, who are said to have been far closer to him than his fellow human beings:

Doch kannt' ich Euch besser
Als ich je die Menschen gekannt
Ich verstand die Stille des Äthers,
Der Menschen Worte verstand ich nie.

Yet I knew you better
Than ever I have known men,
I understood the silence of the Aether
But human words I've never understood.[71]

Before he learns to name, not God, but the gods, Helios, Endymion, Luna, he already knew them, listening to the voices of nature, to sun and moon, to the quiet of the ether, to flowers and whispering trees. He knows that our ordinary ways of speaking, *das Geschrei der Menschen,* drown out these voices. The young poet thus sensed the presence of the holy in particular shapes. Dwelling in the presence of the gods gave him the strength to name them. But this privilege was bought at a price and later he was to accuse himself of having sinned against his fellow human beings: since as a poet he neither loved nor served them in human fashion, they did not show themselves to him as human. The very first lines of "Patmos", at least in their revised form, reject this opposition between poetry and community.

The next four lines speak of beings who live securely in the face of danger.

Im Finstern wohnen
Die Adler und furchtlos gehen
Die Söhne der Alpen über den Abgrund weg
Auf leichtgebaueten Brücken (I, 5 - 8)

In gloomy places dwell
The eagles, and fearless over
The chasm walk the sons of the Alps
On bridges lightly built.

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71 The English translation of "Da ich ein Knabe war..." by Michael Hamburger, *Poems and Fragments*, 80 -81.

It is important to recall that the eagle is also the symbol of John the Evangelist, and the historically perceived attributes of his gospel suggest that the wings of the spirit allow us to dwell in the dark without fear and to pass over the abyss of time. The stanza's last sentence is a request, based on a further description of the present situation:

> Drum, da gehäuft sind rings
> Die Gipfel der Zeit,
> Und die Liebsten
> Nah wohnen, ermattend auf
> Getrenntesten Bergen… (I, 9 - 13)
>
> Therefore, since round about
> Are heaped the summits of Time
> And the most loved live near, growing faint
> On mountains most separate…

Time is now seen as a mountain range. Its peaks, as the following stanzas make clear, are the high points of history, especially the age of the Greeks and the time of Christ. And yet their proximity to us is coupled with a lack of reality. The loved ones dwell near, but cannot be reached. Destructive time separates the poet not only from the Greeks and their gods, from Christ and his disciples, but also from those whom he once knew and was separated by death. Die *Liebsten* thus includes also Susette Gontard, his Diotima.

We can now be somewhat more specific about the community the poet has in mind. Those he loves, while near, yet languish on most distant mountains. Every lover knows that memory is a very inadequate bridge across the abyss of time. Such inadequacy leads to the request with which the stanza closes:

> So gieb unschuldig Wasser,
> O Fittige gib uns, treuesten Sinns
> Hinüberzugehn und wiederzukehren. (I, 14 - 16)
>
> Give us innocent water,
> O pinions give us, with minds most faithful
> To cross over and to return.

The request may seem surprising. One might have expected a request that God show himself in such a way that he can be grasped; instead the request is for wings that allow us to fly across the abyss of time. Yet the two requests are not unrelated: for God has shown Himself to us in Christ. But this, too, now belongs to the past: just another peak of time with its power, too,

waning. We no longer live in the presence of the divine. The request thus becomes a request to join those who once saw Him.

Important is the line:

To cross over and to return.

Especially for Hölderlin, whose "beautiful soul" found it easy to seek refuge in an idealized past, yet had difficulty finding its place in the contemporary world, the request again to return is a request that the desired community not be bought at the cost of his world.[72]

The next two few stanzas pose fewer problems. Less dense than the first, they are made up of just two sentences. The first suggests that the request has been granted: a *Genius*, a poetic spirit abducts him and leads him far way from home. The next twenty-six lines form one extended sentence, describing a movement cross space and time, away from the forests and brooks of his youth, across Greece, to the Eastern edge of the Aegean, to Asia. As later revisions suggest, nature presented itself to the young poet in human form:

Es kleideten sich
Im Zwielicht, Menschen ähnlich, da ich gieng
Der schattige Wald
Und die sehnsüchtigen Bäche
Der Heimat

There clothed themselves,
Like men, in the twilight, as I went,
The shadowy wood
And the yearning streams of
My homeland.

Hegel points out that when we experience nature as if dressed in human form, we dwell near the Greek gods. But this time the journey carries the poet beyond Greece, to its Eastern edge, to Patmos, this island, where, according to legend, the apostle John, who, following tradition, was identified with the evangelist, author of the pneumatic gospel, wrote down the *Apocalypse*, for Pietists like Friedrich Christoph Oetinger and Johann Albrecht Bengel the very model of an inspired text.[73] In the fifth stanza this turn to Patmos is tied to calamities:

Und wenn vom Schiffbruch oder klagend

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72 See e. g. the last stanza of "Dichterberuf".

73 Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, 190 - 197.

Um die Heimath oder
Den abgeschiedenen Freund
Ihr nahet einer
Der Fremden, hört sie es gern,...

And when, after shipwreck or lamenting for
His homeland or else for
The friend departed from him,
A stranger draws near
To her, she is glad to hear it,...

Shipwreck and loss of home and friend refer here not just to the Apostle but also to the homeless poet, struggling with the loss of his Diotima and his loneliness.

The sixth stanza brings a change. The poem becomes denser, the rhythm more complicated. Especially towards the end of the stanza sentences become very brief. More than to any other part of the poem, Hölderlin kept returning to this stanza. Thus in a later version the first four lines become three stanzas.

Striking are parallels between poet and disciple. Not only has John, too, lost home and the one he loved, but he appears here as the paradigm of a poet who saw the face of, not just a god, but the God who presented himself as the only one. John wrote as someone who not only saw, but had been loved and called by God. And yet, this God had died on the cross and no new gods have appeared to take his place. The problem facing Hölderlin is this: what is the place of the poet, given the death of God? How are we to hold on to God, given abysmal time. Later versions dwell on this point:

Begreiffen müssen
Diß wir zuvor. Wie Morgenluft sind nemlich die Nahmen
Seit Christus. Werden Träume. Fallen wie Irrtum
Auf das Herz und tödtend, wenn nicht einer

Erwäget, was sie sind und begreift.

This first we
Must understand. For like morning air are the names
Since Christ. Become dreams. Fall on the heart
Like error, and killing, if one does not

Consider what they are and understand.

The death of God tempts the poet to make himself into a false priest, as Hölderlin describes himself in the last fragmentary stanza of "Wie wenn am Feiertage...", significantly repressed by Heidegger.[74] The poet, who without being called, usurps the place of the prophet can only mislead, for his words have no substance. Yet even the words of former prophets have become hollow. Orthodoxy thus threatens to imprison the spirit in now meaningless, but established ways of speaking. To guard against this we need to weigh and comprehend them.

Metaphors of lightning, thunder, and rainbow keep echoing through this poem. In this stanza Christ is thus called der *Gewittertragende* , a phrase that suggest the opening of "Wie wenn am Feiertage...", central to Hölderlin's determination of the place of the poet:

> Doch uns gebührt es, unter Gottes Gewittern,
> Ihr Dichter! mit entblößtem Haupte zu stehen,
> Des Vaters Stral, ihn selbst, mit eigner Hand
> Zu fassen und dem Volke ins Lied
> Gehüllt die himmlische Gabe zu reichen.
>
> Yet, fellow poets, us it behooves to stand
> Bare-headed beneath God's thunderstorms,
> To grasp the Father's ray, no less, with our own two hands
> And, wrapping in song the heavenly gift,
> To offer it to the people.[75]

The poet appears here as mediator between God and the people. The divine, as so often with Hölderlin, expresses itself as terrifying and potentially destructive. The poet must expose himself to God's lightning. And yet there is hubris in this idea that the poet should grasp "the Father's ray, no less," with his own two hands. John was free of such hubris. God showed Himself to him in definite shape so that he could be grasped without danger. But the divine becomes destructive whenever a human being reaches for it, without waiting for a divine mediator, and when the poet usurps the place of such a mediator. The already mentioned fragmented, terrifying last stanza of "Wie wenn am Feiertage..." makes this point:

> Und sag ich gleich,

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74 Martin Heidegger, "Wie wenn am Feiertage...," *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung*, *Gesamtausgabe,* vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1981), 49 - 77. See especially 51.

75 The English translation of "Wie wenn am Feiertage..." by Michael Hamburger, *Poems and Fragments*, 372 - 373.

Ich sei genaht, die Himmlischen zu schauen
Sie selbst warfen mich tief unter die Lebenden
Den falschen Priester ins Dunkel, daß ich
Das warnende Lied, den Gelehrigen singe.
Dort

And although I say

That I approached to see the Heavenly,
They themselves cast me down, deep down
Below the living, into the dark cast down
The false priest that I am, to sing,
For those who have ears to hear, the warning song.
There[76]

The imaginary journey that carries the poet to Patmos, fails to carry him into the presence of God, only to the island that once offered refuge to the Seer, who in "blessed youth" walked with "the son of the highest" — the parallels between the poet and John are unmistakable — only to experience the death of God. Thus it carries him to the edge of the night in which we still dwell. Like John of "Patmos," we have to learn to let go of "blessed youth" and learn to accept the death of God. Yet like the disciples we find it difficult to let go of the light of day, which for Hölderlin means also, to let go of the Greek world and its plastic principle, also of his beloved Diotima.

aber sie liebten unter der Sonne
Das Leben und lassen wollten sie nicht
Vom Angesichte des Herrn
Und der Heimat. Eingetrieben war,
Wie Feuer im Eisen, das, und ihnen gieng
Zur Seite der Schatte des Lieben. (VII, 5 - 9)

but under the sun they loved
This life and were loath to part from
The visible face of the Lord
And their homeland. Driven in,
Like fire into iron, was this, and beside them

76 Michael Hamburger, *Poems and Fragments*, 376 -377.

The loved one's shadow walked.

Later versions of this stanza add, *Wie eine Seuche*, "like a disease." And memories of life "under the sun" can indeed prevent us from taking our place in this world night that is our destiny. It is not up to us to name God or the gods. They themselves must claim us. We can only wait for the gift of a new day, wait for the god who is to come. Impatient attempts to reveal the divine must fail in one of two ways: either the words of the would-be prophet will become empty and hollow, or the unmediated God, still so near as to be one with the self, will break the shell of words and render the poet mute. In this night authentic poetry, in its attempt to name the transcendent, will again and again approach silence.

To say that the gods have fled is not to say that there is no mediation at all:

Und es grünen
Tief an den Bergen auch lebendige Bilder (VIII, 14–15)

And low down at
The foot of the mountains, too, will living images thrive

And again:

der Vater aber liebt
Der über allen waltet,
Am meisten, daß gepfleget werde
Der veste Buchstab, und bestehendes gut
Gedeutet (XV, 10–15)

but what the Father
Who reigns over all loves most
Is that the solid letter
Be given scrupulous care, and the existing
Be well interpreted.

Nature and what has been established in the words of seers who, like John, lived in the light of day, are the mediations left to us.[77] And yet what sacred texts speak of becomes more and more dreamlike and nature does not speak clearly enough to found on such speech a common way of life. Modernity has closed both the book of nature and Scripture for us. With the death of God

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[77] As we read in a later version of "Der Einzige":
Mit Stimmen erscheinet Gott als
Natur von aussen. Mittelbar
In heiligen Schriften.

all genuine community is threatened, for community presupposes a common language that joins individuals in a larger order. Such a language issued from Christ; but with the death of God this language appears to have lost both founder and foundation. The old order falls apart. Individuals, and especially those most committed to the divine, find themselves alone with the abyss.

Doch furchtbar ist, wie da und dort
Unendlich hin zerstreut das Lebende Gott. (IX, 1 - 2)

Yet dreadful it is how here and there
Unendingly God disperses whatever lives.

The ninth stanza is grammatically the most confusing in the poem. Much remains unsaid that is yet necessary to even grammatically complete what appears. Communicating uncertainty and loss, they lead to the desperate question that is the tenth stanza. What is the meaning of the process in which we find ourselves caught up?

Three times the word *wenn* introduces a description that points to what makes this process so questionable:

Wenn aber stirbt alsdenn
An dem am meisten
Die Schönheit hieng, daß an der Gestalt
Ein Wunder war und die Himmlischen gedeutet
Auf ihn, (X, 1–5)

But when thereupon he dies
To whom beauty most adhered, so that
A miracle was wrought in his person and
The Heavenly had pointed at him,

Hölderlin speaks of the beauty of the incarnated God. With his death all beauty becomes questionable. That includes the beauty of the Greek gods, includes also the beauty of Hölderlin's Diotima.

... und wenn, ein Räthsel füreinander
Sie sich nicht fassen können
Einander, die zusammenlebten
Im Gedächtniß, und nicht den Sand nur oder
Die Weiden es hinwegnimmt und die Tempel
Ergreifft, (X, 5 - 10)

And when, an enigma to one another
For ever, they cannot understand
One another who lived together
Conjoined by remembrance, and not only
The sand or the willows it takes away,
And seizes the temples,

Time appears here as a force that takes away not only sand and willows, but even the temples in which the gods and God were once present. Time forces us to acknowledge that ultimately we are alone; even those whom we loved, with whom we lived together, while still so near, yet become strange and alien, a riddle we are unable to solve.

... wenn die Ehre
Des Halbgotts und der Seinen
Verweht und selber sein Angesicht
Der Höchste wendet
Darob, daß nirgends ein
Unsterbliches mehr am Himmel zu sehn ist
Oder auf grüner Erde, was ist diß? (X, 10–15)

when even
The demigod's honor and that of his friends
Is blown away by the wind, and the Highest
Himself averts his face
Because nowhere now
An immortal is to be seen in the skies or
On our green earth, what is this?

Christ himself is forgotten and God has turned away from a world subject to the seemingly meaningless rule of time.

The *was ist diß?* with which the stanza closes is the cesura, the interruption that breaks into the poetic progress and marks off what has preceded from what follows. Very gently, parable-like, the eleventh stanza attempts an answer. Recalling two New Testament parables, the poet suggests that God is like the sower of Mark 4:3–9 and Matthew 3:12, who separates the wheat from the chaff, and is rich enough not to care if some gets lost:

Und nicht ein Übel ists, wenn einiges
Verloren gehet und von der Rede
Verhallet der lebendige Laut,

Denn göttliches Werk auch gleicht dem unsern
Nicht alles will der Höchste zumal. (XI, 1 - 7)

And there's no harm if some of it
Is lost, and of the speech
The living sound dies away,
For the work of gods, too, is like our own,
Not all things at once does the Highest intend.

This invites a Hegelian reading. Yet is it an answer? Or just an invitation to accept the place where God has cast us, destitute though it is? It is not much consolation to someone mourning the death of a loved one that what really mattered remains *aufgehoben,* cancelled and preserved in memory. And it is not much consolation to tell someone struggling with the death of God, that what really mattered remains *aufgehoben,* cancelled and preserved in memory. As Hölderlin says of the disciples, it is difficult to accept such destitution and to live in the night. The second part of the stanza begins with

Zwar Eisen träget der Schacht (XI, 11)

The pit bears iron, though

Here, the language accelerates as there is a suggestion that the poet might be rich enough to form an image of Christ as he was; the breathlessness continues into the next stanza, but instead of coming to an end, the sentence breaks off, and separated from it by a hyphen, the warning words:

Im Zorne sichtbar sah' ich einmal
Des Himmels Herrn, nicht daß ich seyn sollt' etwas, sondern
Zu lernen. (XII, 5–8)

In anger visible once I saw
The Lord of Heaven, not that I should be something, but
To learn.

The suggestion that the poet might be rich enough to create an image of God that would once again render him visible and present, is rejected. When, impatient, he tries to fashion such an image, another golden calf, falsehood reigns and humanity is lost.

The rest of this and the following stanza express an eschatological hope. The present night will come to an end, although we humans lack the strength to bring this about. Once again there will be those able to see and name the highest. But we cannot will this into reality:

Denn sie [die Menschen] nicht walten, es waltet aber
Unsterblicher Schicksaal und es wandelt ihr Werk

Von selbst, und eilend geht es zu Ende.
Wenn nemlich höher gehet himmlischer
Triumphgang, wird genennet, der Sonne gleich
Von Starken der frohlockende Sohn des Höchsten. (XII, 10–15)

For they do not govern, the fate
It is of immortals that governs, and their work
Proceeds by its own force and hurrying seeks its end.
For when heavenly triumph goes higher
The jubilant son of the Highest
Is called like the sun by the strong.

This relates to the earlier statement:

Denn wiederkommen sollt es
Zu rechter Zeit (VIII, 7–8)

For it was to come back when
The time was due

Yet this day belongs to an indefinite future. Until it arrives we have to wait:

Es warten aber
Der scheuen Augen viele,
Zu schauen das Licht. (XIII, 5–7)

But many timid eyes
Are waiting to see the light.

Willing to wait, they save themselves from destructive lightning:

Nicht wollen
Am scharfen Strale sie blühn, (XIII, 5–7)
They are reluctant to flower
Beneath the searing beam,

Content with what has been established, they entrust themselves to the mediation of Holy Scripture (XIII, 13; XIV, 11).

The fourteenth stanza addresses the Landgrave of Homburg, to whom the poem is dedicated, as to someone more beloved by the Heavenly ones than the poet.

Denn Eines weiß ich,
Daß nemlich der Wille
Des ewigen Vaters viel
Dir gilt. Still ist sein Zeichen

Am donnernden Himmel. (XIV, 4 - 8)

For one thing I know:
The eternal Father's will
Means much to you. Now silent is
His sign on thundering heaven

The silent sign in the thundering sky is of course the rainbow, sign of the covenant between God and the earth, following the deluge, but also the rainbow that in the *Book of Revelations* rises above the throne of the judge, that rises also, despite Hegel, and quite irrationally, above the throne of the Absolute Spirit which, appropriating the Biblical text, Hegel names to end the *Phenomenology*.

The landgrave, himself committed to Pietism, had asked the old Klopstock to write an ode against the critical reading of the Bible advanced by such representatives of the Enlightenment as Reimarus and Fichte.[78] The *Book of Revelations* warns in the most explicit way against such liberal interpretations: no one should add or take away any of its words (*Rev*. 22: 18–19). Klopstock declined the request, but it was answered by Hölderlin. In this penultimate stanza Hölderlin once again asserts the presence of the divine, indeed of Christ, even in this age.

Und Einer stehet darunter
Sein Leben lang. Denn noch lebt Christus.
Es sind aber die Helden, seine Söhne
Gekommen all und heilige Schriften
Von ihm und den Blitz erklären
Die Thaten der Erde bis itzt, (XIV, 12–13)

And there is one who stands
Beneath it his whole life long. For Christ lives yet.
But all the heroes, his sons,
Have come, and holy scriptures
About him, and lightning is explained by
The deeds of the world until now,

Though invisible and his temples seized and his glory blown away by the storms of time, Christ still lives. And in the thundering sky stands the rainbow of hope.

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78 See Schmidt, *Hölderlins geschichtsphilosophische Hymnen*, 187 - 190.

The last stanza offers a final determination of the task of the poet; at the same time it states in what sense God can be grasped today. Its first two lines once again characterize this age as an age of need:

Zu lang, zu lang schon ist
Die Ehre der Himmlischen unsichtbar. (XV, 1–2)

To long, too long now
The honour of the Heavenly has been invisible

And since we cannot see and thus describe them, they have to seize us:

Denn fast die Finger müssen sie
Uns führen und schmählich
Entreißt das Herz uns eine Gewalt. (XV, 3–5)

For almost they must guide
Our fingers, and shamefully
A power is wresting our hearts from us

Pagan rather than Christian is the insistence on the Heavenly ones, which do not want to be neglected. To each divinity we owe proper sacrifice and service. But the poet's own service, first to the earth, to nature, and then to the light of the sun, to reason, is now judged inadequate, because too one-sided:

Wir haben gedienet der Mutter Erd'
Und haben jüngst dem Sonnenlichte gedient,
Unwissend, der Vater aber liebt,
Der über allen waltet,
Am meisten, daß gepfleget werde
Der veste Buchstab, und Bestehendes gut
Gedeutet. Dem folgt deutscher Gesang. (XV, 9–15)

We have served Mother Earth
And lately have served the sunlight,
Unwittingly, but what the Father
Who reigns over all loves most
Is that the solid letter
Be given scrupulous care, and the existing
Be well interpreted. This German song observes.

The poet here distances himself from both from the Greek gods and the Enlightenment. Poetry must serve what previous words have established. The reference to the *veste Buchstab* recalls

Protestant insistence on the firm letter of the Bible. But that letter, while firm, needs to be well interpreted. This is the task of poetry. To refuse this modest hermeneutic function is to run the risk of letting go of what has been established without putting anything in its place.

There is thus a sense in which "Patmos" still addresses the demand of the "System Programme" for a "Monotheism of reason and heart, for a polytheism of imagination and art." What the father loves most must be balanced against what is called for by the statement that every divinity demands sacrifice and service, where such balance is shadowed by God's presence as destructive time. But over the destructive waters of time rises the rainbow, prefigured in the poem by the lightly built bridges that allow the sons of the Alps to walk fearlessly across the abyss.

4. Heidegger's Way I: From Theology to Logic

1

Let me begin by returning to our first session and to Heidegger's claim, made in the *Spiegel* Interview, that his thinking stands in a relationship to Hölderlin's poetry that is not to be gotten around. I pointed out that this is a claim that Heidegger could not always have made. The young theologian could not have made it: his thinking also stood in an essential relationship to a text, a text believed to be the word of God. The young logician could not have made it. He placed his work in the service of a timeless *logos* in the traditional sense. The Heidegger of *Being and Time* could not have made it, as we shall see today and next time. Nor, to continue the story, could the Heidegger of 1933. To understand what lets Heidegger claim that his thinking stands in an absolutely essential relationship to the poetry of Hölderlin, we have to understand the progress of Heidegger‘s thinking, more especially the evolution of his thinking on *logos* (Rede)**.** We have to take seriously Heidegger's self-description in a letter to Löwith (August 19, 1921) as a "Christian theo-*logian*." [79] It points to what Heidegger, from the very beginning sought in "logic."

2

Some such understanding of Heidegger's way guided William J. Richardson when he wrote his still indispensable study *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. Consider this statement which introduces Richardson's study:

> There is a long and winding way that leads from Reichenau to Todtnauberg. It is Martin Heidegger's way. Past the moor and through the fields, it wends its way over the hills, only to wander now this way, now that, along uncharted forest trails. Yet for all its meandering, it moves in a single direction, it is but a single way. The purpose of these pages is to trace in some measure that way in order to raise the question if others may walk it to.[80]

These five sentences state the purpose of Richardson's work, but they do so in a way that suggests an understanding of Heidegger's path significantly different from that expressed in the title. For Reichenau, as Father Richardson reminds us in a footnote, is "a small island in the western arm of Lake Constance, where a Benedictine abbey, founded by Pirmin (724 A. D.), was

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[79] Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 7, 78, 287.

an important center of Christian culture in medieval Europe."[81] The young Heidegger's best known poem is entitled *Abendgang auf der Reichenau*. This evocative, if a bit kitschy, introduction to Richardson's study of Heidegger's path invites us thus to keep in mind that even the young theologian and logician had a poetic side, even as it bids us remember the Christian origin of his thinking. That this origin cannot be relegated to a past that Heidegger put behind him and that his readers can briefly note and pass over is suggested by Richardson's conclusion:

> Night has fallen again on Reichenau — the Light has gone out of the West. For those who watch with Heidegger, there is nothing to do but wait — and hope — for the grace of a better dawn.[82]

This suggests that Heidegger's thought leaves Christian culture behind only to return us to it in the end, even though night has now fallen and it has become difficult to find one's way and discern relevant contours. The proximity to Hölderlin's *Patmos* is evident.

That this suggestion is not altogether off the mark is demonstrated by this often cited interchange from "A Dialogue on Language":

> J. But it is obvious that through your background and your studies you are at home in theology in a manner totally different from those who come from outside and merely pick up through reading a few things that belong in that area.
>
> I. Without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking. But origin always comes to meet us from the future (*Herkunft aber bleibt stets Zukunft*).[83]

Heidegger himself here invites us to understand the progress of his thinking as a movement from theology back to theology, which is also a movement from a thinking born of a conviction that human beings lack the strength to come to a true understanding, even of themselves, relying only on what is their own, to a thinking that insists on the autonomy of authentic philosophical reflection, and back to a thinking that has recognized that reflection must confront the insufficiency of all such supposedly authentic and autonomous thinking and must appropriate its own insufficiency. Heidegger's famous proclamation in the *Spiegel* interview that "Only a god can still save us" supports such an interpretation. [84]

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80 William J. Richardson, S.J., *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1963) 4.

81 *Ibid.,* 1.

82 *Ibid*., 641.

83 Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language,* trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 10. Cf. John D. Caputo's "Heidegger and Theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 285.

84 "Der Spiegel Interview with Martin Heidegger" in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: Questions and Answers*, trans. Lisa Harries, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering (New York: Paragon, 1990), 57.

Already in the late thirties, and already very much under the influence of Hölderlin's hymns, the posthumously published *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* had similarly linked salvation to both a meaningful death and to God — not the Christian God, to be sure, but "the last God," who, without entering our world, passes by, yet beckons into "the ever more primordial dialogue of those who are lonely, because he beckons, as he passes by."[85] But despite such oracular pronouncements, which leave us groping in the dark, despite all the essays following the *Rectorial Address* that, citing Hölderlin, too easily speak of the holy and God, of gods and angels, must the philosopher not side with *Being and Time,* which insists on the essential difference between theology and fundamental ontology? Is George Kovacs not right to insist that "the *distance* between philosophy and theology is a definitive one in Heidegger's [and not just in his] thought."[86] Not that the theological origins of Heidegger's philosophical thinking are in question.[87] But even if we must grant that Heidegger owes some of his most basic insights to his theological training, must the phenomenological method of *Being and Time* not render such a debt philosophically insignificant? Was Heidegger not right to demand that philosophy radically rid itself of its theological origins? (BT 272/SZ 229).[88] And even though his own choice of vocabulary often recalls us to just these origins, was Heidegger not right to warn against misleading associations by insisting on what distinguishes fundamental ontology, a transcendental inquiry into the structures constitutive of the possibilities of human existence, from theology, an ontic discipline grounded in faith and concerned with a particular being?[89] In *Being and Time* Heidegger thus insists that his ontological analysis of "guilt" offers no support whatsoever either for or against the assertion that human beings are in fact subject to original sin. "Taken strictly it cannot even be said that the ontology of Dasein of itself leaves this possibility open; for this ontology, as a philosophical inquiry, 'knows' in principle nothing about sin." (BT

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85 Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis), Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1989), 405, 416.

86 George Kovacs, *The Question of God in Heidegger's Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1990) 51. See also Caputo, "Heidegger and theology," 272–276 and Richard Kearney, *Heidegger's Three Gods*, with a response by Martin Warner, Research Publication Series, Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature, University of Warwick, 1992, pp. 6 - 9. Cf. Averroes and Siger of Brabant.

87 See especially Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seiner Biographie* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1988), 45–127.

88 Citations of this sort refer to Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), followed by the corresponding pagination in *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953).

354 n ii/SZ 306 n 1) In the same vein the ontological analysis of human being as being unto death is said to leave open the question whether or not there is in fact an after-life. (BT 291–293/SZ 247–248) Given Heidegger's insistence on the "absolute difference" that separates theology and fundamental ontology,[90] one should expect that the analysis developed in *Being and Time* could in principle know nothing of the existence of God. God is thus mentioned only a few times in that work and never to suggest that he has a place in fundamental ontology.

But such impressions invite challenge, a challenge that has to extend to any attempt to insist on an "absolute difference," not just between theology and philosophy, but between ontic and ontological, existentiell and existential questioning. One thing that I shall attempt to show in this seminar is that some experience of God, although not necessarily of the Christian God, is a necessary condition for the very possibility of authentic existence as Heidegger understands it, that some sort of faith in God must supplement resolute being unto death. Something like the notorious later pronouncement that "Only a God can still save us" is demanded already by the analysis developed in *Being and Time*.

To be sure, nothing of the sort is asserted in that text. On the contrary, the analysis of authenticity given there would seem to rule it out. But that analysis, as I shall attempt to show, is essentially incomplete: Heidegger's later interpretation of poetic building hints at what is necessary for its completion. Developing these hints, I shall try to show that Heideggerian authenticity demands a poetic or prophetic naming of God, and would demand it even if Heidegger had never spoken of God or gods. Such a naming in turn demands something like what I have called here the descent of the logos into the material and sensible — demands something like an incarnation of logos. What matters to me here is first of all a conceptual necessity.

To be sure, even if successful, such an argument cannot establish the existence of God. It can, however, show that, *if* authenticity in Heidegger's sense is indeed a possibility, and is, moreover, as he insists, a possibility demanded of human beings, then so is something very much like faith in *one* God. And that faith cannot be forced by philosophical reflection. Such reflection can at best prepare for it. As the *Beiträge* so strongly suggest, Nietzsche's

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89 Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Phänomenologie und Theologie" in *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976), 45–7l.

90 In "Phänomenologie und Theologie" Heidegger insists that as "a positive science" (p. 49) theology is "absolutely different" from philosophy, understood "als das freie Fragen des rein auf sich gestellten Daseins," "as the free questioning of Dasein based purely on itself" (65).

understanding of philosophy as devious theology extends to Heidegger's thinking.[91] Should this be considered a philosophical failing or is it born of a profound insight into the insufficiency of philosophical reflection?

3

I shall try to show then that Heidegger's turn to Hölderlin is indeed prepared for by the understanding of authenticity we find in *Being and Time*, more especially by his struggle with the question, "*what is it to use language authentically?"* And that question inevitably intertwines with another question: "*what is it to think authentically*?" But we should keep in mind that Heidegger presents *Being and Time* as a fragment. His thinking is very much under way in that work and in these years and it is fair to say that career considerations — he was being proposed for a chair at Marburg and had not published anything in ten years — rushed him into publication: "did he not have something he could publish?" he was asked. He did indeed.The book as we have it contains only the first two sections of part one, that is to say roughly one third of the envisioned work. In a later marginal note to the second part of the title of Part One: *die Explikation der Zeit als des transzendentalen Horizontes der Frage nach dem Sein* (SZ 41) Heidegger refers us to GA 24, *Grundprobleme der Phänomeneologie*, and in the beginning of that lecture we find a note calling it a working out of Part I, Chapter 3. Most of the material promised for Part II is now available in one form or another, both in his lectures and in published essays. Of particular interest to those who want to pursue the question of the fragmentary character of *Being and Time* should be Heidegger's lecture course from 1941, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idalismus (Schelling).*[92]

Heidegger was to say later in *Unterwegs zur Sprache* that he had gone too quickly, too far. There are indeed tensions in *Being and Time*, including a tension between style and content. We shall have to be alert to these tensions, especially to the last, when reading the work. The

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[91] George Kovacs dismisses Walter Schulz's related characterization of Heidegger's philosophy as a "disguised theology" as a "simple and hasty answer to a complex problem." (*The Question of God in Heidegger's Phenomenology* , p. 79. See also Walter Schulz, *Der Gott der neuzeitlichen Metaphysik*, 3d ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), p. 26. At issue is the distance between ontic and ontological, *existenziell* and *existenzial* reflection. The argument presented here suggests that, while presupposing such distance, Heidegger's own understanding of authenticity and, more especially, of authentic understanding, has to call it into question and this means also, has to call into question "the radical difference between the primordial task of philosophical thinking and the authentic goal [and nature] of theological reflection" (Kovacs, p. 249).

[92] Martin Heideger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idalismus (Schelling,* GA 49, especially 39 ff.

style remains close to German transcendental philosophy and to Husserlian phenomenology, which the content has to call into question.

It has become customary to contrast *Being and Tim*, along with the immediately following works, *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* and *Was ist Metaphysik*? with the later works beginning with the lecture course *Einführung in die Metaphysik* and "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks" (1935). Pöggeler and von Herrmann have celebrated the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (1936–38), now published as GA 65, as Heidegger's second main work, which makes the turn from a Dasein-centered explication of the problem of time as horizon of the question of Being to a restatement of this question in terms of the history of Being (Cf. von Herrmann's essay in *Martin Heidegger, Politics, Art, and Technology*). But such talk of the famous *Kehre* is misleading in at least two ways:

1. The later works should not be lumped together. As Pöggeler points out in the *Concluding Discussion* (*PAT* 247), there are at least two important breaks in Heidegger's development, one comes in 1929/30, the second in 1938. Pöggeler is right to point out that 1933 does not represent an important turn in Heidegger's philosophical development, although I would question his claim that therefore there is no deep connection between Heidegger's political engagement and his philosophical development. It is possible to argue that it was precisely Heidegger's need to confront, not just National Socialism, but also his own involvement with it, that called for the move to the third stage. In this sense the *Rekotoratsrede* does hold a central place in that stage which lasts from 1929/30 to 1938.

More importantly, *Being and Time* is not Heidegger's first work. Anyone who wants to have an adequate understanding of Heidegger's development should be familiar with his dissertation of 1914, *Die Lehre vom Urteil im Psychologismus* and the *Habilitationsschrift* of 1916, *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (GA 1), should also be aware of his difficult movement away from Catholicism, first to a free Protestantism and soon beyond Christianity altogether, as reflected in the even earlier publications by the young Heidegger, mostly book reviews, who then still considered himself a theologian.[93] And as more and more volumes of the GA appear, the importance of Aristotle for Heidegger's appropriation of Husserl's phenomenological project becomes ever more apparent. But here I shall focus on *Being and*

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[93] Cf. Hugo Ott, "Heidegger's Catholic Origins" in *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art, and Technology*, ed. Karsten Harries and Christoph Jamme (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1994).

Time and more specifically on what it has to tell us about Heidegger's understanding of *logos,* or *"Rede"*

3

Still, by way of an introduction let me briefly and very roughly (and therefore, perhaps, misleadingly) sketch Heidegger's development and the place of *Being and Time* in that development. I want to do so by drawing a parallel between Heidegger's development and that of Wittgenstein. I would like to mark the latter with three quotations:

> 4.003 Language disguises the thought: so that from the external forms of the clothes one cannot infer the form of the thought they clothe, because the external form of the clothes is constructed with quite another object than to let the form of the body be recognized.[94]

On this view language hides its essential structure, just as the body hides the spirit. In the language of *Sein und Zeit*, ***Sprache* hides *Rede*, *logos*.**

> 3.324 Thus there easily arise the most fundamental confusions (of which the whole of philosophy is full)

To avoid such confusions we have to develop an artificial language which does not obscure the logos. The sign language of the *Tractatus* answers this demand.

My second quote is from the *Philosophische Bemerkungen* of 1930:

> 3. How strange if logic were to concern itself with an 'ideal' language and not with *ours*. For what should this ideal language express? Presumably what we are expressing in our ordinary language; but then logic must investigate it. Or something else: but how then am I to know what that it. The logical analysis is the analysis of something that we have, not of something that we do not have. It is therefore an analysis of propositions as they are. (It would be strange if human society had spoken until now without succeeding in uttering a single correct proposition.)[95]

My third quotation is from the *Philosophical Investigations*.

> §23. It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language (including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.)[96]

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94 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. C K. Ogden* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1958).

95 Luwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Bemerkungen Schriften*, vol. 2, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1964), p, 52, par. 3

96 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* , trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 19550.

Heidegger's thought underwent a similar development. The early Heidegger demands that logic be freed from grammar, appealing in this connection to Emil Lask.[97] This demand for an emancipation of logic from grammar is explicitly rejected in *Being and Time*:

> The task of *liberating* grammar from logic requires *beforehand* a *positive* understanding of the basic *a priori* structure of discourse in general as an *existentiale*. It is not a task that can be carried through later on by improving and rounding out what has been handed down. Bearing this in mind, we must inquire into the basic forms in which it is possible to articulate anything understandable, and to do so in accordance with significations; and this articulation must not be confined to entities within-the-world which we cognize by considering them theoretically, and which we express in sentences. (BT 209/SZ 165–166)

Let us ask in a preliminary fashion: how is the *apriorische Grundstruktur von Rede* to be understood? Traditionally the assertion has been understood as paradigmatic speech. In Die *Lehre vom Urteil* Heidegger had given the example: "the cover of the book before me is yellow."

Why the focus on assertion? In *Being and Time* Heidegger was to link this focus to an *Ontologie des Vorhandenen*, that is, an ontology of the "present-at-hand," and thus call it into question. But we already see how the philosophy of language and ontology here intertwine. The question of Being intertwines in turn with the question: what constitutes proper access to beings? To understand Being as presence-at-hand is to transform the experiencing human subject into first of all a subject standing before a world of objects. The world is transformed into a picture. It is understood as the totality of what is the case. But perhaps we should stick to the term "object": that such an understanding rests on a reduction of everyday experience is apparent.

What is the relationship of language to these facts? Consider Heidegger's example: "the cover of the book before me is yellow." The predicate expresses something that is said to be valid of the subject. The copula "is" claims such validity. The proposition communicates a content that remains what it is regardless of what as a matter of fact is the case. Consider another judgment: "the sky is blue," and imagine it made in different circumstances, by a gardener perhaps, or by a child, or by a lover. Do we have the same judgment in each case? In the dissertation Heidegger had argued that despite possible differences in connotation the content remains the same. It is this content which he there calls *Sinn,*or sense. It is this sense, and not what happens to be its linguistic expression, that is said to concern the logician. And it is as a logician that the young Heidegger understands himself; it is through logic that he enters

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[97] *Die Lehre vom Urteil*, GA 1, 178, especially note

philosophy. And, with frequent references to both Aristotle and Husserl, the word "logic" was to continue to figure prominently in the lecture courses of the twenties.[98]

4

In his dissertation Heidegger understood logic as the theory of *Sinn*. He divides that theory into three parts:

1. The doctrine of the elements of sense — *Lehre vom Begriff*
2. The doctrine of the structures of sense — *Lehre vom Urteil*
3. The doctrine of science — *Lehre von der Wissenschaft*

Rather like Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus,* Heidegger calls the sphere of *Sinn* a *logischer Bereich,* a logical realm. Meanings fall into different groupings. These determine the categories of meaning, the *Bedeutungskategorien*, the fundamental principles constitutive of classes of meaning. The investigation into these categories of meaning was the point of the speculative grammar of Thomas of Erfurt, then still confused with Duns Scotus, whom Heidegger discusses in the second part of his *Habilitationsschrift*.

Heidegger, too, understands the proposition as determining a "logical place." The similarity with the *Tractatus* is apparent:

> 3.4. The proposition determines a place in logical space. The existence of this logical place is assured by the existence of its constituent parts, by the existence of the meaningful sentence[*des sinnvollen Satzes*].

One might also want to speak, thinking of Husserl, of an **eidetic space**.

All important, given this picture, is **the separation of the ontic from the logical,** the distinction between **the realm of facts and the realm of meanings**. The later offers room not only to this world, but to all possible worlds. It offers a structure into which all these worlds must fall, where the presupposition is that logic circumscribes the real. Logic transcends any particular set of ontic conditions. If meaning transcends facts, all attempts to ground meaning in fact must be mistaken, that is, rest on a category mistake. And such an attempt was the project of the young Heidegger, a project that is given up in *Being and Time*, just as Wittgenstein gives up a similar thesis in the *Philosophical Investigations*. In both cases, transcendental philosophy, or perhaps I should say the logos, is brought down to earth, temporalized. We may ask, however, if this is not perhaps a confusion. Was the critique of historicism and psychologism that

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[98] See especially GA 21 *Logik. Die Frage nach der Wahrheit* (1925/26) and GA 26*: Metaphysische*

dominated philosophy in the time before the First World War really mistaken? Did that war have anything to do with the shift in philosophical climate? I invite you to consider this question further.

5

But let me return to *Being and Time*: what does Heidegger mean by an *existentiale*? Let us get some terms straight: we have already discussed the distinction between the **logical or transcendental** and the **ontic**. The distinction between **ontological** and **ontic** is essentially the same: ontology is the inquiry into the structures constitutive of entities. Its object is the exhibition of categories. Kant is thus an ontologist when he tries to exhibit the categories. But Kant is not willing to put the presupposed understanding of experience into question. And yet, as the other two *Critiques* demonstrate, the presupposed notion of experience rests on a reduction. A more fundamental questioning of experience is therefore needed: what are the structures constitutive of human being-in-the-world? The inquiry into these structures Heidegger terms fundamental ontology. The structures are called *existentialia*. The relationship between the concepts *existential* and *existentiell* parallels thus the relationship between the concepts "ontological" and "ontic". Heidegger wants to challenge his earlier effort by showing that it uncritically based itself on a particular interpretation of experience and, inseparable from it, on a particular uncritically adopted understanding of Being.[99]

Anfangsgründe der Logik (1928)

[99] I would like to mention here a certain parallel between Heidegger and Descartes: Descartes recognized that his metaphysics of nature, his interpretation of the Being of the objects of science, needed for its foundation a metaphysics of the soul, an analysis of the Being of human being as *res cogitans*. That "fundamental ontology" was to secure that access to beings provided by clear and distinct thinking. That "fundamental ontology" in turn was recognized to be in need of a further foundation. Descartes' philosophical theology addresses that need. Heidegger of course would have us question Descartes' attempt as insufficiently fundamental.

6

I have drawn a parallel between Heidegger and Wittgenstein, but there is also a decisive difference. Heidegger seems more traditional in *Being and Time* in that with his distinction between the ontic and the ontological he appears to hold on to the traditional distinction between essence and fact, a distinction that Wittgenstein subjects to criticism in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Do we need a notion of essence? In what sense? We shall return to this point. But let me here point in conclusion to another decisive difference between the two thinkers: Heidegger insists on distinguishing **authenticity** from **inauthenticity**. Everyday language in its entirety, as we shall see, is a phenomenon of inauthenticity. Heidegger is unwilling to accept ordinary language as something like a *Grund*, a ground. Thus while at first one may be struck by parallels that link Wittgenstein and Heidegger, by the time we get to part 2 of *Being and Time* as we nowhave it there are deep differences that will become ever more important.

Like Wittgenstein, Heidegger leads philosophy in *Being and Time* to a point where the philosophic enterprise in its entirety is called into question. He does so by showing that philosophy is a discipline without adequate foundation or ground. This opposes the Cartesian understanding of philosophy as a kind of conceptual architecture that first lays and then builds on firm foundations. Heidegger would seem to do just the opposite: today we might say he is in the business of deconstruction rather than in that of construction, that is to say, he forces us to recognize that there is no such ground. In this respect Heidegger is more radical than Wittgenstein who only denies that philosophy can establish such a ground, but does claim for himself to be revealing such a ground: *Wir legen den Grund frei*. Ordinary language is that ground. Heidegger calls that ground, into question. It shows itself to be a shifting and thus questionable ground.

5. Heidegger's Way II: Transformations of Logic

1

Last time I drew a parallel between Heidegger's development and that of Wittgenstein:

> 1. *Tractatus* 4.003. Language disguises the thought.

On this view language hides its essential structure, just as the body hides the spirit. *Sprache* hides *Rede, logos*. To avoid such confusions we have to develop an artificial language which does not obscure the logos. Compare with this *Philosophical Investigations*.

> 23. It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language (including the author of the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus).*

Heidegger's thought underwent a similar development. The early Heidegger demands that logic be freed from grammar. This demand for an emancipation of logic form grammar is explicitly rejected in *Being and Time:*

But let me here point again to the decisive difference between the two thinkers: Heidegger insists on distinguishing **authenticity from inauthenticity**. Everyday language in its entirety, as we shall see, is a phenomenon of inauthenticity. Heidegger is unwilling to accept ordinary language as something like a **Grund**, a ground. But let us take a closer look at Heidegger's discussion of language in *Being and Time*.

2

Paragraph 7. clarifies the sense in which Heidegger's method is **phenomenological**. The par. begins with a consideration of the meaning of **phenomenon**. I shall skip over this section here and turn directly to **B,** which offers a preliminary analysis of the concept of ***Logos***.

Heidegger begins with the traditional understanding of *logos* as reason, judgment, concept, definition, ground. The guiding idea here is that of **assertion**, **judgment**:

> If we say that the basic signification of lógos is "discourse", then this word for word translation will not be validated until we have determined what is meant by "discourse" itself. The real signification of "discourse", which is obvious enough, gets constantly covered up by the later history of the word *lógos*, and especially by the numerous and arbitrary Interpretations which subsequent philosophy has provided. *Lógos* gets 'translated' (and this means that it is always being interpreted) as "reason", "judgment", "concept"' "definition", "ground", or "relationship". But how can 'discourse' be so susceptible to modification that *lógos* can signify all the things we have listed, and in good scholarly usage? Even if *lógos* is understood in the sense of "assertion", but of

> "assertion" as "judgment", this seemingly legitimate translation may still miss the fundamental signification, especially if "judgment" is conceived in a sense taken over from some contemporary 'theory of judgment'. (SZ 32/ BT 55)

But is the signification of "discourse" obvious enough? What is it? Is *Rede* adequately translated as "discourse." Discourse suggests a running about. What about Rede?

But *logos* does not first of all mean judgment:

1. *Die Grundbedeutung von lógos ist Rede* (SZ 32), The fundamental meaning of *logos* is discourse.

> *Lógos* as discourse means rather the same as *deloun*: to make manifest what one is 'talking about' in one's discourse. Aristotle has explicated this function of discourse more precisely as *apophaínesthai*. The *lógos* lets something be seen (*phainesthai),* namely, what the discourse is about; and it does so either f*or* the one who is doing the talking (the medium) of for persons who are talking with one another, as the case may be. Discourse lets something be seen *apó*…: that is, it lets us see something *from* the very thing the discourse is about. In discourse (*apóphansis*), so far as it is genuine, *what* is said [*was geredet ist*] is drawn *from* what the talk is abut, so that discursive communication, in what it says [*in ihren Gesagten*], makes manifest what it is talking about, and thus makes this accessible to the other party. This is the structure of *lógos* as *apóphansis*, This mode of making manifest in the sense of letting something be seen by pointing it out, does not go with all kinds of 'discourse'. Requesting (*euché*), for instance, also makes manifest, but in a different way. (SZ 32/ BT 56)

2. Rede means so much as revealing what the Rede is about (SZ 32/ BT 56) Aristotle explicates this function as *apophainesthai*. But this should not lead us to overlook that

3. Not all discourse is apophantic.

Consider for example asking for something. This suggests the need for situating apophantic discourse in a broader understanding of discourse.

4. Discourse becomes concrete in speaking — *im konkreten Vollzug has das Reden den Charakter des Sprechens, der stimmlichen Verlautbarung* (SZ 32).

> When fully concrete, discoursing (letting something be seen) has the character of speaking [*Sprechens*] — vocal proclamation in words. The *lógos* is *phoné*, and indeed *phoné metá phantasías* — an utterance in which something is sighted in each case. (SZ 32-33/ BT56)

Can there be discourse without thus being concretely executed? We shall have to return to this question.

> And only *because* the function of the *lógos* as *apóphansis* lies in letting-something-be-seen by pointing it out, can the *lógos* have the structural for of *súnthesis*. Here "synthesis" does not mean a binding and linking together of representations, a manipulation of psychical occurrences where the 'problem' arises of how these bindings, as something inside, agree with something physical

> outside. Here the *syn* has a purely apophantical signification and means letting something be seen in its togetherness [*Beisammen*] with something — letting it be seen *as* something. (SZ 33/ BT 56)

5. Because logos as apophansis has as its function this pointing out of something that lets something be seen, it *can* have the structure of synthesis. This synthetic structure has its foundation in the apophantic nature of logos. This *kann* suggests that this is not necessary.

6. The synthetic character of apophantic logos in turn founds the possibility of the falsity and error of assertions.

> Furthermore, because the *lógos* is a letting-something-be-seen, it can therefore be true or false. But here everything depends on our steering clear of any conception of truth which is construed in the sense of 'agreement'. This idea is by no means the primary one in the concept of *alétheia*. The 'Being-true' of the *logos* as *aletheúein* means that in *légein* as *apohaínesthai* the entities *of which* one is talking must be taken out of their hiddenness; one must let them be seen as something unhidden (*alethés*); that is, they must be discovered. Similarly, 'Being false' (*pseúdesthai*) amounts to deceiving in the sense of *covering up* [*verdecken*]: putting something in front of something (in such a way as to let it be seen) and thereby passing it off as something which it is *not*. (SZ 333/BT 56-57).

The being true of something means its being uncovering, the being false means a covering up. But precisely because of its synthetic character, this apophantic logos cannot be the primitive kind of logos. Nor can the sense in which assertions are true be the primary sense of truth.

7. Heidegger warns us **not to seek the essence of truth in correspondence.** This idea is said not to be primary.

> But because 'truth' has this meaning and because the *lógos* is a definite mode of letting something be seen, the *lógos* is just *not* the kind of thing that can be considered the primary 'locus of truth. (SZ 33/ BT 57)

The truth of propositions, just because of their synthetic character, must be grounded in some more fundamental truth. Something of that necessity is glimpsed, if inadequately, by those who, like Descartes (cf. *Rules*) or logical atomism, would ground the truth of propositions in simple natures or logical atoms that one either grasps or fails to grasp, but which cannot be grasped falsely.

> If, as has become quite customary nowadays, one defines "truth" as something that really pertains to judgment, and if one then invokes the support of Aristotle with this thesis, not only is this unjustified, but above all, the Greek conception of truth has been misunderstood. *Aísthesis*, the sheer sensory perception of something, is 'true' in the Greek sense, and indeed more primordially than the *lógos* which we have been discussing. Just as seeing aims at colors, any *aísthesis* aims at the *ídia* (those entities which are genuinely accessible only *through* it and *for* it); and to that extent this perception is always true.(SZ 33/ BT 57)

You either see what you see or you fail to see it. You do not see falsely. When you see something falsely you have already interpreted what you see; you see it as this or that. You seeing now already possesses that synthetic structure that finds expression in assertion.

> This means that seeing always discovers colors and hearing always discovers sounds. Pure *noein* is the perception of the simplest determinate ways of Being which entities as such may possess, and it perceives them just by looking at them. This *noein* is what is 'true' in the purest and most primordial sense; that is to say, it merely discovers, and it does so in such a way that it can never cover up; it can never be false; it can at worst remain a non-perceiving, *agnoein*, not sufficing for straightforward and appropriate access. (SZ 33/ BT 57)

Heidegger here both sketches an interpretation of Aristotle that challenges those who would claim him as championing the proposition as the most fundamental locus of truth and suggests that the eidetic intuition of phenomenology invites comparison with the Greek understanding of *noein* in its most primordial sense. But he also forces us to ask whether there really is a simple seeing of colors. Later he will explicitly challenge such a claim. And does that challenge also extend to phenomenology's hope to ground knowledge in some pure *noein*? Is knowledge ever that pure? But this is not to call into question the claim that the assertion should not be considered the primary locus of truth.

> When something no longer takes the form of just letting something be seen, but is always harking back to something else to which it points, so that it lets something be seen as something, it thus acquires a synthesis-structure, and with this it takes over the possibility of covering-up. The 'truth of judgments', however, is merely the opposite of this covering-up, a secondary phenomenon of truth, *with more than one kind of foundation*. (SZ 34/ BT 57)

2

With this let me turn to **Paragraph 34.** In this key paragraph Heidegger returns to the problem of language. We should note the way Heidegger here remains tied to traditional ontology: he still looks for constitutive structures. Note how the distinction between ontic and ontological seems to reappear in the distinction between **Rede** and **Sprache**.

> *The existential-ontological foundation of language [Sprache] is discourse or talk [Rede]* (SZ 160)
> *Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with state of mind and understanding.* (BT 203)

This suggests that ***Rede* names the essence of *Sprache*. That which makes language language** — regardless of the particular language in question. This distinction evaporates in the later essays, as *Sprache* comes to dominate — a fact that deserves reflection. Can *Rede* be construed as a core to be recovered by eliminating from language all that is not essential?

> The intelligibility of Being-in-the-world — an intelligibility which goes with a state-of-mind — *expresses itself [aussprechen] as discourse*. The totality-of-significations of intelligibility is put into words. To significations words accrue. But word-Things do not get supplied with significations,
>
> > The way in which discourse gets expressed [*hinaussprechen*] is language. Language is a totality of words — a totality in which discourse has a 'worldly' Being of its own; and as an entity within the world, this totality thus becomes something which we may come across as ready-to-hand. Language can be broken up into word Things which are present-at-hand. Discourse is existentially language, because that entity whose disclosedness it articulates according to significations, has, a its kind of Being, Being-in-the-world — a Being which has been thrown and submitted to the 'world'. (SZ 161/ BT 204)

The difference between *aussprechen* and *hinaussprechen* is lost in the translation, which uses "express" for both. *Die Rede ist existenzial Sprache*. What would it mean to deny this? Heidegger's immediately following explanation seems convincing. If Dasein is essentially being in the world *Rede* would seem to be equally essentially *Sprache*. The essence of language is then to be *Sprache*. *Rede* should then not be construed as a core that could be reached by eliminating from *Sprache* all that is not essential. Cf. The human being is essentially body.

To say that *Die Rede ist existenzial Sprache* is also to keep in mind also the communal character of discourse. Silence, listening, hearing, are all said to belong to language. once more:

> > The task of *liberating* grammar from logic requires *beforehand* a *positive* understanding of the basic *a priori* structure of discourse in general as an *existentiale*. It is not a task that can be carried through later on by improving and rounding out what has been handed down. Bearing this in mind, we must inquire into the basic forms in which it is possible to articulate anything understandable, and to do so in accordance with significations; and this articulation must not be confined to entities within-the-world which we cognize by considering them theoretically, and which we express in sentences. (SZ 165-166/ BT 209)

Heidegger here suggests how his fundamental ontology should be brought to bear on the philosophy of language.

3

Paragraph 35 opposes idle talk, *Gerede*, to authentic *Rede*. Here, as I pointed out, an important difference between Wittgenstein and Heidegger makes its appearance.

But let us begin by looking at different types of *Gerede*: first the example of reading a newspaper — it is always the same old story. Consider the speed with which we read. We want to be informed. All men desire to know, Aristotle had said. Seeing and knowing here are

not subordinated to some other project which they serve. There is a sense in which **language and understanding here go on a holiday**. Wittgenstein invites us to understand philosophy in these terms, as an "idling" of language. Equipment is out of gear. The sphere of *Zuhandenheit* has been left behind**. Why do we go on such holidays**? Is it something that just happens to us or something we pursue, perhaps to escape the burden character of existence?

A second example: the chatter at some cocktail party. The power of idle talk stems from its power to let us feel at home in the world. *Weiter- und Nachreden*.

> The Being-said, the dictum, the pronouncement [*Ausspruch*] — all these now stand surety for the genuineness of the discourse and of the understanding which belongs to it, and for its appropriateness to the facts. And because this discoursing has lost its primary relationship of-Being-towards the entity talked about, or else has never achieved such a relationship, it does not communicate in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossipping* and *passing the word along*. What is said-in-the-talk as such spreads in wider circles and taken on an authoritative character. (SZ 168/ BT 212)

How are we to tell when we hear or read something whether the words are idle talk or authentic discourse?

> And indeed this idle talk is not confined to vocal gossip, but even spreads to what we write, where it takes the form of scribbling' [*das "Geschreibe*"]. In this latter case the gossip is not based so much upon hearsay. It feeds upon superficial reading [*dem Angelesenen*]. The average understanding of the reader will never be able to decide what has been drawn from primordial sources with a struggle and how much is just gossip. The average understanding, moreover will not want any such distinction and does not need it, because of course, it understands everything. (SZ 168-169/ BT 212)

Idle talk is thus understood as essentially groundless. But such groundlessness, it turns out, pervades understanding from the very beginning.

> The groundlessness of idle talk is no obstacle to its becoming public; instead it encourages this. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own. If this were done, idle talk would founder; and it already guards against such a danger. Idle talk is something anyone can rake up; it not only releases one from the task of genuinely understanding, but develops an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed of any longer (SZ 169/ BT 213)

First of all and most of the time we are all subject to idle talk.

> This way in which things have been interpreted in idle talk has already established itself in Dasein. There are many things with which we first become acquainted in this way, and there is not a little which never gets beyond such an average understanding. This everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which Dasein has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of

> extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed. (SZ 169/ BT 213)

Does all language then not become *Gerede*? Consider

> Idle talk is the kind of Being that belongs to Being-with-one-another itself (BT 221)
> Gerede ist die Seinsart des Miteinanderseins selbst. (SZ 177)

How then are we to think of authentic discourse? What might an authentic conversation be like? Heidegger fails to provide us here with examples of authentic discourse. Can there even be such examples?

3

Let us return to the phenomenon of *Gerede* and to the fact that first of all and most of the time "they" have already decided who we are, how we speak, think, etc. What is it then that in the everyday situation calls us to authenticity? In **Paragraph 54** Heidegger identifies what calls with the **call of conscience**. The discussion of conscience is necessary to show that a possible authenticity is demanded by Dasein of itself. Dasein calls itself to authenticity.

Heidegger discusses conscience as a **call**. It is a mode of speech, or rather of discourse (*Rede)*. In conscience Dasein calls itself to return to itself, to assume itself in its finitude, its being-unto-death.

> But because Dasein is *lost* in the "they", it must first *find* itself. In order to find *itself* at all, it must be 'shown' to itself in its possible authenticity. In terms of its possibility, Dasein is already a potentiality-for-Being-its-Self, but it needs to have this possibility attested.
>
> In the following Interpretation we shall claim that this potentiality is attested by that which in Dasein's everyday intepretation of itslf, is familiar to us as the "voice of conscience' [Stimme des Gewissens]. (SZ 268/ BT 313)

The following makes clear that Heidegger considers the voice of conscience a mode of discourse:

> Conscience gives us 'something' to understand; it discloses. By characterizing this phenomenon formally in this way, we find ourselves enjoined to take it back into the disclosedness of Dasein. This disclosedness, as a basic sate of that entity which we ourselves are, is constituted by state-of-mind, understanding, falling, and discourse. If we analyze conscience more penetratingly, it is revealed as a call [*Ruf*]. Calling is a mode of discourse. The call of conscience has the characer of an appeal to Dasein by calling it to its ownmost potentiality–for-Being-its-Self; and this is done by way of summoning it to its ownmost Being-guilty. (SZ 269/ BT 314)

It would seem that different views of human being would lead to different interpretations of the call of conscience. Is the call of conscience a theoretical construction of a familiar phenomenon?

4

Paragraph 55 discusses the character of conscience as something calling. Discourse and understanding belong together. Discourse discloses.

The call of conscience disrupts our normal listening, which implies a failure to listen to ourselves.

First of all "they" are said to have already determined how we understand ourselves.

> To any state-of-mind or mood, understanding belongs equiprimordially. In this way Dasein 'knows' what it is itself capable of [*woran es mit ihm selbst ist*], inasmuch as it has either projected itself upon possibilities of its own or has been so absorbed in the "they" that it has let such possibilities be presented to it by the way in which the "they" has publicly interpreted things. The presenting of these possibilities, however, is made possible existentially through the fact that Dasein, as a Being-with which understands, can *listen* to Others. Losing itself in the publicness and the idle talk of the "they", it fails to hear [*überhört*] its own Self in listening to the they-self. (SZ 270-271/ BT 315)

Today we may want to speak in this connection of the social construction of self-identity. The call of conscience calls every such constructed self into question.

> Dasein fails to hear itself, and listens away to the "they"; and this listening-away gets broken by the call if that call, in accordance with its character as such, arouses another kind of hearing, which in relation to the hearing that is lost, has a character in every way opposite. If in this lost hearing, one has been fascinated by the 'hubbub' of the manifold ambiguity which idle talk possesses in its everyday 'newness', then the call must do its calling without any hubbub and unambiguously, leaving no foothold for curiosity. *That, which, by calling in this manner, gives us to understand, is the conscience*. (SZ 271/ BT 316)

The call of conscience gives us something to understand. What is it? Nothing? The call of conscience as discourse that displaces.

Heidegger reiterates that the call of conscience is to be understood as a mode of discourse, as a form of *Rede*; indeed, it presents itself to the reader as the only example of authentic discourse discussed in *Being and Time*.

> If the everyday interpretation knows a 'voice' of conscience, then one is not so much thinking of an utterance (for this is something which factually one never comes across); the voice is taken rather as giving-to-understand. In the tendency to disclosure which belongs to the call, lies the momentum of a push — of an abrupt arousal. The call is form afar unto afar. It reaches him who wants to be brought back. (SZ 271/ BT 316)

5

What if conscience is a mode of speech, does it have to tell us? And to whom is it addressed? Heidegger develops his answer to these questions in **Par. 56**

What or who is the addressee of this call, *das Angerufene*? Dasein itself. And to what is it called? To its own self. The call brings Dasein back to itself.

> The call reaches Dasein in this understanding of itself which it always has, and which is concernful in an average, everyday manner. The call reaches the they-self [*Man-selbst*] of concernful Being with Others.
>
> And to what is one called when one is thus appealed to? To one's own Self. Not to what Dasein counts for, can do, or concerns itself with in its being with one another publicly, nor to what it has taken hold of, set about, or let itself be carried along with. The sort of Dasein which is understood after the manner of the world both for Other and for itself, gets passed over in this appeal; this is something of which the call to the Self takes not the slightest cognizance. And because only the Self of the they-self gets appealed to and brought to hear, the "they" collapses. (SZ 272-273/ BT 317)

The call of conscience speaks in the mode of silence and yet, Heidegger insists, what it discloses has one clear sense, is unequivocal or *eindeutig*.

Having lost itself to the "they" Dasein calls itself back to itself. **Dasein** here is **both caller and called**. But the call does not call us to a particular place. It has **nothing** to say. Its speech is **silence**. This silent discourse, as I pointed out, would seem to be the only example of authentic discourse that we are given in Beng and Time, a fact that invites a gnostic interpretation of *Being and Time*. (Cf. Hans Jonas) **Authentic Silence is opposed to inuthentic *Gerede***. In this connection it would be good to take a close look at Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos Letter or more generally at the valorization of silence, epecially in modern poetry. (Cf. Hugo Friedrich)

6

Paragraph 57 seeks to clarify just who here is calling. The call comes from within, even as it overcomes me. But what thus overcomes me is not God or the moral law, is indeed nothing other than my ownmost self. This self is not at home with the they. Dasein calls itself in ***seiner Unheimlichkeit.*** Inseparable from that call is therefore a sense of homelessness or **uncanniness** (*Unheimlichkeit).*

How are we to understand this ownmost self? Heidegger answers in the form of a rhetorical question:

> Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the ownmost elemental way in which thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein's being-in-the-world face to face with the "nothing" of the world; in the face of this "nothing", Dasein is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. *What if this Dasein which finds itself [sich befindet] in the very depths of its uncanniness, should be the caller of the call of conscience?* (SZ 276/ BT 321)

Dasein is both caller and called. In the call of conscience Dasein calls itself, anxious about its own being. Breaking into the world of the they from without, it does not belong to that world.

> The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an *alien* voice. (BT 321)
> Dem alltäglichen Man-selbst eine *fremde* Stimme: (SZ 221)

But any attempt to interpret the caller as a power beyond Dasein, say God or some *daimon*, is rejected as a flight from conscience.

Heidegger himself raises the obvious question: what does the phenomenon here described then have to do with what we usually call conscience?

> So then, only by analyzing the way the appeal is understood can one be left to discuss explicitly what the call gives one to understand. But only with our foregoing general ontological characterization of the conscience does it become possible to conceive existentially the conscience's call of "Guilty!" All experiences and interpretations of the conscience are at one in that they make the 'voice' of conscience speak somehow of 'guilt'. (SZ 279-280/ BT 324-325)

6. Authenticity and the Burden of Freedom

1

Heidegger, as we saw last time, opposes inauthentic *Gerede*, somewhat misleadingly translated as idle talk, to authentic *Rede*. The only example of the latter we are given in *Being and Time* is the silent call of conscience. Presupposed is the distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity. Heidegger ties authenticity to authorship. Human beings do not exist as things, as stones, trees or animals are: for them to be is to be involved in the constitution of their own being. Human beings bear responsibility for their being. They can accept such responsibility and become authors of themselves; they can also refuse it and lose themselves. The twin-possibility of authenticity and inauthenticity is inseparable from human existence. (*SZ* 42 -43)

If Heidegger is right, inauthenticity is not like some disease that comes over us or a temporary straying from the right path, but our normal way of being. First of all and most of the time we find ourselves caught up in a social world that has already assigned us our place and defined who we are: we act as one acts, speak as one speaks. The sway of this anonymous "one" inescapably marks our being with others. (*SZ* 126) But Heidegger also points out that inauthenticity does not just happen to characterize our being: we are such that our own being invites us to run away from who we are, more precisely from what Heidegger terms our "guilt," invites what may be called a potentiation of everyday inauthenticity. (*SZ* 177)

Conscience, we saw last time, calls us to authenticity. What does it have to tell us? Conscience does not does us to a particular place. It has nothing to say. Its speech is silence. Dasein here calls itself in *seiner Unheimlichkeit.*

2

We should not confuse what Heidegger means by "guilt" with what is usually meant when that word is used. We call someone guilty who did what should not have been done or failed to do what should have been done. The ideas of authorship and negativity are thus linked in our ordinary understanding of guilt: to be guilty is to be author of a lack (*SZ* 282) Heidegger's understanding of guilt similarly joins the ideas of authorship and negativity, but in his fundamental ontology guilt can no longer be understood as the consequence of some particular action. The human being is said to be guilty, because, while author of his actions, he yet exists in such a way that he always remains in the thrall of facticity and nothingness, because he is free

and bears responsibility for what he is, and yet cast into a world, subjected to it, subjected also to death. In the human being's dread-shadowed awareness of his own mortality what I have called potentiated inauthenticity has its deepest root. If we are to really appropriate our own being, we also must have the strength to appropriate our mortality, to acknowledge that our freedom is tied to impotence, that all our attempts to make us into our own foundation must fail, that the project of pride must inevitably suffer shipwreck. Authentic existence requires the acceptance of this essential guilt (*SZ* 283 - 284).

Authenticity does not simply refer to a possible mode of life, but, if Heidegger is right, that possibility claims human beings and calls them in the call of conscience, where once again "conscience" may not be taken in the sense in which we use the word when we speak of someone having a bad conscience because of something he did or failed to do. What Heidegger terms conscience is inseparable from human being. In the call of conscience our own guilty being calls us out of our absorption in the accepted and usually taken for granted, back to ourselves and to an acknowledgement of how insecurely we dwell in the world. Calling in conscience, the individual calls himself home to his essential self.

Conscience demands to be heard. Heidegger terms the authentic response to that demand resolve. Resolved, we appropriate ourselves as we are, that is to say in our freedom, but also in our weakness and our impotence, in our vulnerability and our mortality. Authenticity thus demands openness to the possibilities and uncertainties of human existence. It surrenders all claims to something like a firm foundation that might allow for a secure dwelling.

But, if this brief statement of Heidegger's understanding of authenticity is anywhere near its mark, what sense can it make to suggest, as I have done, that authentic existence requires a turn to God? Does God, whether understood as the God of the Bible or the God of metaphysics,[100] not precisely offer a firm foundation of the sort authenticity must renounce? Authenticity would seem to require rather an appropriation of Nietzsche's pronouncement that God is dead, as Heidegger suggests in the "Rectorial Address."[101] Is not faith in God born of what Nietzsche called the spirit of revenge, of a will to power lacking the strength to appropriate

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100 On the distinction between the "God of the Bible," the "God of metaphysics," and the "God of poetry" see Richard Kearney, *Heidegger's Three Gods*.

101 Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität. Das Rektorat 1933/34* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983), p.13; trans. Lisa Harries, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, p. 8.

its own ineliminable lack of power, offering illusions of security to human beings unable to secure their own being?

3

From Heidegger's understanding of authenticity as self-possession and of human being as essentially a being-in-the-world and with others, it follows that resolve is only inadequately understood when interpreted as the authentic response to the silent call of conscience. What the authentic person does and thinks cannot be a matter of indifference: he must also be open and respond to those with him and to the things around him, for it is these that constitute him in his being. If all emphasis is placed on the silent call of conscience, the authentic individual becomes a homeless stranger, who, like Kierkegaard's knight of faith, has suspended his ties to the world, in this case for the sake of nothing rather than for the sake of God. So understood, authenticity becomes an inner quality that must remain hidden from others. But to become authentic the human being must not allow himself to become thus stranger even to himself, but affirm himself in his entirety. Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger therefore insists that resoluteness does not mean a leave-taking from the world and does not yield a free-floating self, but pushes the individual back into the world and the community (*SZ* 298). In the *Rectorial Address* Heidegger thus calls spirit a "primordially attuned, knowing resoluteness toward the essence of Being,"[102] a formulation repeated in the *Introduction to Metaphysics.*[103] *Entschlossenheit* (resoluteness), we are now told, is to be understood as *Ent-schlossenheit*, where the hyphen is to suggest that the resolute individual has unlocked and opened himself, ready to listen and to respond to what is.[104] Resoluteness is still understood here as Dasein's affirmation of itself in its entirety, but the hyphen links such affirmation to an openness to the clearing of Being and to what stands in that clearing.

Still, such formulations do not really help one to understand the possibility of authentic choice much better than those in *Being and Time*. Inseparable from Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as care is indeed a recognition of the fact that human beings do not face a mute world, but are always already claimed and called in countless and often incompatible ways, by persons

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102 *Ibid*.,p. 14 ; trans. 9.

103 Heidegger, *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), pp. 37, 38; trans. Ralph Manheim, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor, 1961), 41.

104 Ibid., 16; trans. 17.

and things, also by their own embodied being. These claims may be said to furnish the necessary material for resolute action. But how is this material to be ordered — and without some such ordering an individual's life would fall apart? How are we to choose between rival claims? Openness to the clearing of Being suggests a readiness to question rather than taking for granted a certain way of life and seeking refuge in it. The resolute human being knows that there can be no real security and that whatever place he has chosen for himself is inescapably questionable. Resoluteness means openness to the groundlessness of our existence: "Every decision ... bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision."[105] Authentic decision, especially, takes place against a background of doubt. In the "Rectorial Address" Heidegger thus calls for a defiant resoluteness that lets us act despite our knowledge that error cannot be be neatly separated from truth. As everything is questionable, "questioning itself becomes the highest form of knowing."[106]

4

Someone who turns to *Being and Time* looking for personal guidance is likely to be disappointed. In vain do we look for a definite moral or political message. And this, it would appear, is as it should be: as a work in fundamental ontology *Being and Time* has to remain formal and abstract; as a transcendental inquiry it can only describe possibilities of human existence, without prescribing where human beings are to stand. To be sure, terms like "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" do not function in a purely descriptive manner. Heidegger uses them rather to call us, if not to a particular life, at least to way of living. *Being and Time* can indeed be read as an edifying discourse in the guise of ontology. Thus while he himself insists that terms like "inauthenticity" and "idle talk" are not being used in a derogatory sense (*SZ* 43, 167), he later acknowledges that finally we cannot divorce ontological from inquiry from the ontic stance of the inquirer.

> Is there not, however, a definite ontical way of taking authentic existence, a factical ideal of Dasein underlying our ontological interpretation of Dasein's existence? That is so indeed. But not only is this Fact one which must not be denied and which we are forced to grant; it must also be

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105 Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks," *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 44 ; trans. Albert Hofstadter, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 55.

106 *Selbstbehauptung*, 13; trans. 8.

> conceived in its positive necessity, in terms of the object which we have taken as the theme of our investigation. (*BT* 358 / *SZ* 310)[107]

Heidegger's choice of terms communicates his own ontic stance, the ideal underlying and steering his ontological investigations. *Being and Time* does more than describe existential possibilities; it calls its readers to that acceptance of our own guilty being Heidegger terms "resoluteness."

> To project oneself upon this Being-guilty, which Dasein is as long as it is, belongs to the very meaning of resoluteness. The existentiell way of taking over this 'guilt' in resoluteness, in its disclosure of Dasein, has become so transparent that Being guilty is understood as something constant. But this understanding is made possible only in so far as Dasein discloses to itself its potentiality-for-Being, and discloses it right-to-its-end'. Existentially, however, Dasein's "Being-at-an-end" implies being-towards-the-end. As Being-towards-the-end which understands —that is to say as anticipation of death, resoluteness becomes authentically what it can be. Resoluteness does not just have a connection with anticipation, as with something other than itself. *It harbours in itself authentic Being-towards-death as the possible existentiell modality of its own authenticity.* (*BT* 353/ *SZ* 305)

To thus exist authentically is to exist, no longer lost to the world, tossed back and forth by competing claims, scattered into different roles and activities, but as a whole. Being-towards-death holds the key to self-integration. Unity is given a normative function.[108] For Heidegger, too, purity of heart is to will one thing: one's ever guilty self.

But if, according to Heidegger, we exist authentically only when, integrating our lives, we affirm ourselves as the mortals we are, such a determination leaves the meaning of such resolute self-integration empty and abstract. It calls us to a form of life, not to a particular life. But human beings cannot exist thus formally: to affirm what Heidegger calls guilt, we, must choose ourselves concretely. Resoluteness becomes genuine only in particular resolute actions. (*SZ* 298) The analysis of authenticity thus remains incomplete without an account of how such actions are at least possible.

If Heidegger's analysis thus demands the responsible realization of resoluteness in concrete decisions and actions, how are we to understand this? Resoluteness, according to his analysis, is inseparable from an acknowledgment of guilt, from the recognition that human

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[107] This remark calls into question Caputo's claim that "The goal of *Being and Time* was to keep the existential analytic free of any 'existentiell ideal,' any concrete, factical way to be — like Christian or Greek life." "Heidegger and theology," 274.

[108] For a fuller account see Karsten Harries, "Death and Utopia: Towards a Critique of the Ethics of Satisfaction," *Resarch in Phenomenology*, vol. 7, 1977, 38-152.

beings cannot secure their being and decisions by relating them to a higher authority in which they could be said to have their measure. Only inauthentic existence gains such a measure by subordinating itself to the authority of an already established way of life. The authentic individual knows about the groundlessness of all such measures. Authentic measures appear only with resoluteness; they are not antecedently given to guide it. Resoluteness lets us take our place in the world; taking his place, the authentic individual knows what is to be done.

This, however, leaves us uncertain of just how we are to understand such resolute action? Is the appeal to resoluteness as understood in *Being and Time* any more intelligible than Sartre's closely related attempt to make an abstract freedom the foundation of value? Freedom that acknowledges no independent criteria or reasons becomes indistinguishable from spontaneity and subverts itself. What gives weight to our actions must be discovered; it cannot be invented. Freedom requires responsibility. But responsibility requires the ability to respond appropriately, requires, if perhaps not what might deserve to be called a moral sense, at least a sense that some things matter and that not all things matter equally. What lets me judge one thing to have more weight than another cannot have its sole determining ground in my free choice. If that were so I should be able to elevate whatever I choose into the integrating center of my life. But such choice would inevitably be experienced as arbitrary and thus devalue itself. Where there are no criteria to evaluate what is to be done and "decision" is blind, it is impossible to preserve an understanding of responsibility. The valorization of resolute being-towards-death and the implied idealization of self-integration do not provide for the content necessary to organize and integrate life. More is needed than the abstract demand for self-integration to render responsible action intelligible. Freedom requires criteria or grounds, some authoritative measure to guide decision.

5

How are we to reconcile this requirement with the analysis of resoluteness found in *Being and Time*? Heidegger recognizes the need for an authority that would allow for an escape from arbitrariness and thus make authentic action possible. In *Being and Time* he seeks that authority in the past that helps shape the present and illuminate future possibilities. With this let me turn to **Paragraph 74.**

The being of Dasein is said to be constituted by its historicity. Resolve implies the ability to resolve in particular concrete situations. But this is to say also that the possibilities Dasein

faces are never altogether open, but limited. History circumscribes the possibilities that are real possibilities for us. It thus delimits and in this sense binds Dasein.

Such a delimitation of Dasein is necessary if we are to be able to resolve.

Consider especially:

> In the existential analysis we cannot, in principle, discuss what Dasein factically resolves in any particular case. Our investigation excludes even the existential projection of the factical possibilities of existence. Nevertheless we must ask whence, in general, Dasein can draw those possibilities upon which it factically projects itself. One's anticipatory projection of oneself on that possibility of existence which is not to be outstripped — on death— guarantees only the totality and authenticity of one's resoluteness. (*BT* 434/SZ 383)

Note the "**only**" in the quote. The anticipation of death provides no content, but only a form. The content has to be provided by one's history.

> The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness, as thrown *takes over*. In one's coming back resolutely to one's thrownness, there is hidden a *handing down* to oneself of possibilities that have come down to one, but not necessarily *as* having thus come down. (BT 435/SZ 383)

The conception of the heritage, the **Erbe,** is necessary to a full account of resoluteness. For Dasein is resolute only when it is able to make particular decisions. But where is it to find the measure for such decisions?

> Only Being-free *for* death, gives Dasein its goal outright and pushes existence into its finitude. Once one has grasped the finitude of one's existence, it snatches one back from the endless possibilities which offer themselves as closest to one — those of comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly — and brings Dasein into the simplicity of its *fate* [*Schicksals*]. This is how we designate Dasein's primordial historizing which lies in authentic resoluteness and in which Dasein hands itself down to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen. (*BT* 435/*SZ* 384)

Here Heidegger threatens to become, not so much a decisionist as a fatalist. **Schicksal**, fate, now comes to play an important part. **Schicksal** names an inherited, but nevertheless chosen possibility. Think of the family as **Schicksal**.

The notion of **Geschick** is related, yet tied to being-with-others. At the bottom of 384 Heidegger speaks of the *schicksalhafte Geschick*.

> Only in communicating and in struggling does the power of destiny become free. Dasein's fateful destiny in and with its 'generation' goes to make up the full authentic historizing of Dasein. (*BT* 436/*SZ* 384, 385)

This would now seem to mean that Dasein can be authentic only when with others, communicating with them, battling with them. Dasein becomes authentic by accepting its *Geschick* as member of its **Generation**. Consoider in this connection the problem of the generation in the twenties and thirties. Dilthey, Wilhelm Pinder. A good paper or dissertation could be written on the *Generationsbegriff*.

Yet there is something unsatisfactory about this analysis. Does history speak with only one voice? **Who is to interpret history?** How is it to gain its focus?

Let me return to the conception of the **Erbe.** Unfortunately this **inheritance** does not speak with one voice. And yet resoluteness demands that these many voices be reduced to one. Does the anticipation of death bring with it such a reduction? The problem we face here is not altogether unlike that Kant faced in an area that at first seems altogether unrelated to what now concerns us, namely in his analysis of the conditions of the possibility of experience. The problem he faced was that of bringing the manifold of experience under the transcendental unity of the apperception. Is there only one way in which such synthesis is to be achieved? In the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant seems to assume this. But does he have any right to do so? In the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant himself comes to question this assumption. But if that assumption is questioned the problem of the genesis of the empirical concept must surface. How do they originate? By an aesthetic judgment? Pushing this point one can move from Kant towards views that argue that the work of the poetic imagination is a necessary condition of the possibility of experience.

Heidegger faces an analogous problem: how to reduce the many strands of our past to one coherent story that allows us to affirm ourselves in our **totality and authenticity**. In this connection it may be tempting to invoke the community, as Heidegger appears to do in a passage that we already looked at (*SZ* 384-385/ *BT* 436) The discussion is summed up in the italicized passage on p. 437:

> *Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially **futural** so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factical "there" by shattering itself against death — that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of **having-been**, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in **the moment of vision** for 'its time'. Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate — that is to say, authentic historicality.* (*SZ* 385/ *BT* 437)

The moment of **vision,** understood here, not as an ecstatic verticality linking the human being with the eternal, cutting the horizontality of everyday existence, as with Kierkegaard, but as

ecstatic, but still horizontal anticipation of death, cutting into the horizontality of the everyday, is linked by Heidegger to the repetition of a particular possibility of past existing and this again is linked to the choice of a hero-precursor:

> The authentic repetition of a possibility that has been — the possibility that Dasein may choose its hero — is grounded existentially in anticipatory resoluteness; for it is in resoluteness that one first chooses the choice which makes one free for the struggle of loyally following in the footsteps of what can be repeated. But when one has, by repetition, handed down to oneself a possibility that has been, the Dasein that has-been-there is not disclosed in order to be actualized over again. The repeating of that which is possible does not bring again [*Wiederbringen*] something that is 'past'. Not does it bind the 'Present' back to that which has already been 'outstripped'. Arising as it does, from a resolute projection of oneself, repetition does not let itself be persuaded of something by what is past, just in order that this, as something which was formerly actual, may recur. Rather, the repetition makes a *reciprocative rejoinder* to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there. But when such a rejoinder is made to this possibility in a resolution, it is made *in a moment of vision*; *and as such* it is at the same time a *disavowal* of that which in the 'today'. Is working itself out as the 'past'. Repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past, nor does it aim at progress. In the moment of vision authentic existence is indifferent to these alternatives. (SZ 385-386/ BT437-438)

Heidegger explicates the meaning of repetition by emphasizing that it is not a slavish imitation of what has been, but a reciprocative rejoinder, where the question is what is to govern the particular form taken by this rejoinder. The **choice of a hero** gives to the past that focus and thus that unity which authenticity requires. Is this then a work of the poetic imagination?

As an aside let me ask: what are the consequences of this understanding of the hero for authentic speaking? What would it mean to speak authentically? You would have to choose your hero and struggle with that hero so that your poetry would be a reciprocative rejoinder. What would such a Heideggerian poetics look like? Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* comes to mnd — I doubt whether Bloom would be pleased about this association with Heidegger.

Another question: what are the consequences of Heidegger's understanding of authenticity for ethics and politics? Let us recall the most important steps of our discussion.

1. Heidegger analyzes authenticity as a human possibility.

2. Not just that: Dasein is said to be called to that possibility. Dasein demands authenticity of itself. It does so in the call of conscience.

3. Authenticity is an appropriation of guilt. Never will Dasein be truly master of itself. Just because of this it is faced with having to make decisions, for genuine decision is only in the face of what has not been fully mastered, as Heidegger will remind us in *The Origin of the Work*

of Art: "Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision." (*OWA*, *PLT* 55)

4. Resolve becomes actual only in concrete decisions. How is decision possible? Is there decision where there are no criteria? What are the necessary conditions for the possibility of decision?

5. But does decision, if it is not to collapse into meaningless arbitrariness or spontaneity require some measure? Where do we find that measure?

6. Does authenticity not require that we give that measure to ourselves? Cf. Kantian autonomy. But Heidegger, of course, cannot appeal to pure reason.

7. To give the law to oneself is the highest freedom. (*SDU*)

8. What sense does this Kantian understanding of authenticity make given the context of *Being and Time*? The only content can come from the past.

9. Resoluteness as fidelity to self and respect for the repeatable possibilities that are part of one's inheritance.

SZ 391 / *BT* 443

But does the past speak with one voice?

10. The need for spiritual legislation.

11. The need for the creator, the poet, statesman, leader, who by interpreting our past for us, lets us find in it our hero.

12. The search for this creator. Cf. Nietzsche's relationship to Wagner. The *Birth of Tragedy* and *Wagner in Bayreuth*. Parallels to Heidegger.

6

Authentic action is said to be repetition, where repetition should not be thought of as a mechanical reenactment of some past paradigm, but as an appropriating response that does not forsake future and present for the past (*SZ* 386). But every such turn to history to banish the specter of arbitrariness remains haunted by it: like the present, the inherited past speaks with many and conflicting voices. No past event, even when looked at as a repeatable possibility, is as such authoritative; it becomes such only when recognized as worthy of repetition. What allows for such recognition?

In *Being and Time* Heidegger significantly does not speak of recognition, but of the individual choosing his hero. (*SZ* 385) Such choice does grant a concrete measure. But the

problem returns: how are we to understand such choice? Heidegger gives no examples and does not elaborate. Was he thinking of the Christian's choice of Christ? Today Heidegger's talk of choosing one's hero has been rendered questionable by his own soon repudiated choice of Hitler for his hero, which raises the question: how are we to distinguish the choice of a genuine hero from worship of some golden calf, where, born of the human need for a measure, such worship seeks to banish that hard to bear lightness of being that is the other side of a freedom that knows neither ground nor measure?

If there is to be an alternative to idolatry, to bad faith, must there not be something about the individual and his situation that genuinely claims him and allows him to recognize in the hero's life the measure of his own? In *Being and Time* this question remains unanswered. Its analysis of authenticity remains therefore incomplete. Due to its formal character *Being and Time* invites a resolve to be resolved, a readiness to choose one's hero without assurance that this hero is indeed worthy to be chosen. The resolve to be resolved makes the individual vulnerable, opens him to attack and seizure, where such seizure promises deliverance from a freedom too heavy to bear.

7. Art Work and Thing

1

As discussed last time, due to its formal character, *Being and Time* invites a resolve to be resolved, a readiness to choose one's hero without assurance that this hero is indeed worthy to be chosen. The resolve to be resolved makes the individual vulnerable, opens him to attack and seizure, where such seizure promises deliverance from a freedom too heavy to bear. To be responsible choice requires something of a measure. The formal character of *Being and Time* serves to underscore the need for a measure.

In "... Poetically Man Dwells..." Heidegger calls poetry "a measuring."[109] By then, Heidegger had chosen Hölderlin for his hero, and his reflections take the form of an attempt to recover or repeat Hölderlin's poetic determination of the essence of poetry. [110] A few lines from a late fragment furnish Heidegger with a point of departure:

> May, if life is sheer toil, a man
> Lift his eyes and say: so
> I too wish to be? Yes. As long as kindness
> The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
> Not unhappily measures himself
> Against the godhead. Is God unknown?
> Is he manifest like the sky? I'd sooner
> Believe the latter. It's the measure of man.
> Full of merit, yet poetically, man
> Dwells on this earth. But no purer
> Is the shade of the starry night,
> If I might put it so, than
> Man, who's called an image of the godhead.
> Is there a measure on earth? There is
> None? [111]

Hölderlin's words present Heidegger with a twofold demand: "for one thing, we are to think of what is called man's existence (*Existenz*) by way of the nature of dwelling; for another, we are to

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109 " ... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...," *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 196; trans. Albert Hofstadter,"... Poetically Man Dwells...," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 221.

110 For a discussion of this deeply problematic choice, see Karsten Harries, "The Root of All Evil: Lessons of an Epigram," *The International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 1 , no. 1 (March 1993), 1 - 20.

111 " ... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...," 194; trans. 219.

think of the nature of poetry as a letting-dwell, as a—perhaps even *the*—distinctive kind of building."[112]

The first demand leads hardly beyond *Being and Time*: resolved, the human being knows his place in the world; knowing his place he is at home in it. Authentic Being –in-the-world can thus be said to be a dwelling (*wohnen*). The second demand calls attention to the problem posed by the analysis of *Being and Time*: if to dwell is to know one's place, does it not depend on the establishing of that place, on a building (*bauen*)? In this sense the poet, too, may be said to build. But how can we build, unless we already know what it is to dwell? Heidegger thus insists: "*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.* "[113] But if, as he also claims, "the nature of building is letting dwell," must we not equally insist on the reverse: dwelling presupposes building? [114] If some particular dwelling is made possible by a particular building, say by the Black Forest farmhouse Heidegger so lovingly describes or by some poem, must such poetic building not presuppose a more primordial dwelling that finally is nothing other than a way of existing? But if so, must such existing not in turn presuppose a more primordial building? "Dwelling," according to Heidegger, names "the relationship between man and space," but space understood now not as homogeneous expanse, but as an ordered whole, joining regions and granting things their separate places. [115] The traditional analogy between human building and divine creation comes to mind: God has often been described as the archetypal architect, who fashioned the world as a perfectly ordered whole, the fit dwelling place for human beings. The primordial building that provides human building with its ground and measure would then be the cosmos. But "cosmos" names precisely the world into which we have been cast, experienced as a meaningfully ordered whole. Heidegger would seem to make some such experience constitutive of human being, although in *Being and Time* he does not speak of "cosmos," but of regions gathered into a world. Authenticity demands such a gathering. But how is it to be understood? Is it compatible with the shape of modernity? How does a world, so understood, come to be established?

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112 Ibid. p. 189; trans. 215.

113 "Bauen Wohnen Denken," *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 161; trans. "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," *Poetry, Language, Thought,* 160.

114 Ibid., 160; trans. 160.

For a first answer, let me turn to the *Origin of the Work of Art*[116] and especially to the description Heidegger there gives of a Greek temple, which I will examine in some detail next time. The essay is as carefully constructed as anything Heidegger has written. Let me begin with the question Heidegger raises near the beginning of the essay. How are we to gain an understanding of the essence of art? Presumably by looking at works of art, asking ourselves what exactly it is that makes them art:

> What art is should be inferable from the work. What the work of art is we can come to know only from the nature of art. Anyone can easily see that we are moving in a circle. Ordinary understanding demands that this circle be avoided because it violates logic. What art is can be gathered from a comparative examination of actual art works. But how are we to be certain that we are indeed basing such an examination on art works if we do not know beforehand what art is? And the nature of art can no more be arrived at by a derivation from higher concepts than by a collection of characteristics of actual art works. For such a derivation, too, already has in view the characteristics that must suffice to establish that what we take in advance to be an art work is one in fact. **(**E18 /G8)

We have here an example of what Heidegger calls the "hermeneutic circle." We have already presupposed what art is when we select certain works as works of art. And, similarly, any attempt to derive the essence of art from supposedly higher principles must already know what art is in advance. Such circularity is unavoidable.

Heidegger goes on to make the seemingly obvious observation that whatever works of art may be, undoubtedly they are things:

> Works of art are familiar to everyone. Architectural and sculptural works can be installed in public places, in churches, and in dwellings. Art works of the most diverse periods and peoples are housed in collections and exhibitions. If we consider the works in their untouched actuality and do not deceive ourselves, the result is that the works are as naturally present as are things. The picture hangs on the wall like a rifle or a hat. A painting, e. g., the one by Van Gogh that represents a pair of peasant shoes, travels from one exhibition to another. Works of art are shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest. During the First World War Hölderlin's hymns were packed in soldier's knapsacks together with cleaning gear. Beethoven's quartets lie in the storerooms of the publishing house like potatoes in a cellar (E18/G8–9).

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115 Ibid., 158; trans. 157. See also *Sein und Zeit,* 102–113.

116 Page references are to Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). followed by references to "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege,* Klostermann, 1977). See also Karsten Harries, *Art Matters: A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's The Origin of the Work of Art* (New York: Springer, 2009)

What Heidegger has to say here invites question: the Van Gogh painting is no doubt a thing, but can the edition of Hölderlin's hymns in some soldier's knapsack be equated with these hymns? Where here is the work of art? And a similar question is raised by Beethoven's quartets: what lies like potatoes in some cellar cannot be identified with these. Their destruction thus would not mean the destruction of Beethoven's quartets. Again we ask: where here is the work of art? In what sense is it a thing?

But let us follow Heidegger: if works of art are indeed things, they are certainly not just things, but things of a very special sort, things *plus* something else:

> This something else in the work constitutes its artistic nature. The work of art is, to be sure, a thing that is made, but it says something other than the mere thing itself is, **allo agoreuei**. The work makes public something other than itself. It manifests something other; it is an **allegory**. In the work of art something other is brought together with the thing that is made. To bring things together is, in Greek, **sumballein**. The work is a **symbol**. (E19-20 /G9)

Heidegger proposes to turn first to an examination of what a thing is, on the thingly aspect of the work of art. An aesthetic investigation turns into an ontological investigation. With this he turns to what for him is an absolutely central topic. For this reason I have asked you to also read his essay "The Thing," dating from 1950.

As we shall see later, the question, "what is a thing?" is centrally related to the topic of this seminar.

But just what is the relationship of the work of art to the thing? As it turns out, the first answer we were given will prove quite inadequate. What is a thing? Where should we look? There is a sense in which everything is a thing. On the other hand, we are reluctant to call persons, or even animals or plants mere things. These are of course things, but they are more than that. We arrive at the mere thing only when this "more" has been stripped away:

> We thus see ourselves brought back from the widest domain, within which everything is a thing (thing = res = ens = an entity), including even the highest and last things. "Mere" here means, first, the pure thing, which is simply a thing and nothing more; but then, at the same time, it means that which is only a thing, in an almost pejorative sense. It is mere things, including even use-objects that count as things in the strict sense. What does the thingly character of these things, then, consist in? It is in reference to these that the thingness of things must be determinable. This determination enables us to characterize what it is that is thingly as such. Thus prepared, we are able to characterize the almost palpable reality of works, in which something else inheres (E21–22/G11–12).

But do we not get an answer to the question: what is a thing? simply by looking at the answers given to that question by the tradition. Heidegger discusses three such answers:

1. The thing as the bearer of properties:

> This block of granite, for example, is a mere thing. It is hard, heavy, extended, bulky, shapeless, rough, colored, partly dull, partly shiny. We can take note of all these features in the stone. Thus we acknowledge its characteristics. But still, the traits signify something proper to the stone itself. They are its properties. The thing has them (E22/G12).

This interpretation has a certain obviousness. It has become part of the Western tradition, so much so that the original experience that once was its warrant has been lost sight of. With this it has become groundless, the interpretation an example of "idle talk":

> The process begins with the appropriation of Greek words by Roman-Latin thought. *Hupokeimenon* becomes *subiectum*; *hupostasis* becomes *substantia*; *sumbebekos* becomes *accidens*. However, this translation of Greek names into Latin is in no way the innocent process it is considered to this day. Beneath the seemingly literal and thus faithful translation there is concealed rather, a translation of the Greek experience into a different way of thinking. Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation. **(**E23/G12–13)

To us this understanding of the thing may seem only natural. After all it is mirrored by the subject-predicate structure of the proposition. But just this mirroring raises a question: Does language mirror reality, or "could it be that even the structure of the thing as thus envisaged is a projection of the framework of the sentence?" **(**E24/G9).

But does this understanding of the thing really capture its thingly character? Take the proposition "this rose is red." Consider then the corresponding experience, I see this thing before me as a red rose. I have pushed the thing into a conceptual framework. Have I thereby captured its thingly character? Have I not rather lost sight of it? Heidegger concludes his discussion of this first determination with the suggestion that it constitutes an assault on the thing.

2. But can we not let the thing speak to us more immediately?

> Can such an assault perhaps be avoided—and how? Only, certainly, by granting the thing, as it were, a free field to display its thingly character directly. Everything that might interpose itself between the thing and us in apprehending and talking about it must first be set aside. Only then do we yield ourselves to the undisguised presence of the thing. But we do not need first to call or arrange for this situation in which we let things encounter us without mediation. The situation always prevails. In what the senses of sight, hearing, and touch convey, in the sensations of color, sound, roughness, hardness, things move us bodily, in the literal meaning of the word. The thing is the *aistheton*, that which is perceptible by sensations in the senses belonging to sensibility **(**E25/G15).

But once again doubts arise. Are the things themselves not closer to us than all sensations? As Heidegger points out,

> We never really first perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises, in the appearance of things—as this thing-concept alleges; rather we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-motored plane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than all sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door shut in the house and never hear acoustical sensations or even mere sounds. In order to hear a bare sound we have to listen away from things, divert our ear from them, i.e. listen abstractly (E26/G15).

Once again we are forced to recognize that we have done violence to the thing.

3. The third interpretation understands the thing in terms of opposition between form and matter. The thing is formed matter, where the matter or *hule* is identified with the thingly character of the thing. It is a definition that fits the work of art especially well. Works of art have indeed long been discussed as formed matter. Indeed it fits humanly produced work so well that we begin to wonder whether we have not illegitimately read human work into the essence of things. How adequate is the matter-form distinction?

> The self-contained block of granite is something material in a definite if unshapely form. Form means here the distribution and arrangement of the material parts in spatial locations, resulting in a particular shape, namely that of a block. But a jug, an ax, a shoe are also matter occurring in a form. Form as shape is not the consequence here of a prior distribution of the matter. The form, on the contrary, determines the arrangement of the matter. Even more, it prescribes in each case the kind and selection of the matter—impermeable for a jug, sufficiently hard for an ax, firm, yet flexible for shoes. The interfusion of form and matter prevailing here is, moreover, controlled beforehand by the purposes served by jug, ax, shoes (E28/G17-18).

Does the form matter distinction operate the same way in the two cases? Does it seem more obvious in one than in the other? It would indeed seem that the understanding of things as formed matter if read off such humanly made things as a jug, or any other piece of useful equipment. It is indeed in light of the equipment paradigm that Heidegger proceeds with his discussion.

> The matter-form structure, however, by which the being of a piece of equipment is first determined, readily presents itself as the immediately intelligible constitution of every entity, because here man himself as maker participates in the way in which the piece of equipment comes into being. Because equipment takes an intermediate place between mere things and works, the suggestion is that nonequipmental beings—things and works and ultimately everything that is—are to be comprehended with the help of the being of equipment (the matter-form structure) **(**E29/G19).

The interpretation received additional support from the Christian interpretation of God as the master craftsman, which allows every thing to be understood as an *ens creatum*, a created thing. And this interpretation received further support when in modern philosophy the knower is made into a kind of maker. Kant serves as the most obvious example. The knower imposes on the material sensibility the form of his concepts.

But has this third paradigm brought us closer to the thingly character of the thing? Have we once again done violence to the thing? And what about the nature of equipment that guided this third interpretation? In apparently good phenomenological fashion, wanting to "simply describe some equipment without any philosophical theory," he chooses a pair of peasant shoes:

> We choose as example a common sort of equipment — a pair of peasant shoes. We do not even need to exhibit the actual pieces of this sort of useful article in order to describe them. Everyone is acquainted with them. But since it is a matter here of direct description, it may be well to facilitate the visual realization of them. We shall choose a well-known painting by Van Gogh, who painted such shoes several times (E32/33/G22).

The move to the painting seems a slight of hand. Why does he not simply take off one of his own shoes? Heidegger appears to have a ready answer: "We are so familiar with these things that we do not even need to produce the shoes. A picture will do." Heidegger speaks of "a picture," not of this particular picture. We are indeed so familiar with such things as shoes that we would not seem to need even a picture. In fact, instead of helping us to a better understanding of the being of equipment, the painting draws attention to itself and to the artist who created it in a way that threatens to derail the smooth progress of the philosophical discussion. But perhaps such derailment is the point of Heidegger's turn to Van Gogh's shoes: do we have here a clue to the relationship in which art should stand to everyday life: to derail us in order to make the being of things more visible?

But why peasant shoes? Why not something that speaks more of the world in which we live? An airplane or a radio, today a computer, might serve the discussion better? To be sure, the example chosen by Heidegger was timely: the critique of the metropolis and its rootless existence, the celebration of life in the provinces, were very much in the air and helped shape the art of the thirties. Heidegger, too, liked to think of himself as someone out of place in metropolitan Berlin, at home with peasants, in the province.[117] In Van Gogh's letters to his brother Theo he seemed to encounter a kindred soul: "When I say that I am a painter of

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117 Martin Heidegger, "Schöpferische Landschaft: Warum bleiben wir in der Provinz," *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 13 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1984), 9–13.

peasants, that is indeed so and you will get a better idea from what follows that it is there that I feel in my element."[118] Heidegger said of his own philosophical work that it was "of the same kind" as that of the peasant who prepares the shingles for the roof of his house.[119]

So it is not surprising that to "facilitate the visual realization" Heidegger should have invoked a "well-known painting by Van Gogh," who, he reminds us, "painted such shoes several times," as if to tell us how unimportant the particular work is, given the use to which it is to be put in his essay: to help us understand the true being, not of art, but of equipment:

> From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong—only an undefined space. There are not even clods of soil from the field or the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use" (E33/G22).

Later, Heidegger was to add that the painting does not allow us to determine "to whom they belong," calling his own subsequent discussion of the owner into question. We are struck by the contrast between how little the painting has to tell us about these shoes and how much the philosopher has to say about them. [120] We should be struck also by the way the thingliness of this particular work of art, its stubborn materiality are passed over.

But once more: why turn to this particular painting? If a picture is wanted, why choose a painting that draws attention first of all to itself, to the way this particular painter put paint on canvas, expressed himself in his use of paint? Does Heidegger not himself call attention to the self-sufficiency of the work of art, which is not respected when it is used, *en passant*, to illustrate a philosophical point? Why did Heidegger not choose a photograph showing some quite ordinary shoes, perhaps his own. Or better yet: why not just point to an actual pair of shoes?

Why this artist and this painting? Was the audience sufficiently familiar with the work to visualize it? Did Heidegger bring in a reproduction to help his listeners? One would assume not. And somehow this does not seem necessary, might even have made them less attentive to what the philosopher had to say. Certainly in the essay the work of art, although referred to and discussed, remains strangely absent, somewhat in the way the thing remained absent from the philosophical interpretations considered earlier. The painting is not even clearly identified.

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[118] Cited in Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans Geoff Bennington and Ian MacLeod (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 367–368.

[119] Heidegger, "Schöpferische Landschaft," 10.

[120] Added only in the Reclam edition of "The Origin of the Work of Art," published in 1960. See Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 18.

From Meyer Schapiro we learn that van Gogh painted such shoes eight times, three of which might be the painting Heidegger had in mind.[121] To an inquiry by the art historian Heidegger responded that he had in mind a painting he saw in Amsterdam in March 1930. This allowed Schapiro to identify the particular painting and the owner of the shoes, at least to his own satisfaction: they are the artist's own, neither a woman's, nor a peasant's.[122] Does this matter to the essay's argument? What does Heidegger "see" in the picture?

3

A great deal; we may well think far too much:

> 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. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. 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 is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety 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. This equipment belongs to the earth**,** and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself (E33-34/G23).

One thing the painting is supposed to show us is that we do not do justice to equipment when we understand it only in terms of what Heidegger calls its "blank usefulness." Such usefulness may give us the "impression that the origin of equipment lies in a mere fabricating that impresses a form upon some matter. [We might want to give a similar account of the origin of art.] Nevertheless in its genuinely equipmental being, equipment stems from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction have a deeper origin" (E35/G24)).

That equipment cannot be reduced to formed matter is obvious: such a reduction elides the meaning of equipment. To understand that meaning we have to understand the activity equipment serves and beyond that a way of life. Heidegger gestures in this direction by speaking of reliability: "The repose of equipment resting within itself consists in its reliability. Only in this reliability do we discern what equipment in truth is" (E35/G24):.

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121 Meyer Schapiro, "The Still Life as a Personal Object—a Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh" in *The Reach of Mind*, ed. M. L. Simmel (New York: Springer, 1968), 206.

> By virtue of this reliability the peasant woman is made privy to the silent call of the earth; by virtue of the reliability of the equipment she is sure of her world. World and earth exist for her, and for those who are with her, in her mode of being, only thus—in the equipment. We say "only" and therewith fall in to error, for the reliability of the equipment first gives to the simple world its security and assures to the earth the freedom of its steady thrust (E34/G23).

Heidegger knows that the sheltering world of his peasant woman is not our own. What he calls reliability hardly describes our modern world. Does that world still "assure to the earth the freedom of its steady thrust"? Heidegger himself speaks of the wasting away of equipmentality, its sinking into mere stuff:

> In such wasting reliability vanishes. This dwindling, however, to which things owe their obtrusive usualness, is only one more testimony to the original nature of equipmental being. The worn-out usualness of the equipment then obtrudes itself as the sole mode of being, apparently peculiar to it exclusively. Only blank usefulness then remains visible (E35/G24).

Not that we should blame ourselves for such wasting and vanishing. It is our fate to have been born into this age of the "world picture." Into this age works of art like the painting by Van Gogh carry the trace of what has been lost. We have been trying to understand the being of equipment. But have we not learned something about art: that it has the power to recall us to what is essential, if often not attended to? Not that Heidegger brought his audience literally before the painting. He only invited them to imagine a painting by Van Gogh, showing a pair of shoes, to put themselves in the position of someone looking at the painting. To accept that invitation is to transport oneself out of the everyday. Entering the vicinity of art, we glimpse what Heidegger calls the "deeper origin" of the distinction between matter and form, as important to an understanding of art as to an understanding of the being of things.

Note the strange progress of our discussion. We began by asking about the origin and essence of art. That question led us to inquire into what a thing is. Heidegger's discussion of three different answers traditionally given to this question, was designed to show how one of these, the third, gained a certain priority. This then led to an inquiry into the being of equipment. And what reveals to us the being of equipment? A painting. But now we have learned something about art, even as we were trying to understand the thingly character of the thing:

> The equipmental quality of equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description and explanation of a pair of shoes actually present; not by a report about the process of making shoes; and also not by the observation of the actual use of shoes occurring here and there; but only by

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122 Kockelmans and Derrida call this identification and Shapiro's mode of argumentation into question. See Joseph J. Kockelmans, *Heidegger on Art and Art Works* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985), 127–132; Jacques Derrida,

> bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's painting. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be. (E35/G24)

The work of art has revealed to us what the shoes are. As Heidegger puts this point:

> In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work. "To set" means here: to bring to a stand. Some particular entity, a pair of peasant shoes, comes in the work to stand in the light of its being. The being of the being comes into the steadiness of its shining (E36 /G25).

Note that this understanding of art harks back to the Platonic. The work of art lets essential being shine forth in the particular, only that Heidegger no longer understands that being in terms of the forms. The work of art has thus been understood, if only in a preliminary way, as the happening of truth. Already we have made a move towards a return to a more ontological conception of art.

What has been accomplished? First of all Heidegger has tried to shake us in our conviction that we already know what art is, and more especially what things are. He points to the violence done to the thing by its traditional interpretations. How then can we get to the thing and to its thingly character? The suggestion is: through art. Art is proposed here as the proper vehicle for phenomenology, for getting **"to the things themselves."**

> The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this deconcealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the art work, the truth of what is has set itself to work. What is truth itself, that it sometimes comes to pass as art? What is this setting-itself-to-work? (E39/G28).

The reader cannot forget, however, that the thingliness of the art-work has been completely elided. The violence done by traditional interpretations of the thingliness of the thing is echoes by the violence done by the philosopher's interpretation to this particular work of art.

The Truth in Painting, 257–382.

8. Earth and World

1

"We allowed a work to tell us what equipment is. By this means, almost clandestinely (*gleichsam unter der Hand*) it came to light what is at work in the work: the disclosure of the particular being in its being, the happening of truth" (G27/E38*)*.[123] *Gleichsam unter der Hand*: with these words Heidegger likens his procedure to that of a magician, his use of the painting to a trick that depends on the observer not noticing what goes on *unter der Hand*. But what did go on? A poetic reflection occasioned by a remembered painting substituted for phenomenological description. Unlike Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's poem "Roman Fountain," the painting by Van Gogh remains absent in this essay; in its place we get Heidegger's description of what he remembers, accompanied by the claim that:

> It would be the worst self-deception to think that our description, as subjective action, had first depicted everything thus and then projected it into the painting. If anything is questionable here, it is rather that we experienced too little in the neighborhood of the work and that we expressed the experience too crudely and too literally. But above all, the work did not, as it might seem at first, serve merely for a better visualization of what a piece of equipment is. Rather the equipmentality of equipment first genuinely arrives at its appearance through the work and only in the work (G24-25/E35-36).

The progress of Heidegger's philosophical thought makes it difficult to take this at face value. Was the painting really needed for an account of the being of equipment that has its place between the analysis of the thing found in *Being and Time*, where equipment is said to give us access to things as they are "in themselves," and the late Heidegger's analysis of the thing in terms of the fourfold of heaven and world, mortals and divinities? Meyer Schapiro seems more nearly right when he writes,

> Alas for him, the philosopher has indeed deceived himself. He has retained from his encounter with Van Gogh's canvas a moving set of associations with peasants and the soil which are not sustained by the picture itself, but are grounded rather in his own social outlook with its heavy

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123 Page numbers refer to Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege,* Klostermann, 1977), followed by "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

> pathos of the primordial and the earthly. He has indeed "imagined everything and projected it into the painting." He has experienced both too little and too much in his contact with the work.[124]

Heidegger himself says that he (we) experienced "too little in the neighborhood of the work" and "expressed the experience too crudely and too literally." And we should note that what Heidegger claims to have expressed here is not so much the painting as his experience or memory of the way the painting of the shoes revealed their being. In the epilogue to the essay he will wonder whether experience is not perhaps "the element in which art dies" (G66/E79) and we may wonder whether Heidegger's experience here does not allow this particular painting to die. This death, we can add, would be quite in keeping with Hegel's thesis of the end of art: here, thought and reflection have indeed taken their flight above fine art.

But granting that Heidegger is substituting for the actual painting a remembered experience or dream of that painting, what kind of art is he dreaming of? Heidegger knows that the world of the peasant woman that the painting conjured up for him is a world to which neither he nor Van Gogh, despite their claims to kinship, belong, or could ever belong. To insist that the painting reveals to us the true being of equipment, even if this is a truth denied to us by our modern world, is to call us to a home not to be found in our world.

Heidegger claims that it is the painting that speaks to us. But what really speaks to us in this essay is a poetic meditation occasioned by the remembered painting. Doubly removed from the actual shoes, Heidegger's words recall what he had to say about the rootlessness of Western thought that is said to begin with the translation of Greek words into Latin, "*without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say*" (G13/E23). Here, too, the translation of the original claims to preserve what is essential. But it is no longer supported by the original experience, makes that lack of support conspicuous by its choice of words, which opens up an abyss between word and picture. But we can say this much: if only in thought, the remembered painting transported Heidegger out of his modern everyday into another, more archaic world, one that he considered more authentic, closer to the origin.

Heidegger himself appeals to the shoes to gain access to the "deeper origin" of the seemingly self-evident distinction between matter and form (G24/E35). How are we to understand this "deeper"? Where does this depth find its measure? Is Heidegger claiming that in this age of the world picture we are denied access to what he terms "genuine equipmental being," denied a sheltering world, prevented from hearing the call of the earth? But if this is indeed the

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124 Meyer Schapiro, "the Still Life as a Personal Object," p. 206. Cited in Joseph J. Kockelmans,

case, does that not mean that adequate access to the thingly character of things is also denied to us, no matter how strenuous our effort to think it? Not that this is something for which we could be blamed. Is it not our fate to have been born into this age of the world picture, to be ruled by its understanding of reality? And yet that rule cannot be total. Were it total Heidegger could not struggle to open windows or doors to what lies beyond our modern world. For support in this struggle he looks to art, here to a painting by Van Gogh.

2

The painting is said to have given us insight into the being of equipment. But, if so, we have learned something about the essence of art: "Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, is in truth" (G25/E36). Truth here names the unconcealedness of beings in their being. This is what the Greeks are said to have called *aletheia.* Works of art can show us that "*Beauty is one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness*" (G44/E56).

Heidegger here returns to what would seem to be an old understanding of beauty, easily related to the Platonic understanding of beauty as the epiphany of the forms, i.e. of true being, but also to Aristotle's understanding of poetry as more philosophical than history, and to the medievals, who understood beauty as *splendor formae*: as the becoming visible of the form. It is evident that such insistence on a link between beauty and truth challenges the separation of the two that helps to define the aesthetic approach, even as it challenges an understanding of truth as the correspondence of our propositions or thoughts to the facts. Judged as a representation of an actual pair of shoes, the painting by Van Gogh is less successful than a photograph. But what it reveals, according to Heidegger, is the being of the shoes and by so doing the painter's and our own ambiguous relationship to our origin, figured in Heidegger's account by the peasant-woman. It is in this sense that truth is said to be established by a poem such as Hölderlin's *The Rhine*, briefly mentioned by Heidegger in this connection. In a lecture course he had just offered a detailed interpretation of that hymn as a projection of being, whose challenge Germans still needed to confront.[125] "The Origin of the Work of Art" concludes by returning to this challenge:

Heidegger on Art and Art Works (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985); pp. 128-129.

125 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein", Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 39 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980), 1.

> Are we in our existence historically at the origin? Do we know, which means do we give heed to, the nature of the origin? Or in relation to art, do we still merely make appeal to a cultivated acquaintance with the past?
> For this either-or and its decision there is an infallible sign. Hölderlin, the poet—whose work still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood—named it in saying:
>
> Schwer verlässt
> was nahe dem Ursprung wohnet, den Ort
>
> Reluctantly
> that which dwells near its origin departs.
> "The Journey," verses 18-19 (G65/E78)

Given the importance of Hölderlin and the "Rhine" hymn for Heidegger, it may seem surprising that in this essay he only refers to it to remind us that the success of a poem such as this has nothing to do with the poet's ability to represent the Rhine river in words. Following this reminder he goes on to quote in its entirety a short poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, which, he suggests, at first glance might seem to lend support to the claim that the artwork is a copy, and yet is an example of "truth put into the work":

> **Der römische Brunnen**
>
> Aufsteigt der Strahl und fallend gießt
> Er voll der Marmorschale Rund,
> Die, sich verschleiernd, überfließt
> In einer zweiten Schale Grund;
> Die zweite gibt, sie wird zu reich,
> Der dritten wallend ihre Flut,
> Und jede nimmt und gibt zugleich
> Und strömt und ruht.
>
> **Roman Fountain**
>
> The jet ascends and falling fills
> The marble basin circling round;
> This, veiling itself over, spills
> Into a second basin's ground.
> The second in such plenty lives,
> Its bubbling flood a third invests,
> And each at once receives and gives

> And streams and rests. (G26/E37)

Why did Heidegger choose this poem? In just what sense is truth being set into this work?

3

Where has our ontological detour, first to the thing, then to equipment gotten us? Our attempt to understand the work of art as a thing with something extra added that makes it into a work of art, as a made thing, an artifact, but with the specific purpose to give aesthetic pleasure, has failed. If we are to understand the thingly being of the work of art, we have to begin, not with the thing, but with art. What then is art? "Art is real in the art work" (G 25/E39). But Heidegger suggests, "Nothing can be discovered about the thingly aspect of the work so long as the pure self-subsistence of the work has not distinctly displayed itself." That the Van Gogh painting failed to do.

How are we to understand "pure self-subsistence": *das reine Insichstehen des Werkes*? The formulation recalls a commonplace of aesthetics. Baumgarten would seem to have had such self-subsistence in mind when he understood beauty as perceived perfection: in a successful work of art nothing can be left out or added without a loss of perfection. The poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer invites discussion as such a perfect work of art, a "well wrought urn."

But is the self-subsistence Heidegger claims for the work of art not another philosophical construct without an adequate basis in experience? "Yet is the work ever in itself accessible? To gain access to the work, it would be necessary to remove it from all relations to something other than itself, in order to let it stand on its own for itself alone." Heidegger adds, in keeping with a commonplace of aesthetics: "the artist's most peculiar intention already aims in this direction" (G29/E 40). But is our experience of works of art not always mediated by some context or other? Today we experience great works of art first of all in museums and exhibitions. But here, Heidegger suggests, we encounter works of art only as objects of the art industry. The art industry has become the master of art:

> Works are made available for public and private art appreciation. Official agencies assume the care and maintenance of works. Connoisseurs and critics busy themselves with them. Art dealers supply the market. Art-historical study makes the works the objects of a science. Yet in all this busy activity, do we encounter the work itself? (G 29/ 40)

Consider a museum such as Munich's *Glyptothek*. Do we encounter the sculptures exhibited there in a way that does justice to their self-subsistence? Transported into the museum environment works of art are no longer the works they once were: "The Aegina sculptures in the

Munich collection, Sophocles' Antigone in the best critical edition, are, as the works they are, torn out of their own native sphere" (G29-30/E 40). "Native sphere" should not be understood as a geographical context: "But even when we make an effort to cancel or avoid such displacement of works—when, for example, we visit the temple in Paestum at its own site or Bamberg cathedral on its own square—the world of the work that stands there has perished" (G30/E40-41).

The temple is no longer the work it once was. While still able to present the earth, it no longer can place us in the world it opened up for the Greeks. It has lost its world-establishing power. In our world it has a very different function: like the cathedral in Bamberg, it invites us to consider what art once meant to human beings. More importantly, then, "native sphere" refers to a cultural context. What Heidegger means by "world" implies such a context. Having lost their world, works of art are no longer the works they were. Now they have their place in the modern world and more especially in the modern art world. The aesthetic approach to works of art with its insistence on the autonomy of art is very much part of this world.

There is tension between two claims Heidegger makes: following the tradition, he speaks of the self-subsistence of works of art; at the same time he insists that they belong in a context, that they cease to be the works they were when this context is lost. But must we not then give up the first claim? Is it not essential for a work to stand in relations? Heidegger's response would seem to be in keeping with what the aesthetic approach demands:

> The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work is present in, and only in, such opening up. We said that in the work there was a happening of truth at work. The reference to Van Gogh's picture tried to point to this happening (G30/E 41).

The successful work of art opens up its own proper context. But if Heidegger's use of the Van Gogh painting is at all successful, why does it become "necessary" at this stage of the discussion to "make visible once more the happening of truth in the work" (G30/E41) and to choose now a work that cannot in any way be considered representational art, a Greek temple?

4

> A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley. The building encloses the figure of the god, and in this concealment lets it stand out into the holy precinct through the open portico. By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of the god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct. The temple and its precinct, however, do not fade away into the indefinite. It is the

> temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers 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. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from this and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfillment of its vocation (G30-31/E41-42).

There are difficulties with this passage. Why choose a work whose world has perished? How can we expect it to make visible what Heidegger calls the happening of truth? The shoes at least were painted by an artist whose world is familiar to us. We can understand his dissatisfaction with that world. But does the temple not remain even more profoundly absent from Heidegger's essay than Van Gogh's painting? Which temple is he describing? Since he has already mentioned "the temple in Paestum," it may seem plausible to think of the ancient Poseidonia and of one its temples, two consecrated to Hera, one of which later came to be associated with Neptune, and a third to Athena, later associated with Ceres. Kockelmans confidently identifies the temple in question with the first.[126] But Heidegger chooses to speak in general terms of "a Greek temple," and in the 1935 version it was said to be a temple of Zeus. His description discourages every attempt to identify the temple in question. Heidegger is not describing a specific building, but the being of a Greek temple. When the quoted passage is read as referring to a particular temple it quickly becomes nonsensical. If every Greek temple were to "first" establish the Greek world, would that world not fall apart? Would we not have to modify Heidegger's claim and say that each particular temple interprets and opens up the pre-given Greek world in its own distinctive way? Surely those who built such a temple were Greeks, already embedded in their distinctive world. And something similar would have to be said about a church like Bamberg cathedral. Heidegger's temple has its place not on earth, but in a spiritual realm. Here, too, the thingly aspect of the work remains profoundly absent.

This much is clear: the being of a Greek temple is not even remotely understood when it is approached in purely aesthetic terms. "The work of art," Heidegger says, "opens up a world and at the same time sets this world back again on earth, which only thus emerges as native ground" (G 32/E42). As we have seen, world "is not the mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things" (G33/E44). World here names a space of intelligibility that determines a way of encountering persons and things. In this sense,

> A stone is worldless. Plant and animal likewise have no world; but they belong to the covert throng of a surrounding into which they are linked. The peasant woman, on the other hand, has a world because she dwells in the overtness of beings, of the things that are. Her equipment, in its reliability, gives to this world a necessity and nearness of its own. By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. In a world's worlding is gathered that spaciousness out of which the protective grace of the gods is granted or withheld. Even this doom of the god remaining absent is a way in which world worlds (G33-34/E44-45).

While this is in keeping with the world concept of *Being and Time*, with his talk of the earth Heidegger takes a step beyond that work, a step that brings us closer to the elusive thingliness of things. The Greek temple is to help us take that step:

> Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground. This resting of the work draws up out of the rock the mystery of that rock's clumsy yet spontaneous support. Standing there, the building holds its ground 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 brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night. The temple's firm towering makes visible the invisible space 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. Tree and grass, eagle and bull, snake and cricket first enter into their distinctive shapes and thus come to appear as what they are. The Greeks called this emerging and rising in itself and in all things *phusis*. It clears and illuminates also that on which and in which man bases his dwelling. We call this ground the earth. What this word says is not to be associated with the idea of a mass of matter deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet. Earth is that whence the arising brings back and shelters everything that arises without violation. In the things that arise earth is present as the sheltering agent (G31/E42).

When Heidegger speaks here of the earth he calls attention both to the material of which the art work is made and to the natural order to which we belong. But can something of this sort not be said of any artifact? It, too, belongs to the earth and is something made. Such making presupposes suitable material. There is, however, this decisive difference: in the artwork the material does not "disappear into usefulness" (G35/E46). Rather, the artist presents the earth by revealing the material he is working with in its materiality: light as light, space as space, stone as stone, paint as paint, words as words. This distinguishes his work from that of the craftsman.:

> To be sure, the sculptor uses stone just as the mason uses it, in his own way. But he does not use it up. That happens in a certain way only where the work miscarries. To be sure, the painter also uses pigments, but in such a way that color is not used up but rather only now comes to shine

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126 Kockelmans, 141-142.

> forth. To be sure, the poet also uses the word—not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who have to use them up, but rather in such a way that the word only now becomes and remains truly a word (G36/E47-48).

To paint a picture is, among other things, to re-present the paint. Thus re-presented, the paint is revealed as what it is. Some modern artists have come close to reducing the function of art to such re-presentation: the painter tries to do nothing more than to make paint conspicuous as paint, canvas as canvas. How different such painting is from representational painting that uses paint and canvas as means of pictorial representation. Ideally such representation lets you forget the medium. In this sense it wants to deceive the eye—Alberti's *On Painting* invites such an understanding of art: ideally the painting should be like a window through which we look at whatever the painter has chosen to represent.[127] Such a representational art is not at all what Heidegger has in mind: the point of great art is precisely to block such easy passage.

5

I suggested that Heidegger's temple has its place not here on earth, but in a spiritual realm. We can be more specific: Heidegger's discussion refers us first of all not to Greece or Southern Italy, but to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics*, where Hegel discusses architecture as humanity's first attempt to give external reality to the divine, and that for Hegel means inevitably also to the human spirit:

> It is architecture that pioneers the way for the adequate realization of the God, and in this service bestows hard toil upon existing nature, in order to disentangle it from the jungle of finitude and the abortiveness of chance. By this means it levels a space for the God, gives form to his external surroundings, and builds him his temple as a fit place for concentration of spirit, and for its direction to the mind's absolute objects. It raises an enclosure round the assembly of those gathered together, as a defense against the threatening of the storm, against rain, the hurricane, and wild beasts, and reveals the will to assemble, although externally, yet in conformance with the principles of art.[128]

Much of this is taken up by Heidegger, but the Hegelian account has been radically rewritten. Nothing in Hegel's description answers to what Heidegger points to when he insists that "*The Work lets the earth be an earth*" (G35/E46). Hegel has a more oppositional understanding of art and especially of architecture: the temple's builders impose a spiritual, and that means for Hegel

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127 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. and intro. John R. Spencer (New Haven and London: Yale,1956).

a truly *human* order on a recalcitrant material. Human beings assert and celebrate their humanity in the face of an initially indifferent environment when they level the ground, break the stone, raise walls and columns: they defend themselves against nature, not only or even primarily against its physical threats—such defense is the task of more modest building—but against its contingency. In this struggle they rely on and exhibit the power of the universal, of what belongs to the logos that makes **human beings human.** That is why architecture is in its very essence not the work of isolated individuals, but of the spirit, and that means of the community: the spirit breaks down the walls that separate individuals:

> Architecture, however, as we have seen, has purified the external world, and endowed it with symmetrical order and with affinity to mind; and the temple of God, the house of his community, stands ready. Into this temple, then, in the second place, the God enters in the lightning-flash of individuality which strikes and permeates the inert mass, while the infinite and no longer merely symmetrical form belonging to mind itself concentrates and gives to the corresponding bodily existence. This is the task of Sculpture.[129]

Hegel assigns the Greek temple its place in his story of the spirit's progress, a progress that has its *telos* in the human community's complete appropriation of the earth, an appropriation which has to break down the walls that separate persons, races, and regions, as it has to subject the earth to our will to power. That progress has to leave behind, first, architecture, that "first pioneer on the highway toward the adequate realization of the Godhead," and then all art, as the spirit discovers a far more complete mastery in science and technology than art can ever provide.

As the "Epilogue" to "The Origin of the Work of Art" makes clear, Heidegger means to call Hegel's prognosis into question, and Heidegger knows that to do so he has to challenge the Cartesian promise that our spirit will render us the masters and possessors of nature. Heidegger cannot recognize a genuine home in a world that has reduced the earth to mere material for human construction. And because he is convinced that we moderns have to learn once again to "let the earth be an earth," something that neither technology nor science can teach us, but only art, he returns in "The Origin of the Work of Art" to architecture, like Hegel, as the art which lets the spirit's progress begin. But he returns to it to suggest that the challenge of that beginning does not lie behind us, as Hegel thought, but ahead of us.

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128 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. Michael Inwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 90–91.

129 *Ibid.*, 91.

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The truth of Hegel's judgment that "Art no longer counts for us as the highest manner in which truth obtains existence for itself," that it "has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit," that "art is and remains for us, on the side of its highest vocation, something past," has not been decided. For the time being, Heidegger says, "the judgment remains in force." "But," he continues, "for that very reason the question is necessary whether the truth the judgment declares is final and conclusive and what follows if it is" (G67/E80).

Heidegger's pronouncement about Hegel's judgment invites a different sort of question: how then are we to understand the three artworks that figure importantly in the essay — the painting by Van Gogh, the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, and the Greek temple? The Greek temple, no doubt, is an example of art in its highest sense, for Heidegger as for Hegel. But it belongs to our past. To be sure, even in its ruined state it still presents the earth, the stone of which it was built, the rocky soil that supports it, the sky above. That dimension of this artwork remains available to us today and invites an art that takes its primary task to be the presentation of the earth. But given Heidegger's understanding of the artwork as establishing a world and as presenting the earth, there is something deficient about such art, even if it is easy to understand why just such deficient art should be particularly adequate to the modern age. Consider once more its understanding of reality: there is a tendency to count only that as real which can be captured by reason, which can be rendered clear and distinct, which can be measured. And when nature has in this sense been subjected by reason, it can also be manipulated. Given that conception of reality, we cannot take seriously talk of the world establishing power of art. Thus what Heidegger has to say about the Greek temple may indeed reflect how people were once able to respond to architecture, but we heirs of the Enlightenment are no longer able to do so. The shape of our modern world prevents us from taking seriously the artistic establishment of the world. This is also to say that our world makes it difficult for us to take seriously what Heidegger has to say in this essay about the world-establishing power of art.

But Heidegger is right to suggest that when we subject nature to number, as our science must do, nature as *phusis* ("emerging") is in an important sense gone. And Heidegger is not the only one to insist that what is lost here is the very source of meaning. By presenting the earth, making it conspicuous, art can still attempt to undo that loss, where we must keep in mind that presentation of the "earth" may not be reduced to shaping or manipulating mute material. The

earth, present in the artwork as the work's thingly dimension, always already moves and claims us, if only obscurely. Art responds to this silent call.

Yet, according to Heidegger, art in its highest sense has to both present the earth and establish a world. And to establish a world is to establish a way of life, a specific ethos. As an establishment of the world the work of art has an ethical and a political function. Such establishment means a certain violence, violence directed especially towards the earth:

> The world grounds itself on the earth and earth juts through the world. But the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there. (G37/E49)

World and earth are inescapably in tension. In the contemplation of the genuine work of art we are tossed back and forth between what was in the very beginning of the essay, and misleadingly, called its symbolic or allegorical character and its thingly character. The work of art is a thing, but a thing that communicates some humanly established meaning. That meaning cannot be thought apart from the world to which it belongs. But the meaning of the artwork inevitably threatens to obscure its thingliness.

We must not forget: while what Heidegger has to say here may well fit his temple, the temple lies in ruins. And even if we imagine it well preserved, its world has perished. No longer does it have the power to establish its world for us and thus gather us into a genuine community. It has lost this religious, ethical, and political function. The temple ruin has its place in our world. We can visit it, enjoy it as an aesthetic object, study it, or nostalgically dream of Greece, but our world is not the world it once established. Into our modern world it speaks with a very different voice. Like an erratic block, carried to us from far away, it speaks to us of what Hegel and Heidegger both take to be the highest function of art and by so doing it reveals to us our modern world as a world that no longer appears to need such art. That was Hegel's claim. But Heidegger does not want to leave Hegel the last word here. He wants to keep open the possibility of a recovery of the origin of art. His use of the Greek temple invites thoughts or dreams of a modern repetition of the world-establishing power of art.

I have not answered the question: how does Heidegger's use of the temple in this essay compare with his use of the painting by Van Gogh and the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer? Are they, too, to be understood as examples of what Hegel called art "on the side of its highest vocation"? It would seem not. Both were created after that end of art proclaimed by Hegel —

and Heidegger grants that Hegel's judgment may well be proven to have been right. If so, neither painting nor poem can be said to refute Hegel. Unlike the temple, both belong to our modern world. Not that these works establish or endorse this world: in their different ways, even as they presuppose it, they also oppose it and call it into question.

But does Heidegger not claim that all three — temple, painting, and poem—should be understood as happenings of truth? Truth is said to happen in the temple as the "setting up of a world and setting forth of the earth" (G36/E48; G44/E55), in the painting as a revelation of the "equipmental being of the shoes" in which what is "as a whole—world and earth in their counterplay—attains to unconcealedness" (G44/E56), and in the poem as a saying of the Roman fountain, which makes "unconcealedness as such happen in regard to what is as a whole" (G44/E56). There would thus seem to be a sense in which all three, in their different ways, set up a world and set forth the earth. Truth is said to be at work in all three. But this is challenged by Heidegger's claim that behind Hegel's verdict "there stands Western thought since the Greeks, which thought corresponds to a truth of beings that has already happened" (G67/E80). This truth rules the world to which these works belong. How then does the world these works set up relate to our modern world?

"What truth is happening in the work? Can truth happen at all and thus be historical?" Heidegger asks (G27/E38). He answers his own question in the affirmative: "The history of Western art corresponds to a change in the nature of truth. This is no more intelligible in terms of beauty taken for itself than it terms of experience, supposing that the metaphysical concept of art reaches to its nature" (G68/E 81). The nature of truth has changed. Hegel offers us a key to this change. And for Heidegger, as for Hegel, that means also that the nature of art has changed. Painting and poem reflect that change.

Discussing the painting, I suggested that it is not an original experience that here supports Heidegger's text. A longing for what remains absent in more than one sense lets him clothe what claims to be insight into what the shoes are in truth in a rhetoric that borrows from the literary culture of his day, especially Rilke. The "world" Heidegger discusses here is not his own, nor that of the painter, but an imagined, dreamed of world that owes all too much to what was then an all too familiar celebration of peasant life as being genuine in a way that the ever restless life in a metropolis such as Berlin never could be, a celebration that by then had become a cliché. Heidegger may insist, "In the work of art the truth of an entity has set itself to work," but his translation of the painting into words remains unsupported by an authentic experience of what

the painting actually says. What substitutes for such an experience is a quasi-poetic construction of the thinker born of nostalgia, a construction that blurs the distinction between reality and fiction. Such a blurring is characteristic of kitsch.

And if the poem by Conrad Ferdinand Meyer can be said to establish a world, it is first of all its own world. Establishing this world, the poem in its self-subsistence speaks to the essence of poetry and more generally of art in the modern world: to allow us to escape from that world, at least for a time, to a realm where perfection is bought at the price of reality. The Roman fountain figures the modern work of art.

9. Truth, Thing, and the Fourfold

1

I have suggested that Heidegger and Plato stand in an inverse relationship. Plato's commitment to philosophy and its truth forces him to become a critic of art and especially poetry. Heidegger rejects the presuppositions of this critique. Once more the artists, and especially the poets, are to be given a privileged place in the *Republic*. At issue is the relationship of art to truth. How does Heidegger consider that relationship? Consider once more:

> Art is truth setting itself into work. What is truth itself, that it sometimes comes to pass as art? What is this setting-itself-to-work? (G28/E39)[130]

Heidegger thus understands the essence of the work of art as the setting itself into work of the truth of what is. Later he describes art as

> ***the becoming and happening of truth***. (G59/E71)

Such formulations must remain rather obscure as long as we do not know just how these two terms are to be linked. What necessity joins them? One question we have to ask is: how does Heidegger understand the meaning of "truth"? It is with this question that I would like to begin today.

How do we usually understand the meaning of "truth"? And is that understanding indeed *stunted*? Heidegger claims:

> How slight and stunted our knowledge of the nature of truth is, is shown by the laxity we permit ourselves in using this basic word. By truth is usually meant this or that particular truth. That means: something true. A cognition articulated in a proposition can be of this sort. However, we call not only a proposition true, but also a thing: true gold in contrast to sham gold. True here means genuine, real gold. What does the expression "real" mean here? To us it is what is in truth. The true is what corresponds to the real, and the real is what is in truth. The circle has closed again. (G39/E50)

What do we then mean by truth?

In approaching this question, Heidegger suggests, we should let ourselves be guided by the Greek understanding of the term, according to which "Truth means the nature of the true. We think this nature in recollecting the Greek word *aletheia*, the unconcealedness of beings"

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[130] Page numbers refer to Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege,* Klostermann, 1977), followed by "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

(G39/E51) But do we have to return to the Greeks? Do we not have an adequate theory of truth? Traditionally the meaning of truth has been understood as correspondence. As Heidegger himself asks:

> Yet why should we not be satisfied with the nature of truth that has by now been familiar to us for centuries? Truth means today and has long meant the agreement or conformity of knowledge with fact. (G40/E51)

But how do the facts that make a proposition true present themselves? Truth as correspondence presupposes that the things have shown or revealed themselves as the things they really are:

> However, the fact must show itself to be fact if knowledge and the proposition that forms and expresses knowledge are to be able to conform to the fact; otherwise the fact cannot become binding on the proposition. How can fact show itself if it cannot itself stand out of concealedness, if it does not itself stand in the unconcealed? A proposition is true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true. Propositional truth is always, and always exclusively, this correctness. The critical concepts of truth which, since Descartes, start out from truth as certainty, are merely variations of the definition of truth as correctness. The nature of truth which is familiar to us—correctness in representation—stands and falls with the unconcealedness of beings. (G40/E51)

Truth as *correspondence* presupposes truth as *unconcealment*. But how does this unconcealment take place? How is it to be thought? It is in this connection that Heidegger introduces one of his most notorious notions, that of the "clearing":

> And yet — beyond what is, not away from it but before it, there is still something else that happens. In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting [*Lichtung*]. Thought of in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree than are beings. This open center is therefore not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting center itself encircles all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know. (G41/E53)

As pointed out before, the German "*Lichtung*" means first of all an open space in the forest, such as an open space in the forest where trees have been cut down. The importance Heidegger attaches to this notion of a clearing is underscored by the title Heidegger gave to the collection of essays in which "The Origin of the Work of Art" first appeared. He called it *Holzwege*, translated as "wood paths." In German the term "*Holzweg*" has a quite specific meaning. It is a path cut by foresters to allow the trees that have been cut down to be brought out of the forest. A *Holzweg* therefore ends in a clearing. For a hiker to be on a *Holzweg* means that he has lost his way. Instead of getting where he wanted to go he suddenly finds himself in some clearing somewhere in the middle of the forest. Recall in this connection Wittgenstein's remark that philosophical problems have the form, "I have lost my way" and Aristotle's location of the

origin of philosophy in wonder. Heidegger's collection of essays seeks to lead us back to this origin.

You may well find Heidegger's use of the term "*Holzweg*" or "clearing" outrageously metaphorical. Let me therefore approach it once more using language that is more familiar to students of philosophy. For a proposition to be recognized as true, some object must have presented itself to the subject recognizing the proposition's truth. But an object can present itself as an object only to a subject; furthermore, it has to fall into some conceptual space or categorial framework. But note how the terms "categorial framework" or "space" are metaphors. And a metaphor is the line in my diagram of the subject-object relation: S — O.

You get here a hint of what Heidegger is after when he uses a metaphor like "clearing." One thing he is doing is calling attention to the metaphorical nature of our understanding of consciousness. He also points to the way consciousness and space are intertwined. We cannot think one without the other and both are incomprehensible.

Our understanding of understanding is shaped by an analogy on which Plato already relies. Understanding is taken to be like seeing. When we see the object seen it is quite literally at a distance from the seeing eye. Similarly, it is suggested that the understood object is at a distance from the understanding subject. And, just as the sun illuminates what I see, so the understanding is illuminated by what philosophers have spoken of as the "natural light." Heidegger's metaphor of the clearing links the metaphors of distance and light on which traditional philosophy relied. Heidegger thus forces you to struggle with what is being said. Is this a less or a more rigorous way of speaking**? What here should be the measure of rigor?**

But let me return to Heidegger's claim that truth as correspondence presupposes truth as unconcealment. Unconcealment presupposes the clearing: But that clearing, that open space, has always already been furnished in some fashion. Wittgenstein's logical space represents such a furnishing. Similarly we can think of language as a furnishing of the clearing:

> Thanks to this clearing, beings are unconcealed in certain changing degrees. And yet, being can be concealed, too, only within the sphere of what is lighted. Each being we encounter and which encounters us keeps to this curious opposition of presence in that it always withholds itself at the same time in a concealedness. The clearing in which beings stand is at the same time concealment. (G42/E53)

Heidegger goes on to distinguish two kinds of concealment:

> Beings refuse themselves to us down to that one and seemingly least feature which we touch upon most readily when we can say no more of beings than that they are. Concealment as refusal is not simply and only the limit of knowledge in any given circumstance, but the beginning of the

> clearing of what is lighted. But concealment, though of another sort, to be sure, also occurs within what is lighted. One being places itself in front of another being, the one helps to hide the other, the former obscures the latter, a few obstruct many, one denies all. Here concealment is not simple refusal. Rather, a being appears, but it presents itself as other than it is. (G42/E53–54)

What Heidegger here terms “refusal” is the mark of reality. Compare understanding a circle to understanding a tree. There is a sense in which, when I am given the definition of a circle as a figure described by its equidistance from some point, nothing is left out. Nothing refuses itself to me. In this sense I shall never understand a tree. When Heidegger here speaks of refusal he points in the same direction as he did with the concept "earth," which I discussed in the last session.

The second kind of concealment is more easily understood. In this case it is one thing that hides another. You may quite literally place yourself before another person, in this sense hide him. The fact that such dissembling is essential to understanding is rooted in the way our understanding depends on language. We apply labels to things that are never adequate to a thing in its concrete particularity. No matter how adequate, words conceal even as they reveal. That is the foundation of Heidegger's notorious statement that “Truth, in its nature, is untruth.” (G43/E54) Heidegger goes on to relate the interplay of concealment and unconcealment of untruth and truth, to what he discussed before as the strife of world and earth.

2

Truth, according to Heidegger, is established by human beings. Such establishment can, but need not be the work of the artist:

> One essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is truth setting itself into work. Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state. Still another way in which truth comes to shine forth is the nearness of that which is not simply a being, but the being that is most of all. Still another way in which truth becomes is the thinker's questioning, which, as the thinking of Being, names Being in its question-worthiness. By contrast, science is not an original happening of truth, but always the cultivation of a domain of truth already opened, specifically by apprehending and confirming that which shows itself to be possibly and necessarily correct within that field. When and insofar as science passes beyond correctness and goes on to a truth, which means that it arrives at the essential disclosure of what is as such, it is philosophy. (G50/E61–62)

If all truth depends on human work, then the work of the artist, and more especially of the poet, is given a certain primacy by Heidegger. Why should this be so?

According to Heidegger there is no revelation that is not mediated by human work, even if that is usually forgotten. Take a concrete example, the proposition, "this room has four windows." The proposition is true if the room does in fact have four windows. I look and see them. What is presupposed by such a seeing? I see the windows as windows because I have a conceptual space in which these windows have their place. That space is inescapably tied to language. Whatever I see is mediated by language.

This language is given to me as something already established. It is not something I create, is not my work. In this sense we generally understand things in terms of frameworks that are generally taken for granted. But if language is in this sense something already established and accepted, must there not also be an *establishing* discourse? It is this kind of discourse Heidegger terms "poetry":

> Language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the Open for the first time. Where there is no language, as in the being of stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness of what is, and consequently no openness either of that which is not and of the empty.
>
> 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. (G60-61/E73)

Poetry is understood by Heidegger as **projective saying**. What it projects is the strife between earth and world. Projecting this strife, it projects an arena for future human action. Or, we can think of a stage. That stage has always been furnished in such a way that it invites certain types of action and not others:

> Poetry is thought here in so broad a sense and at the same time in such intimate unity of being with language and word that we must leave open whether art, in all its modes from architecture to poesy, exhausts the nature of poetry. (G61/E74)

If you accept Heidegger's understanding of language and poetry, it follows that philosophy, too, is dependent on poetry. Plato's understanding of the relationship between philosophy and poetry has been turned around.

3

In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger's prime example of a world-establishing work is a Greek temple. Later, in the essay "Building Dwelling Thinking" he will substitute for a Greek temple a Black Forest farmhouse. How are we to understand that substitution? Let us first consider Heidegger's questionable description of the farmhouse in detail:

> The nature of building is letting dwell. Building accomplishes its nature by the raising of locations by the joining of their spaces. *Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.* Let us think for a while of a farmhouse in the Black Forest which was built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants. Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter *in simple oneness* into things ordered the house. It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain-slope looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and which, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the "tree of the dead"—for that is what they call a coffin here: the *Totenbaum*—and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time. A craft which, itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and frames as things, built the farmhouse. (G154155/E160)[131]

Once again Heidegger chooses an example removed from our world. Heidegger himself emphasizes the temporal distance that separates us from the farmhouse and underscores that distance also with his own archaizing style.

The quoted passage is part of the conclusion of a lecture first delivered on Sunday morning, August 5, 1951 to an audience composed mostly of architects, as part of a still war-shadowed *Darmstädter Gespräch*, which that year focused on the theme "Man and Space." The lecture begins by stating what would seem to be obvious: the nature of building is letting dwell. To be sure, Heidegger reminds us, "not every building is a dwelling" (G139/E145). Heidegger mentions a number of such "buildings," including bridges and hangars, stadiums and power stations, highways and dams, factories and market halls. In their different ways they all serve our way of life, but we would not call them dwellings. To work in a factory or to shop in a store is not to dwell; we do not reside there.

Just this equation of dwelling and residing is called into question by Heidegger's suggestion that even many residential buildings, though they may be "well planned, easy to keep, attractively cheap, open to air, light, and sun," hold no "guarantee that *dwelling* occurs in them" (G139-140/E146). Of course not, we may want to agree: no more than a hammer can guarantee that it will be used as a hammer, can a house guarantee that people will actually reside in it. But such easy agreement would miss Heidegger's point: he wants to distinguish genuine dwelling

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131 Page numbers refer to Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," *Vorträge und Aufsätze,* (Pfullingen: Nesk, 1954), followed by "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

from mere residing, that is, from merely inhabiting a structure or finding shelter. To dwell is to feel at home.

Building allows for dwelling by granting a sense of place. The builders of Heidegger's farmhouse did so by placing it on its hillside, orienting the part of the house in which the farmer and his family ate, cooked, rested, and slept towards the valley, leaving the farmhouse's larger back half to cows, horses, and goats. All this seems obvious enough and hardly worth saying, even as we may wonder in what sense such building and dwelling is compatible with life in a modern metropolis. And yet Heidegger warns us not to settle for what is so readily taken for granted:

> Dwelling and building are related as end and means. However, as long as this is all we have in mind, we take dwelling and building as two separate activities, an idea that has something correct in it. Yet at the same time by the means-end schema we block our view of the essential relations. For building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling—to build is in itself already to dwell. Who tells us this? Who gives us a standard at all by which we can take the measure of the nature of dwelling and building? (G140/E146)

Certainly the farmhouse serves a quite specific kind of dwelling, fitted to a particular landscape. The climate helped dictate that animals and humans share the same roof, while comfort demanded the separation of their quarters, joined only by a narrow walkway. One could thus discuss the farmhouse as a machine for living, although "tool" might seem to fit better. But, Heidegger insists, talk of building serving dwelling fails to consider "the real meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell":

> What, then, does *Bauen, building, mean?* The Old English and High German word for building, *buan,* means to dwell. This signifies: to remain, to stay in a place. The real meaning of the verb *bauen,* namely, to dwell, has been lost to us. But a covert trace of it has been preserved in the German word *Nachbar,* neighbor. The neighbor is in Old English the *neahgehur; neah,* near, and *gebur,* dweller. The Nachbar is the *Nachgebur, the Nachgebauer,* the near-dweller, he who dwells nearby. The verbs *buri, büren, beuren, beuron,* all signify dwelling, the abode, the place of dwelling. Now to be sure the old word *buan* not only tells us that *bauen,* to build, is really to dwell; it also gives us a clue as to how we have to think about the dwelling it signifies. (G140–141/E146)

Heidegger appeals to Old English and High German: the now lost, but nevertheless real meaning, of *bauen*, to build, is said to be "to dwell," and "to dwell" in turn originally meant "to be." *Dwelling* thus names "the basic character of human being" (G142/E148). Dwelling here names authentic being in the world. The relationship between man and space is said to be none other

than dwelling, strictly thought and spoken" (G160/E157). Once again the problem of space and the problem of consciousness intertwine.

4

Dwelling presupposes a sense of place. The bridge that spans the Neckar in Heidelberg establishes such a sense of place:

> To be sure, the bridge is a thing of its *own* kind; for it gathers the fourfold in *such* a way that it allows a *site* for it. But only something *that is itself a location* can make space for a site. The location is not already there before the bridge is. Before the bridge stands, there are of course many spots along the stream that can be occupied by something. One of them proves to be a location, and does so *because of the bridge.* Thus the bridge does not first come to a location to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge. The bridge is a thing; it gathers the fourfold, but in such a way that it allows a site for the fourfold. By this site are determined the localities and ways by which a space is provided for (G156/E154–18).

Establishing a distinctive place, the bridge joins and opens up other places and spaces: the river, the riverbanks, the city. Place-establishing work first reveals space. Instead of thinking place in terms of space, Heidegger inverts that order.

> Only things that are locations in this manner allow for spaces. What the word for space, *Raum, Rum,* designates is said by its ancient meaning. *Raum* means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras.* A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*. That is why the concept is that of *horismos,* that is, the horizon, the boundary. Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds. That for which room is made is always granted and hence is joined, that is, gathered, by virtue of a location, that is, by such a thing as the bridge. *Accordingly, spaces receive their being from locations and not from "space."* (G148-149/E154)

So understood, space is first of all both cleared and bounded. Such clearing bounding is presupposed by our experience of things, which are inevitably placed in one way or other: the fork on the table, the car on the road, Venus in the evening sky. Inseparable from our encounter with things is the experience of different places and therefore spaces: table, road, evening sky.

Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger had insisted that our everyday experience of space is intimately linked to the activities we are engaged in. First of all and most of the time the body, especially the moving body, mediates our experience of space: the street is to be walked down, the mountain to be climbed, the bridge to be crossed. To be sure, we can locate the bridge by

measuring how far it is from other things. But this is an abstracted understanding of distance. We have to agree with Heidegger: first of all and most of the time our experience of space is an experience of spaces, mediated by our encounter with things and their places. So experienced space is regional: this room is a region with boundaries that mark it off from other regions; so is a house; a neighborhood; or a city. Building helps to establish regions, architecture to re-present them. Regions assign to persons and things their proper places. Were it not for this, we would be disoriented, could not consider certain things out of place. Regions are nested within regions: the room in the house, the house in its neighborhood, the neighborhood in the city, and so on. The region of all regions is the world, understood now not as the totality of all things but as the context of contexts that assigns everything its place. Aristotelian space, which assigns to the four elements and thus to all things their proper places, is closer to this regional, everyday understanding of space than the space of geometry or the space presupposed by modern science.[132]

It is first of all in terms of the activities we are engaged in that we understand proximity and distance. As humanist architecture recognized, the human body furnishes something like a natural measure of space. Bound up with that measure is the qualitative difference of the directions of the space we inhabit: up and down, front and back, right and left, for example, carry different meanings, as becomes clear as soon as we begin to reflect on the metaphorical use of these terms in phrases such as "I am down," "he is sinister-looking," "he went behind my back." World-space has always already been separated into different regions, of which sky and earth are perhaps the most basic. This allows Heidegger to say that human being is essentially a dwelling on the earth and under the sky. And if dwelling expresses the relationship between man and world-space, that space is always already charged with meanings: space is not mute.

5

"Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build." But if "the nature of building is letting dwell," must we not also hold on to the converse: dwelling presupposes building? Thus while the particular dwelling made possible by the Black Forest farmhouse can be said to presuppose that more primordial dwelling that is nothing other than the human way of existing, must the latter not also presuppose a more primordial building? How are we to

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[132] See Martin Heidggger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953). 101-113/ *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 134-148.

understand this "building"? A first answer was suggested in the preceding section: if "dwelling" names "the relationship between man and space," this primordial "building" must mean space, but space understood as placing persons and things. The traditional analogy between human building and divine creation comes to mind: God has often been described as the archetypal architect, who fashioned the world as a perfectly ordered whole, the fit dwelling place for human beings. Such an understanding of building is of course hardly unique: again and again we meet with an understanding of building as more or less explicit repetitions of the cosmogonic act. The primordial building that provides human building with its ground and measure would then be the cosmos. But "cosmos" names precisely the world into which we have been cast experienced as a meaningful order. Heidegger makes such an experience constitutive of human being:

> When we speak of man and space, it sounds as though man stood on one side, space on the other. Yet space is not something that faces man. It is neither an external object nor an inner experience. It is not that there are men, and over and above them *space;* for when I say "a man," and in saying this word think of a being who exists in a human manner — that is, who dwells — then by the name "man" I already name the stay within the fourfold among things. Even when we relate ourselves to those things that are not in our immediate reach, we are staying with the things themselves. We do not represent distant things merely in our mind — as the textbooks have it — so that only mental representations of distant things run through our minds and heads as substitutes for the things. If all of us now think, from where we are right here, of the old bridge in Heidelberg, this thinking toward that location is not a mere experience inside the persons present here; rather, it belongs to the nature of our thinking *of* that bridge that *in itself* thinking gets through, persists through, the distance to that location. From this spot right here, we are there at the bridge-we are by no means at some representational content in our consciousness. From right here we may even be much nearer to that bridge and to what it makes room for than someone who uses it daily as an indifferent river crossing. (G151/E156)

With the introduction of the **fourfold** Heidegger takes a step that threatens to leave both the modern world and all phenomenological evidence behind: it is one thing to say that human being is essentially being-in-the world, in this sense also a being in space, quite another to claim that such being-in-the world is essentially a dwelling, understood now as a "staying within the fourfold" of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, a preserving of "the fourfold in its essential being, its presencing" (G144-145/E150-151) How can Heidegger claim both: that human being is essentially dwelling and that dwelling is a staying within the fourfold?

> But in what does the nature of dwelling consist? Let us listen once more to what language says to us. The Old Saxon *wuon*, the Gothic *wunian* like the old word *bauen*, mean to remain, to stay in a place. But the Gothic *wunian* says more distinctly how this remaining is experienced. *Wunian* means: to be at peace, to be

> brought to peace, to remain in peace. The word for peace, *Friede*, means the free, *das Frye*, and *fry* means: preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded. To free really means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm the one whom we spare. Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own nature, when we return it specifically to its being, when we "free" it in the real sense of the word into a preserve of peace. To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its nature. *The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving*. It pervades dwelling in its whole range. That range reveals itself to us as soon as we reflect that human being consists in dwelling and, indeed, dwelling in the sense of the stay of mortals on the earth.
>
> But "on the earth" already means "under the sky." Both of these also mean "remaining before the divinities" and include a "belonging to men's being with one another." By a primal oneness the four-earth and sky, divinities and mortals-belong together in one. (G 143/E148–149)

Something like the distance that separates us from the Black Forest farmhouse also would seem to separate us from Heidegger's fourfold. If genuine dwelling must indeed be understood as a staying within the fourfold, would this not mean that we moderns are no longer able to dwell in Heidegger's sense? And, if being human should indeed mean "staying within the fourfold among things," that we have lost or are we in danger of losing our humanity? But what justifies such talk? Had Heidegger's *Being and Time* not placed authenticity in opposition to being at home in the world? Why now privilege dwelling understood as "staying within the fourfold"? Such questioning returns us to Heidegger's puzzling fourfold. I shall begin with it next time.

10. On the Way to the Fourfold

1

Due to its formal character, *Being and Time*, I suggested, invites a resolve to be resolved. But resolve requires something like a measure. The formal character of *Being and Time* serves to underscore the need for a measure. Authentic dwelling would seem to demand something like a sense of our proper place. In this sense authentic being in the world can be said to be a dwelling (*wohnen*). But if to dwell is to know one's place, does it not depend on the establishing of that place, on a building? In this sense the poet, too, may be said to build. But how can we build, unless we already know what it is to dwell? As Heidegger insists: "*Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build*" (G155/E160). [133] But if, as he also claims, "the nature of building is letting dwell," must we not equally insist on the reverse: dwelling presupposes building? God has often been described as the archetypal architect, who fashioned the world as a perfectly ordered whole, the fit dwelling place for human beings. The primordial building that provides human building with its ground and measure would then be the cosmos. But "cosmos" names precisely the world into which we have been cast, experienced as a meaningfully ordered whole.

In "Building Dwelling Thinking" Heidegger, following Hölderlin, would seem to make some such experience constitutive of human being. This, I take it, is the point of his interpretation of being-in-the-world as a preserving of the fourfold. Being human now comes to be understood as a "staying within the fourfold among things." But just how are we to understand this?

2

Three of the terms, I suggested, would appear to pose little difficulty although they do raise questions. Let me consider now each in some detail.

1. By "earth" Heidegger means the ground that supports us, literally, and in the sense that it sustains us with its gifts of food and water:

> Earth is the serving bearer, blossoming and fruiting, spreading out in rock and water,
> rising up into plant and animal. When we say earth, we are already thinking of the other

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[133] Page numbers in the text of the chapter refer to Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," *Vorträge und Aufsätze,* (Pfullingen: Nesk, 1954), followed by "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

> three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four. (G151/E149)

Human being is essentially on the earth, and it remains so, despite space flights and dreams of colonizing other planets.

Such a reading, however, fails to capture all that matters here: already in "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger had insisted that earth "shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained":

> Earth thus shatters every attempt to penetrate into it. It causes every merely calculating importunity upon it to turn into a destruction. This destruction may herald itself under the appearance of mastery and of progress in the form of the technical-scientific objectivation of nature, but this mastery nevertheless remains an impotence of will. The earth appears openly cleared as itself only when it is perceived and preserved as that which is by nature undisclosable, that which shrinks from every disclosure and constantly keeps itself closed up.[134]

"Earth" names here what I call "material transcendence." What such transcendence transcends is precisely every linguistic or conceptual space in which things must find their place if they are to be disclosed and explained. What invites talk of "material transcendence" is the fact that, even if constituted by our language or concepts and as such appearance, what thus appears is not created by our understanding, but given. Inseparable from our experience of things is a sense of this gift, an awareness that our understanding is finite, and that means also that the reach of our words, of all our determinations and calculations, is limited. The rift, Heidegger speaks also of a *Streit*, a battle, thinking no doubt also of the Heraclitean *polemos* between thing and word, between earth and world, where world names not the totality of facts but a space of intelligibility, cannot be closed. Nor can it be eliminated:

> In setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work is an instigating of this strife [*Streit*: translation corrected]. This does not happen so that the work should at the same time settle and put an end to the conflict in an insipid agreement, but so that the strife may remain a strife. Setting up a world and setting forth the earth, the work accomplishes this strife. The work-being of the work consists of the fighting of the battle [*Bestreitung des Streites*] between earth and world. It is because the strife [translation corrected] arrives at its high point in the simplicity of intimacy that the unity of the work comes about in the fighting of the battle.[135]

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134 Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege,* Klostermann, 1977), 35; "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 47.

135 "Origin," G38/E49.

What prevents the world from "soaring out of the earth's sight," what opens human beings to material transcendence, this transcendence within the sensible, is first of all the body—where it is important to keep in mind that the embodied self is a caring, desiring, acting self. To be in the presence of the earth is inevitably to be affected, moved, claimed. Earth thus also refers to the elusive affective ground without which all talk of essences, meaning, values, or divinities is ultimately groundless: idle talk.

More problematic than this understanding of the earth as the ever elusive, yet indispensable supporting ground of human existence is Heidegger's suggestion, a suggestion that invites appropriation by deep ecologists, that dwelling requires a special respect for our ineliminable dependence on the earth and its gifts, requires "saving" the earth:

> Mortals dwell in that they save the earth—taking the word in the old sense still known to Lessing. Saving does not only snatch something from a danger. To save really means to set something free into its own essence. To save the earth is more than to exploit it or even wear it out. Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from boundless spoliation. (G144/E150)

That we often fail to save the earth in this sense requires no comment. Genuine dwelling is here opposed to the way we ordinarily deal with persons and things. And if such dwelling is equated with being human, being human here can only name an ideal at a distance from our usual mode of being, calling us perhaps beyond it.

3

By "sky," too, Heidegger means first of all pretty much what we usually mean by the word:

> The sky (*Himmel,* which means also “heaven”) is the vaulting path of the sun, the course of the changing moon, the wandering glitter of the stars, the year's seasons and their changes, the light and dusk of day, the gloom and glow of night, the clemency and inclemency of the weather, the drifting clouds and blue depth of the ether. When we say sky, we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four. (G143/E149)

Again such a reading fails to capture what matters: human beings not only look up to the sky, but such looking up has long provided natural metaphors for the way human beings are never imprisoned in the here and now, but are always "beyond themselves," ahead of themselves in expectation, behind themselves in memory, beyond time altogether when contemplating eternity. Such power of self-transcendence is part of the meaning of "spirit." The second term of the

fourfold means thus not only the familiar sky, but opens that meaning to what may be called the ineliminable spiritual or ecstatic dimension of human being.

But once again Heidegger questions the way we live first of all and most of the time when he insists that dwelling requires an openness to the sky as sky. Those who dwell "leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessings and inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest" (G144-145/E150). The challenge to our modern way of life is evident, inviting us to question not just this way of life, but also the assumptions behind Heidegger's words: would he have us live in a pre-technological world? The distance that separates us from Heidegger's farmhouse turns out to be a version of the distance that separates the fourfold from the technological world. What special lesson do this house type and the presupposed way of dwelling hold for us today?

4

Heidegger's "mortals" are of course we human beings. To speak of "mortals" is to emphasize the precariousness and finitude of our existence. Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger had linked authenticity to a resolute appropriation and affirmation of our essential mortality; and with good reason: as long as we remain unable to make our peace with the fact that we grow older and sooner or later must die, remain unable to make our peace with the passage of time, we also will be unable to make our peace with all that binds us to time, with our bodies for example, with our sexuality, also with the setting of the sun, the coming of winter, also with the earth, which so often withholds its gifts. The inability to save the earth and to receive the sky appears linked to the difficulty we have accepting ourselves as the mortals we are.

In this connection one of Heidegger’s few explicit remarks about the holocaust, made in "*Die Gefahr*," "The Danger," the third of four lectures given on December l, l949 at the Club in Bremen, under the title, "*Einblick in das was ist*," "View Into What Is" demands our attention. Of the four this lecture remained unpublished until published 1994 in volume 79 of the Gesamtausgabe.

In his review of the book by Farias, Thomas Sheehan introduces this passage, along with another from the second Bremen lecture, to which I shall turn presently, and an excerpt from a

letter to Karl Jaspers, with this remark: "All these texts are characterized by a rhetoric, a cadence, a point of view that are damning beyond commentary."[136]

I both agree and disagree with Sheehan: they are indeed damning; but they also call for thoughtful commentary. Such commentary should include reflection on the function of "rhetoric" and "cadence" in philosophical discourse. But let me cite the passage in question:

> Hundreds of thousands die *en masse*. Do they die? They perish. They are cut down. Do they die? They become items of the material available for the manufacture of corpses. (*Sie werden Bestandstücke eines Bestandes der Fabrikation von Leichen.)*
>
> Do they die? Hardly noticed, they are liquidated in extermination camps. And even apart from that—in China hunger now lets millions perish in misery.
>
> Dying, however, means bearing death in its essence. To be capable of dying means to be able to bear this death. But we are able to do so only when the essence of death has an affinity to our essence.[137]

Like so much in the later Heidegger, this passage is difficult to translate without misleading. The main outline of his understanding of the holocaust is, however, made clear enough. In this horror, which lets poets and philosophers grope for words, the essence of technology which continues to endanger our humanity is said to have found its necessarily inhuman expression.

Let me focus here on just one sentence:

> Sie (die Menschen) werden Bestandstücke eines Bestandes der Fabrikation von Leichen.
> They (human beings) become parts of the material at hand for the manufacture of corpses.

Heidegger, too, understood the extermination camps as factories of death. Presupposed is that reduction of human beings to human material that denies what is according to Heidegger a condition of genuine humanity: the possibility of really dying. "Do they die?" Heidegger asks of those who perish in the extermination camps? "Hardly noticed," they are *umgelegt,* "cut down," "liquidated." Such perishing is not dying in Heidegger's sense. The reader of *Being and Time* will not be surprised by his explanation: "To die, however, means to carry out death in its essence. To be able to die means to be capable of this carrying out. We are capable of this only, if the essence of death has an affinity to our essence."[138] *Being and Time* had tied authenticity to a resolute being unto death, but circumstances can be such that they prevent human beings from dying such an authentic death. Thus the death dealt by the Nazis to uncounted innocent

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[136] Thomas Sheehan, "Heidegger and the Nazis," *New York Review of Books*, (June 16, 1988), 41-42,

[137] Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994, 56.

victims denied them full humanity by denying them the possibility of a genuine dying. "Only those, able to die, become mortals in the full sense of this word. A mass of misery, of countless, dreadfully undied deaths everywhere—and all the same, the essence of death remains blocked. Not yet are human beings mortals"[139]

We have to wonder whether the last sentence does not include Heidegger himself. His own failure to recognize the humanity the Nazis would deny their victims, forces us to question his own humanity. "Not yet are human beings mortals," Heidegger mournfully proclaims. But such generalization obscures his own quite personal failing, a failing bound up with the philosopher's ontological view of things which passes all too easily from the ontic to the ontological, from the particular to the essential.

Heidegger thus does not name the murdered victims. He does not speak of Jews. The humanity the Nazis would deny their victims forces those in any way involved with them to question their own humanity, to ask whether they failed to see what they should have seen, because they refused to see, because they blinked, as Nietzsche's last man blinks, for lack of courage. Active compassion often demands courage.

An inhuman detachment, according to Heidegger himself bound up with that technological age which revealed its monstrous essence in National Socialism, allowed him to say the following:

> Agriculture is now a motorized food industry; in its essence the same thing as the manufacture of corpses in gas chambers, the same thing as blockades and the reduction of a region to hunger, the same as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs.[140]

This statement especially has been cited as an example of Heidegger's inhuman indifference to an injustice that may not be forgotten by such different thinkers as Blanchot, Lacoue-Labarthe, Levinas, and Sheehan. These words, too, were spoken on December l, l949 at the Club in Bremen, in the year of the Berlin blockade, as part of a second lecture, entitled *Das Ge-Stell*. This lecture was later revised, enlarged, and published as "*Die Frage nach der Technik*," "The Question of Technology." All but the statement about agriculture were deleted from the published version.[141]

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138 Ibid., 56.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid. 27.
141 See “Nachwort der Herausgeberin, Ibid., 177

Monstrous as they are, it is not difficult to make sense of Heidegger's equations. They are indeed demanded by his focus on the essence of technology as he understood it. But if so, such an essential vision has built into it something very much like the inhumanity that Heidegger himself ascribes to technology. Heidegger's understanding of the dehumanizing power of technology as a fate that no attempt at personal responsibility can hope to master, prevents him from assuming himself responsibility for what happened and from acknowledging his own guilt. Hans Georg Gadamer observed:

> "Now one may ask: didn't he feel any responsibility for the terrible consequences of Hitler's seizure of power, the new barbarism, the Nuremberg laws, the terror, the blood spilled in two world wars, and finally the indelible shame of the extermination camps.—The unequivocal answer: no."[142]

Heidegger did acknowledge that he was mistaken: mistaken about the power of thought to change reality, mistaken about what National Socialism in fact had been, mistaken about the essence of technology and about our ability to assert ourselves as its master. Heidegger himself was to call his engagement a great stupidity, but this acknowledgement carries no hint of an acknowledgement of moral guilt. It was this moral blindness that outraged Herbert Marcuse who, as he wrote Heidegger in l947, had "venerated" him as a philosopher and "learned infinitely much from him."

But perhaps I have said enough to suggest what is at stake when Heidegger speaks of "mortals."

5

The most difficult term is, as I mentioned last time, the fourth: consider once more:

> Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is unhoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn. (G145/E150)

What can such perhaps suggestive, but disturbingly vague talk mean to us? Are we, on Heidegger's view, condemned to fail to live up to what the essence of dwelling demands? What sense can we make of his oracular pronouncement? More especially: how are we to understand Heidegger's "divinities"? Let me return once more to the already cited Hölderlin fragment into

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142 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Zurück von Syrakus?" *Die Heidegger Kontroverse*, ed. Jürg Altwegg (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1988), p. 178.

which Heidegger wraps his thoughts in a way that brought to my mind a poem by Gottfried Benn, "*Was schlimm ist*", "What is bad." The third stanza reads as follows:

> Einen neuen Gedanken haben,
> den man nicht in einem Hölderlinvers einwickeln kann,
> wie es die Professoren tun.
>
> To have a new thought
> That one cannot wrap in a Hölderlin verse,
> As the professors do.

But let me return to the Hölderlin text:

> May, if life is sheer toil, a man
> Lift his eyes and say: so
> I too wish to be? Yes. As long as kindness
> The Pure, still stays with his heart, man
> Not unhappily measures himself
> Against the godhead. Is God unknown?
> Is he manifest like the sky? I'd sooner
> Believe the latter. It's the measure of man.
> Full of merit, yet poetically, man
> Dwells on this earth. But no purer
> Is the shade of the starry night,
> If I might put it so, than
> Man, who's called an image of the godhead.
> Is there a measure on earth? There is
> None?[143]

Following Hölderlin Heidegger, as we saw, calls human dwelling poetic and understands poetry as a measuring.

> Man, as man, has always measured himself with and against something heavenly. Lucifer, too, is descended from heaven. Therefore we read in the next lines (28 to 29): "Man measures himself against the godhead." The godhead is the "measure" with which man measures out his dwelling, his stay on the earth beneath the sky. Only insofar as man takes the measure of his dwelling in this way is he able to *be* commensurately with his nature. Man's dwelling depends on an upward-looking measure-taking of the dimension, in which the sky belongs just as much as the earth.[144]

In a way this is not a surprising claim. God is said to have created man in his image. But that is

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143 " ... dichterisch wohnet der Mensch ...," Vorträge und Aufsätze, 188; "... Poetically Man Dwells, Poery, Languge, Thought, 219-220.

144 Ibid., G189/E221.

to say that man measures himself with and against God. We should compare this with the seemingly opposed Protagorean saying "man is the measure of all things." Consider the way our body provides us with a natural measure. But when we use it to measure we are inescapably also measured.

What Heidegger, following Hölderlin, has in mind would seem to be closer to the Biblical view: we are said to measure ourselves against something heavenly. How are we to understand "heavenly" here? The mention of Lucifer provides a pointer points once more in the direction of the Bible.

Thought provoking is the sentence "Man's dwelling depends on an upward-looking measure-taking of the dimension, in which the sky belongs just as much as the earth." That recalls Vitruvius' account of the origin of building.[145] What elevates his primitive builders above the other animals is according to him first of all their upright posture, which allows them to lift up their eyes and to "gaze upon the splendor of the starry firmament," a splendor that even to us post-Copernicans seems to promises a timeless order not subject to the ravages of time. To build in the image of that cosmic order was to endow buildings with at least a semblance of eternity. The word "firmament," to be sure, does not suggest the infinite space of the moderns, but the ancient understanding of the superlunar material realm exempt from corruption, from birth and death, a realm in which eternity and matter, eternity and time, appear reconciled, a reconciliation visible in the ever returning sun, moon, and stars. What does the sight of a splendor that fingers and hands cannot reach have to do with the construction of the first shelters? Did the sublime spectacle of the starry sky lead these early builders to recognize their own precarious existence and to glimpse in the unchanging order of the firmament possibilities of a more humane dwelling? But what is all this to us today? And can it be in any way related to what Heidegger has in mind? Consider:

> In poetry there takes place what all measuring is in the ground of its being. Hence it is necessary to pay heed to the basic act of measuring. That consists in man's first of all taking the measure which then is applied in every measuring act. In poetry the taking of measure occurs.[146]

Only such poetic measuring is said to allow genuine dwelling:

> His dwelling, however, rests in the poetic. Hölderlin sees the nature of the "poetic" in the taking of the measure by which the measure-taking of human being is accomplished.[147]

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145 Cf. Karsten Harries, The Ethical Function of Archuitecture (Cambridge, Mass,: MIT,1997), 137-138.
146 "... Poetically Man Dwells," G191/E221.
147 Ibid.

But where does the poet find his measure? Heidegger answers with Hölderlin: "Man measures himself against the godhead." This recalls the old understanding of the human being as *imago Dei.* But can such an invocation of the godhead be reconciled with authenticity? *Being and Time* had no place for a god who assigned poets and humans measure and place. How is poetic-measure-taking to be understood? Heidegger's explanation is cryptic:

> The question begins in line 29 with the words: "Is God unknown?" Manifestly not. For if he were unknown, how could he, being unknown, ever be the measure? Yet—and this is what we must now listen to and keep in mind—for Hölderlin God, as the one who he is, is unknown and it is just as *this Unknown One* that he is the measure for the poet. This is also why Hölderlin is perplexed by the exciting question: how can that which by its very nature remains unknown ever become a measure? For something that man measures himself by must after all impart itself, must appear. But if it appears, it is known. The god, however, is unknown, and he is the measure nonetheless.[148]

The words that follow don't make things easier:

> What is the measure for human measuring? God? No. The sky? No. The manifestness of the sky? No. The measure consists in the way in which the god who remains unknown, is revealed *as* such by the sky. God's appearance through the sky consists in a disclosing that lets us see what conceals itself, but lets us see it not by seeking to wrest what is concealed out of its concealedness, but only by guarding the concealed in its self-concealment. Thus the unknown god appears as the unknown by way of the sky's manifestness. This appearance is the measure against which man measures himself.[149]

But how can such a revealing provide a measure? Does such speech help us to understand the divinities of the *Geviert*, the "fourfold"?

Following Hölderlin, Heidegger speaks both of the *Gottheit ,* godhead, and of *Gott*, God, where the former would seem to be the ontological counterpart to the latter. Heidegger also speaks of gods. Thus we read in "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung" (1936) that the original naming of the gods brings human being or Dasein into a firm relation and places it on firm ground.[150] Only the naming of the gods is said to allow things to show themselves. This makes the naming of the gods a necessary condition of the very possibility of experience. How are we to understand this?

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148 Ibid., G191/E223.

149 Ibid., GA7, 201/E223.

150 Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung," *Erläuterngen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1971), 38.

Following Hölderlin, Heidegger understands the Godhead as the most fundamental measure of human being. Is he then simply returning to the traditional conception of human being as created in the image of God? But that God, for Heidegger, as for Nietzsche, is a poetic fiction that, while it once may have assigned human beings their place, allowing them to dwell, today has lost its authority. God remains unknown. And yet Heidegger insists, once again citing Hölderlin, it is precisely this unknown God who grants our dwelling its measure. God is revealed, yet remains hidden, revealed in the endless variety of the things that surround us:

> What remains alien to the god, the sight of the sky-this is what is familiar to man. And what is that? Everything that shimmers and blooms in the sky and thus under the sky and thus on earth, everything that sounds and is fragrant, rises and comes—but also everything that goes and stumbles, moans and falls silent, pales and darkens. Into this, which is intimate to man but alien to the god, the unknown imparts himself, in order to remain guarded within it as the unknown. But the poet calls all the brightness of the sights of the sky and every sound of its courses and breezes into the singing word and there makes them shine and ring. Yet the poet, if he is a poet, does not describe the mere appearance of sky and earth. 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.[151]

Heidegger gestures here towards the many-voiced ground of all meaning and value. To be touched by that ground in a specific way that gives direction to our live is to receive some divinity's message, where depending on the message received we may name that divinity Aphrodite or Hera, Dionysus or Apollo. But any attempt to name the gods and God and thus to take the measure of human being, if only to return that measure to human beings and to let them dwell, is a violation of the unknown essence of divinity, in danger of obscuring divinity with some golden calf.

To summarize: when Heidegger understands essential dwelling as "staying within the fourfold," he seems to want to reappropriate the archaic view that gives human building measure and ground in some more primordial building, in sacred order. And even if Nietzsche is right and the old God is dead, even if with this death the building in which Europeans dwelled for so many centuries lost its founder and foundation, Heidegger yet insists that we can learn to dwell only by learning to listen to an all but silent call. Poetry should help us to learn to dwell in that way.

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151 "… Poetically Man Dwells," (G194/E225)

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But much of this remains all too vague. A successful naming of things presupposes that these must somehow have touched human beings. He who finds the right word, takes the proper measure, must have experienced things as somehow belonging together. In some pre-conceptual fashion these things must have already gathered themselves into some kind of whole. To name a god would then mean to find a word for the ground of what gathers things together. So understood, Heidegger's or Hölderlin's gods remind us of Plato's ideas. According to Plato we experience the measure-giving authority of such ideas in memory or recollection. Heidegger speaks a different language. In "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" we read: "dem dichterischen Wort wird erst dann seine Nennkraft zuteil, wenn die Götter uns selbst zur Sprache bringen", "To The poetic word its naming power if granted only when the gods themselves bring us to language."[152] The words of the poet must answer to a divine logos. In a way that recalls what Heidegger had to say about the silent call of conscience, he here too speaks of a wordless discourse, a "Winken." And thus Heidegger, in "Building Dwelling Thinking," calls the divinities "the beckoning messengers of the godhead" (GA7:151). Like Hölderlin, Heidegger also speaks of angels. The poet hears their message and makes it public in his poem. Such ability to listen or *Hörigkeit* binds the poet's imagination. To name a god presupposes thus something like an experience of what gathers certain phenomena into a whole. Names of gods such as Aphrodite or Hera, Dionysus or Apollo have their origin in such experiences. But every attempt to name the gods and to make public what remains finally incomprehensible in order to give humans a measure and to gather them into a conversation involves an inevitably violent dressing up or masking of the undisclosable essence of the Godhead. Remember the warning in Holderlin's *Patmos*: Over and over again we replace gods with golden calves.

7

But once more the question: what are we to do with such talk today? Would we philosophers not have been better served had Heidegger listened more to Kant than to Hölderlin? Is he not thinking here of what Kant might have discussed as the productive imagination as the elusive ground of our concepts, where even the word "Einbildungskraft" hints at that gathering (*Sammeln*) of the manifold to which Heidegger returns over and over in his texts? But such a

152 "Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung," 42.

translation of what is to be thought in a language more familiar to the philosopher threatens to obscure something essential, for it invites us to ascribe this power of gathering to the imagination of the poet. But the ground of such a gathering may not be located in the subject, nor, for that matter, in the object. It would be better to say: it lies in between. As Kant knew, it transcends all our concepts. In ever inadequate symbols we dance around this elusive ground.[153] Heidegger's artificial, quasi-poetic speech underscores that the ground which gives a measure to our existing and our knowing cannot be captured in the net of our concepts. It demands a *Hörigkeit*, an ability to listen and to submit to what is heard, that transcends our concepts. But what we can understand is that without such a *Hörigkeit* there can be no authentic existing.

Heidegger knows that the godhead and its messengers are not present to us moderns as is the earth, that we cannot receive them as we can the sky. The divinities, he tells us, we can only await. They have to come to us:

> Mortals dwell in that they await the divinities as divinities. In hope they hold up to the divinities what is unhoped for. They wait for intimations of their coming and do not mistake the signs of their absence. They do not make their gods for themselves and do not worship idols. In the very depth of misfortune they wait for the weal that has been withdrawn. (G145/E150)

But if we can only await the divinities and if they are yet part of the fourfold within which genuine dwelling must stay, must such a dwelling not also elude us? It may be hoped for, perhaps, but it cannot be willed. Heidegger asks us to dwell in the knowledge of the absence of the godhead's messengers, to resist the temptation to dance around some golden calf, to substitute idols for angels, measures we have created for measures gained by interpreting the messages of the godhead's messengers. But how then is our dwelling to find measure and direction? His suggestion, that we wait for what has been withdrawn, hardly provides the content necessary to give guidance to our modern dwelling and building and threatens to render his essay quite useless to the architects whom he was addressing in "Building Dwelling Thinking". The admonition to await the divinities does not help much when we need to act decisively, although it may invite us to keep our distance from this God-forsaken world.
But this much at least should have become clear: when Heidegger determines authentic dwelling as a saving of the fourfold, he measures our modern being by an archaic dwelling, that receives measure and place form an original building, a holy order, where the experience of the holy is to be understood as the experience of a power that gathers our understanding and life into a whole

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153 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, "Einleitung" and pars. 49, 57, und 59.

and yet transcends our comprehension and will.[154] But why does Heidegger say in the Spiegel-Interview: "Only a God Can Still Save us"? Why does he speak in the singular of *ein Gott*, and not in the plural of *Götter*? Once more I remind you of Heidegger's understanding of authenticity. Authenticity demands a gathering of self. A plurality of gods would mean a self-dispersal. As long as human beings hear only the voices of god*s*, as long as God remains absent, dead, or silent, all that remains is such an inauthentic self-dispersal. Only one God can gather the world into a whole, that assigns to things and human beings their proper places.

Much here reminds us of Heidegger' theological origin. The Biblical God who created the human being in His image also provided him with a measure. Heidegger, too, takes the giving of such a measure to be a presupposition of authentic dwelling. But we are given such a measure not by God but by the poet, or more generally, by human beings who create what Heidegger calls a work. But once more the question: how are we to distinguish such a work from a golden calf?

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[154] Louis Dupré, *The Other Dimension* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 18.

11. The Fourfold Reconsidered

1

I would like to begin this class with a quote from "The Thing":

> Thinging, the thing stays the united four, earth and sky, divinities and mortals, in the simple onefold of their self-unified fourfold.
>
> Dingend verweilt das Ding die einigen Vier, Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen, in der Einfalt ihres aus sich her einigen Gevierts" ("The Thing" GA7: 179).[155]

I, and I suspect many of you, stumble a bit when reading such sentences. The later Heidegger's talk about the fourfold, divinities, and especially of the last God brings to mind Nietzsche's already mentioned word in the *Antichrist*:

> Among Germans I am immediately understood when I say that philosophy has been corrupted by theologians' blood.[156]

Nietzsche was thinking of Hegel and Schelling. But does what he has to say not also fit Heidegger? Just consider Heidegger's mention in a letter to Karl Jaspers of April 8, 1950 of an "advent" concealing itself in the present homelessness.[157] His talk of the *Geviert*, easily attacked as Kitsch—I shall have to return to this category—points in the same direction.

To return to the Nietzsche quote:

> Definition of Protestantism: the partial paralysis of Christianity—and of reason.

First it was Heidegger's demand for authenticity that paralyzed the faith in which theology must have its roots. "Glaube ist das Sichgefangengeben in den Sachen, die wir nicht sehen," as Heidegger had once put it, citing Luther.[158] "Faith is allowing oneslf to be imprisoned in things at we do not see." **F**aith is bondage." As such faith has to be the mortal enemy of philosophy, at least if, with the young Heidegger, we understand the "free self-possession of the entire Dasein" as the "form of existence that belongs essentially to philosophy," even as it may take different

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155 Martin Heidegger, "Das Ding," *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 179; "The Thing" in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. and introduction by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).178.

156 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking, 1959) 10.

157 Martin Heidegger/Karl Jaspers, *Briefwechsel 19020-1963* (Frankfurt am Main and München: Klstermann and Piper, 1990), 203.

158 Martin Heidegger, Phänomenologie und Theologie, *Wegmarken*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol 9 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann1976), 53.

forms.[159] But that form of existence Heidegger found ever more difficult to bear. He could not forget memories of how he once had found spiritual shelter in his faith, of Messkirch and its church, where his father had been sexton. The Spiegel interview touches on this:

> SPIEGEL: It has, of course, always been a misunderstanding of philosophy to think that the philosopher should have some direct effect with his philosophy. Let us return to the beginning. Is it not conceivable that National Socialism can be seen on the one hand as a realization of that "planetary encounter" and on the other as the last, most horrible, strongest, and, at the same time, most helpless protest against this encounter of "planetarily determined technology" and modern human beings? Apparently you are dealing with opposites in your own person that are such that many by-products of your activities can only really be explained in that you, with different parts of your being that do not touch the philosophical core, cling to many things about which you as a philosopher know that they have no continuity–for instance to concepts like "home" [*Heimat*], "rootedness," and similar things. How do planetary technology and "home" fit together?[160]

But the asserted opposition of philosophical core and by-products no longer did justice to Heidegger after his much discussed *Kehre,* or turning. The "bekehrte" or converted Heidegger was concerned with something else and so he answers:

> HEIDEGGER: I would not say that. It seems to me that you take technology too absolutely. I do not think the situation of human beings in the world of planetary technology is an inextricable and inescapable disastrous fate; rather I think that the task of thinking is precisely to help, within its bounds, human beings to attain an adequate relationship to the essence of technology at all. Although National Socialism went in that direction, those people were much too limited in their thinking to gain a really explicit relationship to what is happening today and what has been under way for three centuries.[161]

He knew that such an adequate relationship would be denied to a philosophy claiming autonomy. Thinking had to learn once again to become *hörig*, to listen to what matters, to allow itself to be bound. Such bondage comes to be understood as a condition of genuine dwelling. Heidegger's talk of the *Geviert* or fourfold is to prepare for such *Hörigkeit*.

Let me return to the quote cited in the beginning: for a German it is difficult not to be put off by the words: "Dingend verweilt das Ding die einigen Vier, Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen …" Is the attempt of the young philosopher to free himself from theology now taken back? Is Heidegger's *Kehre* to be understood as a return to a theology now dressed

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159 [explain citation]Ibid., 66.

160 *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: questions and answers*, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, introduction by Karsten Harries, trans. Lisa Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 61.

161 Ibid.

up in mystifying language, heavily indebted to Hölderlin quotations? Heidegger hints at this when he describes the path of his thinking as a path that leads from theology to philosophy and back to theology. Consider once more:

> Without the theological background I should never have come upon the path of thnking. But origin always comes to greet us from the future[162]

Not that Heidegger recovers his lost faith, but in various ways he does attempt to prepare for a new *Hörigkeit*. We have to learn to become better listeners. But how does that agree with the demand for autonomy? Are we faced here with a human and philosophical failure or with a necessity of thought? The late Heidegger's talk of the *Geviert* presents us with this problem.

2

One might think that the path to the *Geviert* should be easy. It is all, we are told in "The Thing," that is necceary is to thoughtfully consider a thing as a thing. So understood the way to the thing would require nothing more than a more thoughtful, hermeneutic phenomenology, where the theological connotation of the word heremeneutic should not be overlooked.[163] In a way that recalls the thing discussion of "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger warns us once again that preconceptions make this step difficult:

> Our thinking has of course long been accustomed to *understate* the nature of the thing. The consequence, in the course of Western thought, has been that the thing is represented as an unknown X to which perceptible properties are attached. From this point of view, everything *that already belongs to the gathering nature of this thing* does, of course, appear as something that is afterward read into it. Yet the bridge would never be a mere bridge if it were not a thing.[164]

The translation is a bit misleading here: "Das Denken ist freilich von altersher gewohnt, das Wesen des Dinges zu dürftig anzusetzen."[165] Such poverty (*Dürftigkeit*) determines philosophy. What matters is to learn to see things differently, to gain a freer access to things. Only such a freer access will open the way to what Heidegger calls the **gathering nature** of the thing. But how is such gathering to be understood?

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[162] Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfulligen: Neske, 1959), 96; *On the Way to Language,* trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 10.

[163] Ibid., 90-91.

[164] Martin Heidegger, "Bauen Wohnen Denken," *Vorträge und Aufsätze,* (Pfullingen: Nesk, 1954), 155-156; "Building Dwelling Thoining," *Poetry, Language, Thought,* trans. and introduction by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 153.

[165] "Bauen Wohnen Denken,"155.

Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger had called the generally taken for granted understanding of the thing into question. We tend to think of things as *vorhanden*, present-at-hand. Descartes' discussion of a piece of wax can serve as an example. We discover such determinations of being as substantiality, materiality, extension, position.[166] But our actual experience is quite different:

> The Greeks had an appropriate term for 'Things": prágmata—that is to say, that which one has to do with in one's concernful dealings (práxis). But ontologically, the specifically 'pragmatic' character of the prágmata is just what the Greeks left in obscurity; they thought these 'proximally' as 'mere Things'. We shall call those entities which we encounter in concern "equipment". In our dealings we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement. The kind of Being which equipment possesses must be exhibited. The clue for doing this lies in our first defining what makes an item of equipment—namely, its equipmentality.[167]

In such use we are said to experience things as they are "an sich," since "Readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are 'in themselves' are defined ontologico-categorically."[168] Yet by putting "an sich" i.e.' "in themselves" in quotes, Heidegger provokes the question: just how are we to understand this "an sich"? The immediately following words only underscore this question:

> Yet only by reason of something present-at-hand, 'is there' anything ready-to-hand. Does it follow, however, granting this thesis for the nonce, that readiness-to-hand is ontologically founded upon presence-at-hand?[169]

Understood as something ready-to-hand the thing always already has its place in a context, in a world as understood in *Being and Time* and "The Origin of the Work of Art." In the thing this world is always already copresent. Things are thus not mute givens.

In B*eing and Time,* Heidegger determines the "An-sich-sein" of things as readiness-to-hand, quite aware how questionable such a determination is. He warns us not to understand readiness-to-hand as *bloßer Auffassungscharakter* :

> But this characteristic is not to be understood as merely a way of taking them, as if we were talking such 'aspects' into the 'entities' which we proximally encounter, or as if some world-stuff which is proximally present-at-hand in itself were 'given subjective colouring' in this way.

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166 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953), 68

167 Ibid.,' ; *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 96-97.

168 Ibid. G71/E101

169 Ibid. G71/E101)

But he himself had second thoughts and in the copy he kept in his hut he added to "nicht als bloßer Auffassungscharakter" the comment "Aber doch nur Begegnischarakter, " which can be translated as "but merely a way of encountering them." This invites reconsideration of the so-called "An-sich-sein" of things and also of the privileging of readiness-to hand and Heidegger's supposed pragmatic turn.

Consider once more Heidegger's saying that "Readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are 'in themselves' are defined ontologico-categorically" (BT 101/SZ 71). Interesting is the interpretation of "an sich" as always presupposing a particular understanding of the world, which brings with it a particular mode of access to things:

> Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves [in seinem An-sich]. (BT120/SZ87)

But we must keep in mind Heideger's own rservations: especially important is the suggestion that the entire analysis of being as Zuhandenheit may be inadequate to an interpretation of primitive Dasein [170] —What does this tell us about Heidegger's own enterprise? In what sense does *Zuhandenheit* provide us with anything like an ontological ground? Too many Heidegger interpreters take the priority of *Zuhandenheit* rather uncritically for granted. A deeper understanding of the thing than we are offered in *Being and Time* is needed.

3

As we have seen, in "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger begins such an analysis. We do not do justice to the work of art when we understand it either as a mere thing or as a piece of equipment. It is something made, not in order to be used as a tool, but to be appreciatesd in its self-sufficient presencing. To be sure, the work of art, Heidegger insisted, is also a thing, if a special sort of thing. That, as we have seen, led Heidegger to a reconsideration of the question: what is a thing? This is the same question taken up once more in "The Thing." I won't recapitulate our discussion of things in "Origin of the Work of Art," but only quote once again one passage:

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[170] Ibid., G81–82/E113.

> The equipmenal being of equipment, reliability, keeps gathered with itself all this according to their manner and extent. The usefulness of equioment is nevertheless only the essential consequence of reliability. (E34/G23)[171]

Much here, I pointed out, recalls *Being and Time*. But Heidegger now places equipment in a more encompassing context:

> 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. (E33/G23)

What is new is especially the appeal to the "silent call of the earth."

Heidegger knows how questionable his chosen example is. To repeat just one question: do the peasant shoes discussed by Heidegger have a place in our world? But this is of course just the question Heidegger himself means to raise: thus he speaks of the wasting away of equipmentality, its sinking into mere stuff:

> In such wasting reliability vanishes. This dwindling, however, to which use-things owe their boringly obtrusive usualness, is only one more testimony to the original nature of equipmental being. The worn-out usualness of the equipment then obtrudes itself as the sole mode of being, apparently peculiar to it exclusively. Only blank usefulness now remains visible (E35/G24).

Such usefulness may give us the "impression that the origin of equipment lies in a mere fabricating that impresses a form upon some matter." "Nevertheless," Heidegger reminds us, "in its genuinely equipmental being, equipment stems from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction have a deeper origin" (E35/G24).

A presupposition of the thing analysis of *Being and Time* is such a *Verödung des Zeugseins*, or wasting of its equipmental being. But this leads to the question: how are we to understand "deeper"? Where does such depth find its measure? How do we gain access to it? And if our modern world denies us such a deeper understanding, would this not mean that it denies us access to the thing as thing, as Heidegger came to understand it?

4

What Heidegger has to say in "The Origin of the Work of Art" about the "V*erödung der Dinge"* looks ahead to what in his Bremen lecture "Die Gefahr" (1949) he was to term the

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171 Page references in the text are to Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). followed by references to "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," *Holzwege,* Klostermann, 1977).

"*Verwahrlosung des Dinges als Ding*," the "neglect of the thing as thing,"[172] rooted, he there argues, in our substitution of the *Ge-Stell* for the *Geviert*: Let me look, in more detail as both terms *Ge-Stell* and *Verwahrlosung*.

First, *Ge-stell*: Neither "construct," nor "configuration," nor the now common translation of Heidegger's term, "enframing," begins to preserve the word-play and the associations of the German *Ge-Stell* in which we should hear at least these two senses of *stellen*: to put something in a place, to set it somewhere, and to hunt it down or bring it to bay, as with a wild animal. So understood, *stellen* means also *herausfordern*, "to challenge." Our science places nature before us by challenging it. Its search for truth is a hunt. The mode of uncovering Heidegger associates with technology thus already governs the science that is a presupposition of what we usually call technology. In its essence technology is thus a way of understanding the being of what is, a way clearly marked by Descartes' famous promise in the *Discourse on Method*, which, in opposition to "that speculative philosophy which is taught in the Schools," offers

> a practical philosophy by means of which, knowing the force and action of fire, water, air, the stars, heavens, and all other bodies that environ us, as distinctly as we know the different crafts of our artisans, we can in the same way employ them in all those uses to which they are adapted, and thus render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.[173]

Nature comes to be understood first of all as available material, to be used and to be disposed of when no longer of use. But such understanding fails to be open to things as they are. In this sense Heidegger can say: "In the essence of the *Gestell* happens the neglect (*Verwahrlosung*) of the thing as thing." We moderns inhabit the world, and neglecting things.

5

Verwahrlosung is once again a quite ordinary German word, meaning precisely "neglect." Yet this meaning does not begin to capture what Heidegger has in mind. He would have us listen more carefully to the word, hear in it not just *verwahren*, to guard or keep something, so that *Verwahrlosung* would name the state of being left unkept or unguarded, but in *verwahren*, *wahren*, to watch over and protect, and *wahr*, true. *Verwahren*

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[172] Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994, 46.

[173] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* 6, in *The Philosophical Works*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), vol. I, p. 119.

thus would mean: to watch over the thing so that it can present itself as the thing it is, as it is in truth. Heidegger thinks such presencing in relation to the world, where "world," as we have seen, does not name the totality of what is, but the way in which human beings relate to whatever they encounter. In this sense we can speak of the world of the baseball player or of the world of the Middle Ages. "World" names here a space of intelligibility in which all that can present itself to us and all that we can think, decide, and enact, must take place.

Heidegger thinks the essence of technology against the background of the world thought as the fourfold of heaven and earth, mortals and divinities. To genuinely present itself as the thing it is, a thing must also present this world, which alone lets it be what it is in truth. But objectifying reason cannot make sense of the fourfold. What Heidegger calls the *Verwahrlosung* or "neglect" of the thing is therefore necessarily also a refusal (*Verweigerung)* of the world, where "world" now no longer means just a space of intelligibility. Talk of the modern world now becomes problematic, for, ruled by objectifying reason and subject to technology, the modern world represents a refusal of the fourfold and thus conceals or hides its own genuine being as world. It is thus the *verwahrloste Welt*. As Heidegger understands it, this refusal is not something that we moderns refuse to do; it does not constitute a failure for which we bear responsibility; rather it is part of our destiny. The world understood as the fourfold refuses to present itself to us moderns, even though poets and artists preserve its traces. This refusal is of a piece with the history of Being thought as the progress of metaphysics from its Greek beginnings to Cartesian rationality, a " progress" which has its other side in the transformation of the work of art from a world-shaping power into an aesthetic object.[174] Art for art's sake and modern technology belong together. That art today lacks the power to make visible the divine, that human beings today are no longer able to dwell on earth as the mortals they are, is nobody's fault. It is rather the destiny that rules our lives as the *Gestell.*

6

As much as I agree with Heidegger's questioning of the troubling conjunction of technology and art for art's sake, more important seems to me to ask whether we can rid ourselves of responsibility for the inhumanity that on Heidegger's analysis follows all too readily from the spiritual situation of our time. If that inhumanity is indeed but a corrolary of

our spiritual situation, is it not our task to change that situation? Such questioning is made more urgent by this proposition from "Die Gefahr":

> Es [das Gestell] bestellt alles Anwsende als das Beständige der Bestandstücke des Bestandes,
> The *Gestell* orders all that presences to be present as the always available items of the availabe material.[175]

Once again my translation is inadequate. *Bestellt* does indeed mean "orders," as one orders a meal; it also means "sends for"; it also means "cultivates," as one cultivates a field. All these connotations are part of Heidegger's meaning. Whatever is, is ordered by the *Gestell* in a way that reduces the many dimensions of its being to just one: it is ordered to present itself as "always available material at hand." But even less than before does my translation do justice to the German: *das Beständige der Bestandstücke des Bestandes*. *Bestand* does indeed mean goods on hand: a company's inventory or available assets can be called its *Bestand*, and it is indeed in the economic sphere, presided over by the imperative to produce things as cheaply as possible, that the word has found a natural home. But *Bestand* also means continuance through time. *Beständig* means first of all "constant," "remaining in the same state." The *Gestell* is thus supported by what Nietzsche called the spirit of revenge: that ill will against time that refuses to accept human vulnerability and mortality, that would defeat the terror of time with ever more careful planning.[176] In the age of technology, all that is comes to be understood equally as always available material. Inseparable from the history of modernity so understood is an increasing levelling or homogenization of what is: everything counts the same. But where everything counts the same, *gilt gleich*, everything becomes *gleichgültig*, a matter of indifference.

> It is in this context that we have to understand the following statement:
> Because reality consists in the homogeneity of what can be subjected to planning and calculation, human beings must enter into this uniformity in order to be up to reality. Today someone without uniform already makes the impression of being unreal, of no longer being.[177]

All too easily Heidegger reduces the many themes of the history in which we stand to only one: to the progress of metaphysics, culminating in technology understood as a destiny to

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174 See especially the postscript to "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" *Holzwege*, 67-70.

175 Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 79 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994, 51.

176 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On Redemption," in *The Portable Nietzsche,* trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Viking, 1954), 252.

177 Martin Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik," *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 97.

which we are subject, but which we cannot hope to master, since to do so we would have to be able to step beyond or at least outside the modern world. According to Heidegger, our being is too essentially a being in that world to make such a step possible. What concerns us moderns presents itself as a matter of regions or sectors to be ordered and secured by appropriate planning. To the planned production of literature corresponds the planned production of human life. The terms Heidegger uses in this essay, *Schrifttumsführung* and *Schwängerungsführung* everything counts the same, taking charge of the production of literature and of children, unmistakably refer to the National Socialist state.[178] A parenthetical remark following the latter tells the reader not to seek refuge in differences that no longer exist. The world in which Heidegger finds himself no longer has room for prudishness of this sort:

> The need for human material is subject to the same regulating ordering that characterizes mobilization in time of war, as is the need for books of entertainment and poetry...All material, including the raw material "human being," is used up for the technological establishment of the unconditioned possibility to make anything at all. Although hidden, such use is determined by the complete emptiness in which the materials that make up what is real now stand.[179]

Written down at the time of the Second World War, these remarks could be said to presuppose a caricature of reality that we have happily left behind. But can we really be altogether sure of this? To test such confidence, you may want to turn to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. If, as a reviewer wrote in the Houston Chronicle, "Atwood takes many trends which exist today and stretches them to their logical and chilling conclusion," then the problem Heidegger addresses lies not just behind, but also ahead of us.[180] We refuse to think that problem when we dismiss Heidegger's reference to the reduction of human beings to raw material to be used and used up as so insensitive to the unique horror of the holocaust, so scandalously insufficient, as to deserve no further commentary. I discussed Heidegger's remark on the holocaust in that same lecture last time.

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[178] Ibid., 97.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1987), i.

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In conclusion let me return briefly to “Building Dwelling Thinking.” Despite the then pressing housing shortage, few of those listening to Heidegger’s “Building Dwelling Thinking” could have disputed that "the real plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses," that "the real plight" is rather this, "that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell.*"[181] Such dwelling, Heidegger had told his audience, is possible only where there is strength to resist the temptation to make gods for ourselves and to worship idols.

This must have touched those who heard him: had the Germans not fallen into idolatry when they substituted a house built by Hitler for that primordial building whose outlines haunt and elude us? And had Heidegger himself not participated in their dance around the golden calf? Convinced that with the death of God the edifice of our culture had lost founder and foundation and lay in ruins, Heidegger had hoped to “repeat”—in the sense in which repetition was tied in *Beng and Time* to authentic Dasein—the archaic truth of pre-Socratic Greece for the modern age. That hope let him be receptive to the Nazis' promise of a new order raised on blood and soil. Those who seek inspiration and a sense of direction in the much cited temple passage in "The Origin of the Work of Art" should remember that it was written at a time when Nazi Germany sought to reappropriate the Greek paradigm, which has played such a fateful part in German history, giving it architectural expression in its own brand of Neo-Classicism. To all appreciatve readers of “The Origin of the Work of Art” I recommend Robert Jan van Pelt's "Apocalyptic Abjection," which begins with a discussion of Heidegger's failed attempt to serve a distinctly German reappropriation of the greatness of our culture's Greek beginning, passes on to a discussion of Nazi architecture as a repetition of the architecture of Athens, of Hitler's attempt to make Berlin "into a mondial acropolis," Nuremberg into a national agora, Munich into a German necropolis, and concludes with an interpretation of Auschwitz as the topsy-turvy city Hitler built.[182] It should be obligatory reading for all who seek to appropriate Heidegger's thought for architectural theory, indeed for all who dream of recovering the greatness of its Greek beginning, but also the seductive simplicity of his Black Forest farmhouse for our modern culture.

Still, as long as we recognize that such farmhouses lie irrecoverably behind us, they help us to understand more clearly what Heidegger calls the plight of our own dwelling, even as the

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181 “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” 156; “Building; Dwell,ing, Thinking,” 161

182 Robert Jan van Pelt, “Apocalyptic Abjection,” in Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll Willliam Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991)

failure of Heidegger's disastrous attempt to reappropriate the archaic in the modern age underscores the threat of idolatry. We still must learn to dwell. But by saying that as mortals, we "*must ever learn to dwell*" Heidegger also suggests that it is not given to us to arrive at our true home. What he calls "the *real* plight of dwelling" is not something to be gotten rid off. We cannot really be at home in the world as long as we fail to accept that we are wayfarers, dreaming of home, nowhere fully at home. This is how we must understand Heidegger's question: "What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight?" and his answer: "Yet as soon as man *gives* thought to this homelessness, it is a misery no longer."

We live in the age of technology, the age of the World Picture. In that world Heidegger hopes to open a window to what transcends that world and thereby to gain what he terms a freer relationship to technology. But does his backward glance to Greek temples and Black Forest houses not betray a nostalgia that must make us homeless in our modern world? What sense can we make today of his proclamation: only a god can save us? I shall focus our last two sessions around these two questions.

12. Nostalgia, Kitsch, and the Interesting

1

In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger discusses a Greek temple as a world-establishing work that, while it lies irrevocably behind us, yet challenge us to attempt their repetition in a modern key. The architectural historian Robert Jan van Pelt has forced us to ask whether Auschwitz has not rendered thoughts of any such repetition impossible. In their *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* he and Carroll William Westfall had struggled with the possibility of just such a repetition, van Pelt with considerable sympathy for Heidegger's position. But any attempt to think the possibility of such a repetition is called into question by the connection between the ethical and political function that Heidegger had assigned to art and that so many continue to dream of, and the art and architecture of National Socialism—that includes, van Pelt points out, the architecture of Auschwitz. Van Pelt found his own effort to contribute to an articulation of "architectural principles in the age of historicism" derailed by his understanding of that connection and he responded by turning from architectural theory to cultural history, more especially to the history of Auschwitz. He became a leading expert on the subject and in that capacity gave testimony that helped to defeat the suit the British historian David Irving had brought for libel against Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt, who had accused Irving of holocaust denial.

What room does Auschwitz leave for talk about an ethical or political function for art or architecture? For van Pelt Auschwitz meant the triumph of nihilism:

> To live without trust in the world means to live without trust in the mind. I believe that the intellectual after Auschwitz is doomed to discover sooner or later that the foundations of her learning are sunk in an abyss of despair. When she discovers that the ground on which she stands is cursed with an unredeemable past, she will surrender to apathy or to that form of despair which Kierkegaard defined as defiance. Kierkegaard defined defiance as the despair of him who "wants to begin a little earlier than do other men, not at and with the beginning, but 'in the beginning'; he does not want to put on his own self, does not want to see his given self as his task—he himself wants to compose himself by means of being the infinite form." It is clear that the author's search for Architectural Principles after Auschwitz … was such an act of defiance.[183]

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183 Robert Jan van Pelt, "Apocalyptic Abjection," in Robert Jan van Pelt and Carroll Willliam Westfall, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Historicism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 380-381. The quoted passage is from Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening,* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 68.

I agree with van Pelt that the loss of trust in the world, whatever its source, tends to leads to apathy or the kind of defiance Kierkegaard described so well. Sartre's fundamental project invites discussion in these terms, as does the art it helps us to understand, including the turn to abjection. But does Auschwitz leave us no alternative to such a loss of trust in the world?
For Van Pelt, as for many others, Auschwitz possesses a unique significance. I am suspicious of invocations of "uniqueness." There is a sense in which everything real, including every historical event, every person, is unique, and another in which nothing we can describe is unique. Much depends here on how "unique" is to be understood. The dictionary defines "unique" as "what has no like or equal." But the disjunction invites questioning: "what has no like" discourages comparison, leaves us without words; "what has no equal" invites comparison. Too easy an insistence on the uniqueness of the holocaust removes what happened into a quasi-sacred realm that discourages responsible reflection, threatening to make out of the horror of Auschwitz something like a satanic golden calf, its mystery as closed to reason as is Abraham's God in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. Anyone committed to reason should be on guard whenever something is called "unique."

The same goes for the claim that the death camps and genocide mark a new phase in human history. To understand the camps and genocide as a radical break blocks efforts at understanding. Auschwitz belongs, horrifyingly so, to this modern age and demands of us an inquiry into the conditions that made it possible so that we can attempt to make sure that nothing like it will happen in the future. Among these conditions I would list, as does Heidegger, an understanding of reality, inseparable from our science and technology, that would have us reckon, not just with nature, but with human beings, too, as material to be used, used up, and discarded when for some reason no longer wanted. Among these conditions I would list also a still growing self-centeredness that makes it ever more difficult to respond to and assume responsibility for the suffering of the other; I would list also, as does Nietzsche, the death of God and the desire to reoccupy the place now left vacant with golden calves of one sort or another.

2

Van Pelt's response to Auschwitz recalls Adorno's pronouncement that there could be no poetry after Auschwitz. Adorno knew of course that without qualifications, the statement could be defended as little as Hegel's pronouncement concerning the end of art:

> The proposition, after Auschwitz it is no longer possible to write a poem, is not valid without qualifications: but this is certain: that after Auschwitz, because it was possible and remains possible for further than we can see, no art that is serene or cheerful (*heiter*) can be imagined. Objectively it will degenerate into cynicism, no matter how it borrows the goodness of human understanding.[184]

Adorno recognized that this supposed impossibility was not just grounded in the horror of Auschwitz, but had deeper roots:

> Such an impossibility of great poetry was sensed almost a century before the European catastrophe, first perhaps with Baudelaire, then also with Nietzsche and in the rejection of humor by the school of George. Humor passed over into polemic parody. There it finds a temporary refuge for as long as it remains implacable, without consideration of the concept of reconciliation, which once was part of the concept humor.

How easily Adorno here moves from poetic greatness to serenity and to a humor that lovingly embraces its object. But today the work of an artist, who attempts lovingly to embrace reality, will ring false, will degenerate into kitsch. And today such kitsch is comical. "The truth content of joy seems to have become unreachable."[185] And as the truth of joy has become unreachable, so also has our ability to take ourselves very seriously. It has become difficult for us not to understand a work such as Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* as high class kitsch. How we would welcome true comedy:

> Those were still good days, with corners to slip away to and sloppiness in the midst of the system of horror when Hajek wrote his *Schwejk*. But comedies about fascism became accomplices of that stupid habit of thought, which thought it already defeated it because the stronger battalions of world history opposed it. The posture of the victor becomes least the opponents of the fascists, which have the duty not to resemble those in any way, who entrench themselves in that position. The historical forces that do not belong to the surface are much too powerful for anyone to treat them, as if he were supported by world history and the leaders were indeed the clowns whose childish chatter their murderous speeches came to resemble only in retrospect.[186]

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184 Theodor W. Adorno, "Ist die Kunst heiter?" in *Noten zur Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch, 1981), 603-604.
185 Ibid., 604.
186 Ibid., 604.

Adorno's pessimism, which denies the possibility of a genuinely serene (*heitere)* art today—and such *Heiterkeit* (the word resists translation into English) is all but equated by Adorno with artistic greatness—has its foundation in his understanding of modernity as a system of horror that no longer allows for hiding places, no longer suffers breakdowns that offer a refuge to true humanity. According to Adorno, we fail to understand the scope of that system when we allow the evil of Auschwitz to blind us to what continues to make genuine *Heiterkeit* impossible.

The section of "Ist die Kunst heiter?" that includes the cited remark on Auschwitz began thus with a quite different, yet, if Adorno is right, related phenomenon:

> Ever since art is being reigned in by the culture industry and takes its place among the consumer goods, its *Heiterkeit* is synthetic, false, bewitched. Where *Heiterkeit* makes its appearance today it is disfigured as ordered, down to that ominous 'nevertheless' of the tragic posture that consoles itself with the thought: well, this is the way life is. Art, which no longer is possible except as reflected, has to renounce any claim to *Heiterkeit*.[187]

Not that it can therefore claim a more profound seriousness (*Ernst*). No: *Ernst* and *Heiterkeit* belong together. In contemporary art we can detect thus

> a dying-off of the alternative of *Heiterkeit* and *Ernst,* of comedy and tragedy, almost of life and death. With this art negates its entire past, presumably because the familiar alternative expresses a state split between the happiness of continuing life and disaster that is the medium of its continuation. Art beyond *Heiterkeit* and *Ernst* can be a cipher of reconciliation, but just as easily a cipher of terror in the face of the completion of the disenchantment of the world. Such art is born both of disgust, aroused by the omnipresence of open and disguised advertising for human existence, and of resistance to the elevated posture that by heightening suffering once again takes the side of those who insist that it cannot be changed.[188]

Such art, we can say, defines itself against two kinds of kitsch, the one sweet, the other sour.

3

Adorno made his remarks in1949. Times have changed. His pathos has become harder to accept. We have grown more suspicious of such gravity. Meanwhile art has continued. But the kinds of serenity and seriousness Adorno declared impossible after Auschwitz have not returned. Advertising and money have become still more decisive forces in the art world, making it ever more difficult for artists to resist their embrace. All too much artistic production today serves to conjure up an image of the good life that settles for simulacra of reality. Such

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187 Ibid., 603.
188 Ibid., pp. 605-606.

substitution helps to define kitsch. And as Adorno saw so clearly, art does not escape kitsch when, attempting to keep its distance from bourgeois pleasures, it turns to the abject, wallows in suffering and decay, thinking that thereby it comes closer to laying hold of reality. This, too, is rarely more than a phantasm. Must not genuine art define itself in opposition all such phantasms, and that is to say, in opposition to kitsch? In opposition also to that spirit of gravity in whom Nietzsche's Zarathustra recognized his arch-enemy?

Opposition to the spirit of gravity governs Lyotard's essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" which concludes with a call to war that gives it the ring of an artist's manifesto:

> We are in a moment of relaxation —I am speaking of the tenor of the times. Everywhere we are being urged to give up experimentation, in the arts and elsewhere. … Beneath the general demand for relaxation and appeasement, we hear murmurings of the desire to reinstitute terror and fulfill the phantasm of taking possession of reality. The answer is this: war on totality. Let us attest to the unpresentable; let us activate the differends and save the honor of the name.[189]

I am too much of a pacifist not to be on guard when someone sounds a call to war. I want to know what cause it is that demands my engagement, weigh the slogans that demand my allegiance.

In that essay Lyotard presents us with a simple, perhaps too simple, account of postmodernism that deserves our attention. Lyotard knows that many have claimed the "postmodern" label for themselves and yet would want nothing to do with the postmodernism he has in mind. But if what Lyotard offers us is only a model that accentuates some aspects at the expense of others, it does open our eyes to something essential and invites us to take a stand.

Lyotard does not so much oppose postmodernism to modernism, as he places it within it. How then does he understand "modernism"? Artistic modernism, Lyotard claims, moves within the orbit of the sublime: "the aesthetic of the sublime is where modern art (including literature) find its impetus, and where the logic of the avant-garde finds its axioms".[190] Since he locates postmodernism within modernism, it is to be expected that postmodern art, on his view, should find its impetus in a variant of the aesthetic the sublime. What distinguishes the postmodern

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[189] Jean-François Lyotard, "Answer to the Question: What is Postmodernism," in The Postmodern Explained. Correspondence 1982 - 1985, trans. Don Barry, Bernadette Maher, Julian Prefanis, Virginia Spate, and Morgan Thomas (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).1 and 16.

[190] Ibid., 10.

from the modern appropriations of the sublime is that the former has shed modernist nostalgia.[191]

What does modernist nostalgia long for? According to Lyotard, too, it longs for lost reality. He says, "modernity, whenever it appears, does not occur without a shattering of belief, without a discovery of the lack of reality in reality,— a discovery linked to the invention of other realities".[192] This formulation makes clear that in an important sense reality has not been lost. And how could it be? First of all and most of the time we do not doubt our body's reality, the reality of those we live with, of the things we encounter. How then does Lyotard understand reality's "lack of reality," this background condition of modern art?

Lyotard hints at the answer when he claims that modern art longs for "the all and the one, for a reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, for a transparent and the communicable experience",[193] longs for the incarnation of what can be thought and dreamed of in what can be seen and experienced, an incarnation so complete it would it would absorb us in a way that would leave no room for questions such as: What is this work about? What does it mean? Absorption and presence have become key words in discussions of modernist painting. Modern art appears here as an expression of modernity's unhappy consciousness, unhappy precisely because it is never quite at home in the world, with things, which it projects against a background of possibilities that renders what happens to be the case arbitrary and contingent. Full presence would defeat arbitrariness and contingency. Nostalgia for lost plenitude, lost presence, is on this view the dominant mood of modern art. And is it not the dominant mood of Heidegger's thinking, in general and not just about art?

To characterize such a vain pursuit of presentations of a reality that remains unpresentable, of the incarnation of meaning in matter long associated with the term beauty, that Lyotard invokes the category of the sublime. Here his characterization of the aesthetics of sublime painting:

> As painting, it will evidently 'present' something, but negatively. It will therefore avoid figuration or representation; it will be 'blank' [blanche] like one of Malevich's squares; it will make one see only by prohibiting one from seeing; it will give pleasure only by giving pain.[194]

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191 Ibid., 14.
192 Ibid., 9.
193 Ibid., 16.
194 Ibid., 11.

Modernist sensibility refuses representation and figuration because it senses in whatever art might represent a lack of reality, an arbitrariness, an absence of what might make things weighty enough to be worthy of the artist's celebrating representation.

But what has been called a lack of reality need not be understood as a lack at all. It may be considered an opportunity. This change in mood characterizes postmodernism, as Lyotard understands it. Postmodern art is modern art that has shed modernist nostalgia for plenitude and weightiness, for absorption and presence, for God and reality:

> If it is true that modernity unfolds in the retreat of the real and according to the sublime relationship of the presentable with the conceivable, we can (to use a musical idiom) distinguish two essential modes in this relationship. The accent can fall on the inadequacy of the faculty of presentation, on the nostalgia for presence experienced by the human subject and the obscure and futile will that animates it in spite of everything.[195]

But such nostalgia can also be shed:

> Or else the accent can fall on the power of the faculty to conceive, on what one might call its 'inhumanity' (a quality Apollinaire insists on in modern artists), since it is of no concern to the understanding whether or not the human sensibility or imagination accords with what it conceives—and on the extension of being and jubilation that come from inventing new rules of the game, whether pictorial, artistic, or something else.[196]

Within modern art Lyotard thus distinguishes two strands, one ruled by *melancholia*, melancholy, the other committed to *novatio*, innovation. Thus he opposes the German expressionists to Braque and Picasso, Malevich to the later Lissitzky, de Chirico to Duchamp. And thus we may want to oppose Stella to Rauschenberg or Anselm Kiefer to Gerhard Richter.

A great deal here requires further discussion. I shall focus on three questions:

1. How are we to understand that "lack of reality" that Lyotard understands as the background condition of modern art?

2. How justified is Lyotard's invocation of the Kantian sublime to characterize the impetus of both modernism and postmodernism?

3. Should we welcome the substitution of *novatio* for *melancholia* that is said to characterize the postmodern sublime?

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195 Ibid., 13.

196 Ibid., 13.

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The first question returns us to ground that is by now familiar. Lyotard does have good reason to link modernity to a withdrawal of the real. A loss of reality is inseparable from the commitment to truth on which our science and technology rest. This is what Heidegger has in mind when he speaks of our world as the *verwahrloste Welt.* Technology has carried what we can call a loss of reality into our everyday. The other side of this loss of reality is a gain in freedom. In this sense Lyotard can claim that "Modernity…does not occur without a shattering of belief, without a discovery of the *lack of reality* in reality,— a discovery linked to the invention of other realities."[197].

I spoke of a gain in freedom. This gain finds one expression in the ever diminishing significance of place. The more modern science and technology carry the attack on place into our everyday life, the more we can expect that life to be tinged by a sense of being on the road, of living in mobile homes—and has not the earth itself become such a mobile home?— and the more we can expect that life to be tinged by a sense of not belonging, of being denied the possibility of really dwelling somewhere, by nostalgia. Heidegger's reading of Van Gogh's painting of a pair of shoes betrays such a longing. Bound up with such longing to escape from that derealization that seems part of modern reality is the temptation to seek comfort in false absolutes. If God should indeed be dead, some golden calf or other will have to do, where every golden calf can be considered with Lyotard a presentation of what is unpresentable, but one that refuses to acknowledge the latter's unpresentability. Like genuine faith, Lyotard's brand of postmodernism defines itself by its opposition to all golden calves. In this spirit Lyotard cites Kant's characterization of the commandment "'Thou shalt not make unto Thee any graven images' (Exodus 20:4) as the most sublime [passage] in the Bible, in that it forbids any presentation of the absolute."[198] Translated into the language of aesthetics, this becomes a commandment against kitsch, for kitsch claims to be able to present the values that preside over our life in such a way that they can readily be grasped. Thus it promises to heal the rift that rends concept and percept. Once more the world presents itself to us as whole. When Lyotard insists that the aesthetic of the sublime has given modern art its impetus and direction, he, too, places modern art in opposition to the beauty of kitsch, which it seeks to overcome with strategies of abstraction, derealization, ironic detachment.

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197 Ibid., 9

198 Ibid., 11.

5

Lyotard invokes Kant's understanding of the category of the sublime to characterize the impetus of both modernism and postmodernism. I find this a surprising invocation, surprising first of all because it is Kant's discussion of pure beauty that has generally been taken as a point of departure for an aesthetic of modern art, for example by Greenberg; surprising also because Kant's aesthetic of the sublime focuses on sublime nature and has almost nothing to say about art; surprising finally in view of Lyotard's mention of Kant's characterization of the commandment "Thou shalt not make unto Thee any graven images" as the most sublime passage in the Bible, for that remark implies not a call for art, not even for sublime art—interested as he is in sublime nature, Kant shows himself remarkably uninterested in sublime art—but a denial of art's ability to give expression to the absolute. Once we have recognized with Plato that art, when it is doing its "own proper work," is far removed from truth and reason, we will no longer demand of art that it serve the truth or lead us to the good life.

And is this recognition not bound up with the shape of our modern world? Given such recognition, why should art, as Lyotard would have it continue to do, bear witness to the inevitable futility of its attempt to represent the unrepresentable? Why not follow Hegel and accept a more modest role for art? To be sure, artists will find it difficult to accept the modest role that the modern aesthetic approach leaves them, to accept a view that seems to degrade art into no more than a form of entertainment. But works that claim to present what we know cannot be presented, such as Dali's *Last Supper*, are likely to be attacked as kitsch by the art establishment, as false. And this presupposes that such critics continue to measure art by some standard of truth.

Lyotard is such a critic. And only because he is can he invoke what Kant called the sublime commandment against the making of graven images to draw from it imperatives for an aesthetic of sublime art. Thus he, too, challenges the boundary between art and religion, beauty and morality established by the aesthetic approach, which no longer would have us look to art for presentations of the absolute. On this aesthetic understanding modern art betrays itself and moves towards kitsch whenever it violates that injunction. This suggests that the proper answer to kitsch is not, as the postmodernist Lyotard suggests, a turn to the sublime, but as the modernist Clement Greenberg saw, a turn to a purified understanding of art and beauty, where, as we have

seen, Kant may once more be said to have provided decisive pointers,not, however, in the aesthetic of the sublime, but in his discussion of pure beauty.

Kant's distinction between the beautiful and the sublime appeals to two fundamentally different moods. At issue are profoundly different attitudes to nature and self:

> Natural beauty (which is independent) brings with it a purposiveness in its form by which the object seems to be, as it were, preadapted to our judgment, and thus constitutes in itself an object of satisfaction. On the other hand, that which excites in us, without any reasoning about it, but in the mere apprehension of it, the feeling of the sublime may appear, as regards its form, to violate purpose in respect of the judgment, to be unsuited to our presentative faculty, and as it were to do violence to the imagination, and yet it is judged to be only the more sublime.[199]

The imagination cannot hold on to the sublime as if it were a beautiful picture. The beautiful, on the other hand, presents itself as if it had been made to be appreciated by us. In beautiful nature we feel at home. It thus readily leads to thoughts of a benevolent deity. Not only the holocaust has made it difficult for us moderns to take such thoughts seriously. That is why modern art that portrays beautiful nature strikes us so often as in some sense false, as kitsch. Sublime nature, on the other hand, resists such interpretation. It forces us to acknowledge our homelessness in nature and thus casts us back to our solitary selves. But precisely this mood of homelessness awakens something in us that is not bound to what can be sensed or imagined, a faculty that allows us to transcend ourselves as beings of nature. Kant speaks of reason, where his reason is inseparably linked to freedom.

Kant insists that, while in the case of the beautiful the reason for our sense of well being must be sought in the beautiful—in the case of beautiful nature, it must be sought in the makeup of nature—this is not so with the sublime, regarding which he says "all that we can say is that the object is fit for the presentation of a sublimity which can be found in the mind, for no sensible form can contain the sublime properly so-called."[200] While the beautiful is thing-centered, the sublime is self-centered. In sublime nature human beings recognize their own sublimity, recognizes that they are more than just parts of nature, tiny atoms lost in the boundless cosmos. As beings possessing freedom and reason we are capable of transcending even the boundless cosmos.

When speaking of the sublime Kant was thinking first of all of nature. Lyotard's suggestion that we derive from Kant an aesthetic of modernist painting presupposes that artists

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[199] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* par. 23, A 75; trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1964), 83.

continue to pursue the absolute, even as they must recognize that the absolute can be presented only negatively as the unpresentable. Lyotard continues to cling here to a version of what Hegel considered art in its highest sense to be, and only because he does can he characterize sublime modernist painting as presenting what refuses presentation, as letting us see what escapes being captured by sight:

> In these formulations we can recognize the axioms of the avant-gardes in painting, to the extent that they dedicate themselves to allusions to the unpresentable through visible presentations…They remain inexplicable without the incommensurability between reality and concept implied by the Kantian philosophy of the sublime.[201]

Malevich spoke of painting icons to a God who had become zero. Nietzsche's dictum comes to mind that we human beings would rather make the void our purpose than be void of purpose.

6

Kant, as we have seen, was too much of a moralist not to have been suspicious of art. How can we justify spending time and money on art when there are so many more important things—hunger, injustice, suffering—that demand our attention. Thus he writes that "an interest in beautiful art ... furnishes no proof whatever of a disposition attached to the morally good or even inclined thereto."[202] Would Kant have judged someone with an interest in sublime art differently? Would such a person not have to be grouped with those who seek out sublime nature from, as Kant put it, amateur curiosity?

The natural sublime holds significance for Kant because it prepares for resolute acceptance of the moral law. But the moral law does not appear to be what Lyotard has in mind when he speaks of the postmodern sublime. When he celebrates *novatio*, innovation, "the extension of being and jubilation that come from inventing new rules of the game, whether pictorial, artistic, or something else," Lyotard places the postmodern sublime in unending opposition to the comforts provided by the established and accepted. He celebrates a freedom that would outstrip whatever would bind it, including Kant's moral law. But once the pleasure we take in the sublime has thus been severed from the moral, a dissociation that corresponds to the dissociation of freedom from the moral law, such pleasure becomes the narcissistic pleasure the solitary self takes in the free play of his own thoughts and inventiveness, which ceaselessly

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[200] *Ibid.,* par. 23, A 75-76; trans. pp. 83-84.
[201] Lyotard, 11-12.

trespasses the boundaries of the currently accepted and acceptable in search of ever new experiences. In other words, once severed form the moral, the postmodern sublime begins to look a lot like what has long been discussed in terms of the category of the interesting. Instead of invoking the Kantian sublime, would we not do better to understand the aesthetics of postmodern art as an aesthetics of the interesting?

As Kierkegaard pointed out long ago, cultivation of the interesting presupposes an understanding of what has come to be established and accepted. The normal is boring, the abnormal interesting. Boredom provides the soil in which the interesting thrives, which offers the thrills of the not-quite-expected. The appeal of the interesting is thus essentially short-lived. It depends for its effect on changing expectations. That Duchamp should be one of the heroes of Lyotard's postmodern sublime is to be expected. The way his *Fountain* deliberately confused the established categories "work of art" and "piece of plumbing" was certainly interesting. But we would fail to respect the success of this paradigmatic achievement were we to attempt to repeat his achievement and literally or figuratively drag all sorts of plumbing pieces into galleries in an inevitably futile attempt to generate a comparable interest. Today such repetitions are just boring. No longer do they test the boundary of art. And must a work today not challenge that boundary, challenge the very meaning of art, if we are to find it interesting? Duchamp's enormously inventive questioning of the nature of art has invited countless successor acts even as its success has cast an inhibiting shadow on all those who would follow his example. The interesting demands novelty. If one has an interest in the interesting, to say that something has already been done is devastating criticism.

Key texts for anyone who wants to formulate an aesthetics of the interesting would have to include Friedrich Schlegel's "Modern Poesy" and Kierkegaard's "Rotation Method." Schlegel was perhaps the first to use the concept of the "interesting" to interpret the meaning of "modern" in "modern art" and "modern poetry," an interpretation that invites comparison with Lyotard's determination of the modern sublime.[203] And Schlegel already saw that, to the extent that art is governed by the pursuit of the interesting, we should expect an accelerating and finally futile race for the ever more interesting. The desire for the interesting has to lead to dissatisfaction with whatever has now come to be expected. Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* provides a devastating

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[202] Kant, *Critique of Judgment.,* par. 42, A 164; trans. 141.

[203] Friedrich Schlegel, "Die moderne Poesie (1795-96), in *Schriften und Fragmente*, ed. Ernst Behler (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1956), 114-121.

immanent critique of the interesting that Lyotard's postmodern sublime needs to confront. Once more consider his questionable invocation of the Kantian sublime: as Kant understands it, the experience of the sublime raises human beings beyond their merely natural being. According to Kant, it is the universality of that law that offers us moderns our spiritual home. The progressive incarnation of the universal in the natural and particular presents us with an infinite task. Not artistic play, but responsible moral action answers to that task, action that will make the world ever more our home. But such action would have to seem pointless if the world were so indifferent to this task as to rob us of all hope to make things at least somewhat better. Today the shadow of Auschwitz and all it figures covers such Enlightenment optimism.

But Kant was such an optimist. He would have been unable to agree with Lyotard that "it is not up to us to *provide reality*," that all that is up to us is "to invent allusions to what is conceivable but not presentable."[204] Whether or not the world is experienced in a way that lets us despair of the possibility of responsible action is indeed our business. Van Pelt is right: "To live without trust in the world means to live without trust in the mind."[205] Reason is powerless to give such trust a foundation. But reason is similarly powerless to undermine such trust, which is supported by a mood that Kant tied to an appreciation of the beauty of nature. Has such appreciation become impossible or indecent after Auschwitz? Van Pelt believes "that the intellectual after Auschwitz is doomed to discover sooner or later that the foundations of her learning are sunk in an abyss of despair." But this is a belief and no such belief, whether in doom or salvation, can appeal to reason for a foundation. Confidence in the possible efficacy of responsible action presupposes some sense of what Kant calls the purposiveness of nature, that is to say, presupposes an appreciation of its beauty, presupposes an understanding of the world as our home, despite all that argues against it. Beauty is necessary if the self-transcending subject is to find his or her home on earth. To Lyotard's call for a postmodern-sublime I would therefore like to oppose a quite old-fashioned plea for beauty, but beauty understood as the descent of a transcendent logos into the visible.

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[204] Lyotard, 15.

[205] van Pelt, "Apocalyptic Abjection," 380.

Conclusion: The Descent of the Logos

1

I would like to focus this last session around three quotations, three *Leitworte*, as Heidegger might say. The first two I considered already in our very first session. They are both from the *Spiegel* Interview:

> 1. Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god (57)[206]
> 2. My thinking has an essential connection to Hölderlin's poetry. But I do not think that Hölderlin is just any poet, whose work is a subject, among many others, for literary historians. I think Hölderlin is the poet who points toward the future, who expects the god, and who therefore cannot remain simply a subject for Hölderlin research in the literary historical imagination. (62).

The third is one of Hölderlin's epigrams:

> **Wurzel alles Übels**
> Einig zu sein ist göttlich und gut; woher ist die Sucht denn
> Unter den Menschen, daß nur einer und eines nur sei?
>
> **Root of All Evil**
> To be at one is divine and good; whence then the rage
> Among human beings, that only one and one thing should be?

2

Let me begin with a brief discussion of the third. Does the epigram not itself suggest the answer: if it is divine and good to be at one, must there not one thing or person with respect to which or whom we can be at one, one God, one creed, one people, or one leader? And yet the epigram calls the desire to thus single out one as the only one a *Sucht*, a disease, while the title suggests that this way of establishing unity is indeed the root of all evil. But traditionally the root of all evil is sin. Is it then the root of all evil to so idealize some finite being that, like the Biblical God, he, she, or it becomes absolutely unique, the only one and tolerates no equals? And how is such idealization related to sin?

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[206] Citations of this sort refer to *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism: questions and answers*, ed. Günther Neske and Emil Kettering, introduction by Karsten Harries, trans. Lisa Harries (New York: Paragon House, 1990).

Hölderlin's epigram, at any rate, invites us to question Heidegger's insistence on the poet's unique significance, but more generally the insistence that someone or something be *Das* or *Der Einzige*. I remind you of Hölderlin's poem with that title, which occupied us in the beginning of this semester, also of the statement in the *Systemprogramm*: "Monotheism of reason and heart, polytheism of imagination and art, this is what we need."[207] The only one may not be so located in time that we cease to remain open to other possibilities.

3

But let me turn now to the first. An answer is suggested by the argument I have been trying to develop in this seminar. The invocation of a saving God in the *Spiegel Gespräch* cannot be considered an aberration in Heidegger's thought. It has indeed antecedents, especially in the posthumously published *Beiträge*. But let me return to the argument.

Let us recall some of the steps of our earlier discussion.

1. In *Being and Time* Heideggger analyzes **authenticity** as a human possibility.

2. Not just that, Dasein is said to be called to that possibility. Dasein calls itself to that possibility in the call of **conscience**.

3. Authenticity is an appropriation of **guilt**. Because Dasein will never be truly master of itself it is faced with having to make decisions. Recall once more: "Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision."[208] **Freedom and guilt** are inseparably intertwined.

4. But authenticity also means a certain *self-integration*. Heidegger thus speaks of an *eigentliches Ganzseinkönnen* of *Dasein* (*BT* 349/SZ 301–302).[209] Key here is Heidegger's understanding of resolve: to be resolved means to permit oneself to be called to one's own being guilty.

> Dasein is essentially guilty—not just guilty *on some occasions*, and *on other occasions not*.
> Wanting-to-have-a-conscience resolves upon this Being-guilty. To project oneself upon this

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[207] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Werke* I, *Theorie Werkausgabe*, *Frühe Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971)235–236.

[208] Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 55; Original German: Martin Heidegger, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks" in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 44.

[209] Citations of this sort refer to Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Incorporated, 1962), followed by the pagination of the later German editions.

> Being-guilty, which Dasein is *as long as it is*, belongs to the very meaning of resoluteness. (*BT* 353/SZ 305)

Crucial here is that to project oneself upon one's Being-guilty is to project oneself unto something constant:

> The existentiell way of taking over this 'guilt' in resoluteness, is therefore authentically accomplished only when that resoluteness, in its disclosure of Dasein, has become *so* transparent that Being-guilty is understood *as something constant*. (*BT* 353/SZ 305)

With this the possibility of opposing to the many different activities that engage us something resembling a constant self presents itself. Again, I would grant that Heidegger has sketched a human possibility. The question remains: should we give this possibility, that is, should we give *unity,* such a normative weight? Our desires and fears will call us in different, perhaps incompatible directions. And yet, every authentic decision, Heidegger insists, must at the same time will the unity of the self. Heidegger gives unity a normative significance. For Heidegger, as for Kierkegaard, "purity of heart is to will one thing."

5. As I pointed out, *resolve* becomes actual only in concrete *decisions*. Does decision, if it is not to collapse into meaningless arbitrariness or spontaneity, require some measure? Where do we find that measure?

6. Does authenticity not require that we give that measure to ourselves? This is related to the Kantian notion of autonomy. But Heidegger cannot appeal to pure reason. Is the formal unity of the self we get in *Being and Time* sufficient to give us the required measure? Needed, I claimed, is a schematization of that formal self.

7. "To give the law to oneself is the highest freedom" Heidegger writes in the *Rektoratsrede*.

8. But what sense does this Kantian understanding of authenticity make given the context of *Being and Time*? Any such law, it would seem there, has to be drawn from the authentically interpreted past. But how are we to understand such interpretation?

9. Heidegger understands resoluteness as fidelity to self and respect for the repeatable possibilities that are part of one's inheritance:

> Resolutenes constitutes the *loyalty* of existence to its own Self. As resoluteness which is ready for *anxiety*, this loyalty is at the same time a possible way of receiving **the sole authority which a free existing can have—of revering the repeatable possibilities of existence**. (BT 443/SZ 391, (emphasis added)

But does the past speak with one voice?

10. The need for an *interpretation* of the past, interpretation that, given that Dasein is essentially with others, would have to be at the same time a communal spiritual legislation.

11. The need for the creator, the poet, statesman, leader, who by interpreting our past for us, lets us find in it our *hero*, who in this sense will tell us who we are.

12. Such talk of the creator lets us think of Nietzsche's relationship to Wagner. *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Wagner in Bayreuth* suggest parallels to Heidegger and invite us to ask: in what sense did Hitler, and in what sense did Hölderlin become Heidegger's hero?

At this point we may do well to remember Lyotard's invocation of the sublime, which can also appeal to Heidegger's analysis of the essential uncanniness of Dasein, its *Unheimlichkeit*. But does this not mean that in the face of Heidegger's call for leaders, we must be on guard? We should not forget the statement that in the *Spiegel-Gespräch* he says he could no longer make, could not even have made in 1934, but which he *did* make in the fall of 1933;

> Nicht Lehrsätze und Ideen seien die Regeln eures Seins. Der Führer selbst und allein ist die heutige und künftige deutsche Wirklichkeit und ihr Gesetz (*G*16, 184)
>
> Not theorems and ideas should provide your being with rules. The leader himself and he alone is today and for the future German reality and its law.[210]

4

With this warning in mind let me return yet once more to the problem of our many-voiced inheritance: how are we to reduce the many strands of our past to one coherent story that allows us to affirm ourselves in our totality and authenticity? Resoluteness demands that these many voices be reduced to one. The problem we face here, as I pointed out, is not altogether unlike that Kant faced in an area that at first seems altogether unrelated to what now concerns us, namely in his analysis of the conditions of the possibility of experience. The problem he faced was that of bringing the manifold of experience under the transcendental unity of the apperception. Is there only one way in which such synthesis is to be achieved? In the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant seems to assume this—otherwise the empirical schematism would have received more attention. But does he have any right to do so? In the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant himself explicitly questions this assumption. But once that assumption is questioned, the problem of the genesis of empirical concepts must

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[210] Martin Heidegegr, *Reden und andere Zeugnisse, Gsamtausgabe* vol. 16, (Frankfurt am Mian: Klostermann, 2000), 16.

surface. How do they originate? By a reflective judgment, which in turn must have its ground in an aesthetic judgment. Pushing this point one can move from Kant towards views that argue that the work of the poetic imagination is a necessary condition of the possibility of experience**.** Only an artistic or poetic imagination establishes something like a world, as Heidegger came to insist.

Kant considers the work of such an imagination not a willful construction, but in an important sense a gift. The work of art invites understanding as a creation in response to something like an aesthetic idea, where, as a look at Schopenhauer suggests, Kant's aesthetic idea invites comparison with Plato's ideas, also with Hölderlin's divinities. In this sense one could say that every genuinely creative, measure-granting work of art gives word or shape to what transcends and yet grounds human work. It is difficult to get around the idea of a word-transcendent, subject-transcendent *logos*. It seems to be a necessary condition of authenticity. In the absence of such a word the temptation to fashion a work not in response to such a transcendent logos, but to a human need, is overwhelming.

Heidegger faces an analogous problem and an analogous temptation. And he proposes an analogous solution: the role Kant assigns to the imagination has its analogue in that assigned by Heidegger to poetry, to the work of art. In "The Origin of the Work of Art" Heidegger discusses thus the work of art as setting up a world and as presentation of the earth. As a setting up of a world the work of art has inevitably also an ethical and a political function:

> It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers 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. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from this and in this expanse does the nation first return to itself for the fulfillment of its vocation.[211]

This might appear to call for a subordination of the world of politics to that of art, of the statesman to the artist, but such a reading is at least put into question by a passage like the following:

> One essential way in which truth establishes itself in the beings it has opened up is truth setting itself into work. Another way in which truth occurs is the act that founds a political state.[212]

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[211] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 42; "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 31.

[212] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 62; "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 50.

Like the work of the art, the work of the statesman is to be understood as one way in which truth happens. Here we should keep in mind that Heidegger uses "truth" to refer both to what has been uncovered and to the uncovering. The latter is said to ground the former and thus to be more fundamentally true. But all uncovering presupposes being-in-a-world, which Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, calls true in a still more fundamental sense (BT 262–263/*SZ* 220). Truth happens as the establishment of world. That the work of the statesman must be thought of as such an establishment is only briefly mentioned in "The Origin of the Work of Art." But that this is not just a passing observation is brought out by the contemporary *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The polis there is discussed as not just another work, but as *the* work, which maintains and preserves the others.

5

Earlier I distinguished a **material** from a **formal** transcendence. In the former case what is transcended is precisely that linguistic or conceptual space in which things must find their place if they are to be understood and comprehended. "Material transcendence" points in the same direction as the Kantian "thing-in-itself," which is present to us only as appearance. What invites talk of a thing in itself is the fact that, even if constituted by our language or concepts and as such appearance, what thus appears is not created by our understanding, but given. Inseparable from our experience of things is a sense of this "gift," an awareness that our understanding is finite, and that means also that the reach of our words is limited. Everything real is infinitely complex and thus can never be fully translated into words. Like Kant's "aesthetic idea," it is "inexponible." The rift between thing and word, between reality and language cannot be closed. Speaking that refuses to recognize this rift must degenerate into idle talk.

Language opens human beings to reality. Yet, as Heidegger emphasized, language conceals even as it reveals. Where this essential concealment is forgotten, language cannot but replace reality with a false, merely linguistic reality—and that holds also for religious reality. This is why I would claim that religion cannot dispense with art if it is to live. To be sure, human being is essentially a dwelling in language. But the house of language may not become a prison. Art may be understood as a way of opening the windows of that house, and that goes also for poetry, which should not be understood as a speaking that is privileged in that it offers particularly effective descriptions of things, but rather as speaking that re-presents the essence of

language in such a way that it becomes conspicuous, and that means a speaking that opens up the rift between language and reality, between world and earth, that is essential to language.[213]

What puts us in touch with material transcendence, this transcendence within the visible, within the sensible, is first of all the body. Here it is important to keep in mind that the embodied self is also a caring, desiring self. What it discloses is not just an assemblage of mute facts, but an inevitably meaningful configuration of objects of desire or things to be avoided. To be in the world is to be claimed in countless different ways by persons and things. What I call material transcendence may thus not be reduced to the mute presence of things. To be open to it is inevitably to be affected, moved, claimed. There is a sense in which material transcendence speaks to us, partakes of logos. Material transcendence thus also refers to the affective base without which all our talk of values and divinities is ultimately groundless: idle talk.

In this sense material transcendence seems to me a necessary, but not sufficient condition for what may be called "sacred transcendence."[214] What it lacks is precisely that "unique power of integration" that Louis Dupré takes to be a defining attribute of the sacred. Sacred transcendence is material transcendence experienced as possessing an integrating power. To experience some particular as possessing such integrative power invites talk of divinity. This is how Heidegger understands the Greek temple's world establishing, where "world" does not mean a collection of mute facts but an order that assigns to persons and things their proper places:

> In setting up the work the holy is opened up as holy and god is invoked into the openness of his presence. Praise belongs to dedication as doing honor to the dignity and splendor of the god. Dignity and splendor are not properties beside and behind which the god, too, stands as something distinct, but it is rather in the dignity, in the splendor, that the god is present. In the reflected glory of this splendor there glows, i.e. there lightens itself what we called world.[215]

In his discussion Heidegger links the world establishing of what he calls "great art" to an openness, not just to what I have called material transcendence, to the earth, but to the holy: only the latter allows for the setting up of a world.

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213 Karsten Harries, "Poetry as Response. Heidegger's Step Beyond Aestheticism," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 16, *Philosophy and the Arts* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1991), 73–88.

214 See Louis Dupré, "The Sacred as a Particular Category of Transcendence" in *Transcendent Selfhood*, 19–22.

215 Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 44; “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” 33..

But does Heidegger not understand our age, with Hölderlin, as the destitute age, the age when "great art, together with its nature, has departed from among men,"[216] had to depart because the now ruling sense of reality makes our finite understanding the measure of reality and thus has to obscure what Heidegger calls the "earth" and what I have called "material transcendence," which in turn is a presupposition of what I called "sacred transcendence"? Much art today continues to struggle to keep human beings open to this elusive dimension, without claiming the integrative power needed to establish a world in Heidegger's sense. But without such openness, without the experience of a positive transcendence, religious discourse has to degenerate into idle talk. To keep itself thus open, religion must turn to art. Religion needs art to preserve a sense of the sacred and thus to preserve itself. To say only one God, instead of only gods, can save us, is to call not just for integrating centers, but for a sacred transcendent able to gather Dasein in its entirety, despite all the different directions in which we are pulled, into a whole.

6

Let us turn now to our second pointer. Let me repeat it here:

> My thinking has an essential connection to Hölderlin's poetry. But I do not think that Hölderlin is just any poet, whose work is a subject, among many others, for literary historians. I think Hölderlin is the poet who points toward the future, who expects the god, and who therefore cannot remain simply a subject for Hölderlin research in the literary historical imagination.

I already raised the question whether such a claim of an essential relationship between his thinking and Hölderlin's poetry places Heidegger's own thinking outside philosophy. That is indeed the case, as the Spiegel interview makes quite clear. Consider the context in which the statement "only a God can save us" was made:

> HEIDEGGER: Those questions bring us back to the beginning of our conversation. If I may answer quickly and perhaps somewhat vehemently, but from long reflection: Philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world. This is true not only of philosophy but of all merely human meditations and endeavors. Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god. (56-57)

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[216] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 79; "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes," 66..

Heidegger denies philosophy or reason the ability to provide the needed world orientation. Philosophy should not claim to be able to establish a binding Weltanschauung. Such a Weltanschauung requires a different foundation:

> SPIEGEL: You just said philosophy and the individual can do nothing except…
>
> HEIDEGGER: ... this preparation of readiness for keeping oneself open to the arrival or absence of the god. The experience of this absence is not nothing, but rather a liberation of human beings from what I called the "fallenness into beings" in *Being and Time.* A contemplation of what is today is a part of a preparation of the readiness we have been talking about.
>
> SPIEGEL: But then there really would have to be the famous impetus from outside, from a god or whomever. So thinking, of its own accord and self- sufficiently, can no longer be effective today? It was, in the opinion of people in the past, and even, I believe, in our opinion.
>
> HEIDEGGER: But not directly.
>
> SPIEGEL: We have already named Kant, Hegel, and Marx as great movers. But impulses came from Leibniz, too—for the development of modern physics and therefore for the origin of the modern world in general. We believe you said just now that you do not expect such an effect today any more.
>
> HEIDEGGER: No longer in the sense of philosophy. The role philosophy has played up to now has been taken over by the sciences today. To sufficiently clarify the "effect" of thinking, we must have a more in-depth discussion of what effect and effecting can mean here. For this, careful differentiations need to be made between cause, impulse, support, assistance, hindrance, and cooperation. But we can only gain the appropriate dimension to make these differentiations if we have sufficiently discussed the principle of sufficient reason. Philosophy dissolves into the individual sciences: psychology, logic, political science.
>
> SPIEGEL: And what takes the place of philosophy now?
>
> HEIDEGGER: Cybernetics.
>
> SPIEGEL: Or the pious one who remains open?
>
> HEIDEGGER: But that is no longer philosophy.
>
> SPIEGEL: What is it then?
>
> HEIDEGGER: I call it the other thinking. (58-59)

This "other thinking" is presumably open to the gift of Being as philosophy is not.

> SPIEGEL: We understand that very well. But because we do not live three hundred years from now, but here and now, we are denied silence. We, politicians, semi-politicians, citizens, journalists, et cetera, we constantly have to make some sort of decision or other. We must adapt ourselves to the system under which we live, must try to change it, must watch for the narrow door to reform and for the still narrower door to revolution. We expect help from the philosopher, even if, of course, only indirect help, help in roundabout ways. And now we hear: I cannot help you.
>
> HEIDEGGER: I cannot.
>
> SPIEGEL: That has to discourage the nonphilosopher.

> HEIDEGGER: I cannot because the questions are so difficult that it would be contrary to the meaning of this task of thinking to make public appearances, to preach, and to distribute moral grades. Perhaps I may risk this statement: The secret of the planetary predominance of the unthought essence of technology corresponds to the preliminariness and inconspicuousness of the thinking that attempts to reflect upon this unthought essence.
> SPIEGEL: You do not count yourself among those who, if they would only be heard, could point out a path?
> HEIDEGGER: No! I know of no path toward a direct change of the present state of the world, assuming that such a change is at all humanly possible. But it seems to me that the attempted thinking could awaken, clarify, and fortify the readiness we have already mentioned. *f*(58-59)

What is philosophy? Heidegger links it to the origin of science. Let me return for yet one last time to the *Rektoratsred*e:

> If we want to grasp the essence of science, we must first face the decisive question: Should there still be science for us in the future, or should we let it drift toward a rapid end? It is never unconditionally necessary that science should be at all. But if there should be science and if it should be for us and through us, then under what condition can it truly exist?
>
> Only if we again place ourselves under the power of the beginning of our spiritual-historical existence. This beginning is the departure, the setting out, of Greek philosophy. Here, for the first time, Western man rises up, from a base in a popular culture [*Volkstum*] and by means of his language, against the totality of what is and questions and comprehends it as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it knows and wills it—or not. All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy. From it science draws the strength of its essence, assuming that it still remains at all equal to this beginning. (6)

Science is born of a rebellion against our immersion in the world. We are more than plants rooted in the ground. Ever since Plato philosophers have dreamed of flying.

> Here we want to regain two distinguishing properties of the original Greek essence of science for our existence.
>
> An old story was told among the Greeks that Prometheus had been the first philosopher. Aeschylus has this Prometheus utter a saying that expresses the essence of knowing:
>
> "Knowing, however, is far weaker than necessity." That means that all knowing about things has always already been surrendered to the predominance of destiny and fails before it.
>
> Precisely because of this, knowing must unfold its highest defiance. Only then will the entire power of the concealedness [*Verborgenheit*] of what is rise up and knowing will really fail. In this way, what is opens itself in its unfathomable inalterability and lends knowing its truth. In this Greek saying on the creative impotence of knowledge, one all too readily hopes to find a prototype for a knowing that is based purely on itself, when actually such knowing has forgotten its own essence. This knowing is interpreted for us as the "theoretical" attitude. But what does [*theoría*] mean to the Greeks? It is said: pure contemplation, which only remains bound to the

> matter in question and all that it is and demands. This contemplative behavior is said, with reference to the Greeks, to be pursued for its own sake. But this reference is mistaken. For on the one hand, "theory" is not pursued for its own sake, but only in the passion to remain close to and under the pressure of what is. On the other, the Greeks fought precisely to comprehend and carry out this contemplative questioning as one, indeed as the highest, mode of human [*énérgeia*], of human "being-at-work." (7)
>
> Science is the questioning standing of one's ground in the midst of the constantly self-concealing totality of what is. This active perseverance knows about its impotence in the face of destiny. (8)

Heidegger locates the origin of science in an uprising, a rebellion. The human being raises himself, stands up, elevates himself above himself. But this *Aufstand* also means an ever deepening loss of place. We could also speak of a loss of the earth or of the rule of technology. In the *Spiegel* Interview Heidegger joins the two:

> SPIEGEL: It is striking that throughout time human beings have been unable to master their tools; look at the magician's apprentice. Is it not somewhat too pessimistic to say that we will not be able to master this certainly much greater tool of modern technology?
>
> HEIDEGGER: Pessimism, no. Pessimism and optimism are positions that fall too short of the realm we are attempting to reflect upon here. But above all modern technology is not a "tool," and it no longer has anything to do with tools.
>
> SPIEGEL: Why should we be so overpowered by technology...?
>
> HEIDEGGER: I do not say overpowered. I say we have no path that corresponds to the essence of technology as of yet.
>
> SPIEGEL: One could naïvely object: What do we have to come to terms with here? Everything functions. More and more electric power plants are being built. Production is flourishing. People in the highly technological parts of the earth are well provided for. We live in prosperity. What is really missing here?
>
> HEIDEGGER: Everything functions. That is exactly what is uncanny. Everything functions and the functioning drives us further and further to more functioning, and technology tears people away and uproots them from the earth more and more. I don't know if you are scared; I was certainly scared when I recently saw the photographs of the earth taken from the moon. We don't need an atom bomb at all; the uprooting of human beings is already taking place. We only have purely technological conditions left. It is no longer an earth on which human beings live today. I recently had a long conversation with René Char in Provence—as you know, the poet and Resistance fighter. Rocket bases are being built in Provence, and the country is being devastated in an incredible way. The poet, who certainly cannot be suspected of sentimentality or a glorification of the idyllic, said to me that the uprooting of human beings which is going on now is the end if thinking and poetry do not acquire nonviolent power once again. (55–56)

Was Hölderlin such a poet? I remind you of the penultimate stanza of Patmos: Though invisible and his temples seized and his glory blown away by the storms of time, God still lives. And in the thundering sky, stands the rainbow of hope.

Our task is to return to the earth. Return home also in the linguistic sense, to a language that opens up the rift between world and earth. Whatever can save us must come to us as a gift, it cannot be constructed by us.

7

Let me conclude with some onto-theological reflections. There would seem to be today no compelling transcendental or theological consideration that points the way to Heidegger's *Geviert* ("fourfold"). Didn't Heidegger himself say that the shape of our age, this age of the world-picture, has obscured the *Geviert*? His own untimely talk—untimely in Nietzsche's sense (I am thinking of the *Untimely Meditations*)—of *die einigen Vier: Erde und Himmel, die Göttlichen und die Sterblichen* is the nostalgic complement to his understanding of our modern world, a world shaped by science and technology, as the *verwahrloste Welt*, the world ruled by the *Ge-Stell*. As I pointed out, it is only to be expected, that ruled as our world is by the *Ge-Stell* we will have difficulty making sense of Heidegger's *Geviert* and the understanding of the thing that supports it. Heidegger presupposes an ideal of human existence that seems almost impossible to realize in our world. At bottom this is still the same ideal that Heidegger understood once as the "freie Selbstübernahme des ganzen Daseins," as "the free assumption of responsibility for Dasein in its entirety." Once it let him understand philosophy as the "mortal enemy" (*Todfeind*) of faith, that faith in which every theology has its ground. But the more resolute the attempt to assume responsibility for Dasein in its entirety, the more questionable the entirety that is being presupposed here has to become, and the more insistent the insight that such a free assumption of responsibility for Dasein in its entirety demands that freedom be bound by something like faith. Heidegger's path is indeed a path that leads from theology to philosophy and back to theology, to be sure a theology that, without the old faith, presents itself to us as an interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry and as talk of the *Geviert*.

I called your attention to the way Heidegger, in his "A Dialogue on Language," calls "the relation between the word of Scripture and theological-speculative thinking" that agitated

him when he was still a student of theology[217] the same relation, even if then still "veiled and inaccessible" to him, that was to occupy him later as the relation between language and Being. This statement linking philosophy and theology may seem surprising, for in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger insisted that a world separated the Christian concept of *Logos*, which interprets *Logos* as a being, from that of Heraclitus, as Heidegger appropriated him, who understood Being as *Logos* and *Logos* as "primordial gathering," "*ursprüngliche Sammlung*"):[218] In the Old Testament *logos* is

> the name for the word … in the specific sense of the command, the order; *hoi deka logoi* are God's ten commandments (dekalogue). Thus *logos* means: the *keryx*, *angelos,* announcer, messenger who transmits commandments and orders. In the New Testament *Logos* means the son of God."[219]

The joining of theological and ontological thinking in Heidegger's conversation with his Japanese friend bridges thus the onto-theological difference. And when Heidegger says of his theological origin, origin always remains future, he poses for himself and for us the task of repeating this bridging and that is to say: poses a return to onto-theology as a task. The task is to find the bridge that leads from an understanding of Being as gathering (Heraclitus) to some concrete beings that we experience and that gathers us. It is this bridge that is the concealed goal of Heidegger's path.

The relation between the Word of Holy Scripture and theological thinking conceals, to Heidegger, the relation between being and language. In different, yet similar fashion, it also conceals the relation between divine and human logos. Again and again Heidegger thinks both being and language as logos, understood as "the always occurring gathering " of what is, of beings.[220] And when we read in *Being and Time* that "Discourse is existentially language"—i.e. beings, because Dasein, whose understanding it articulates, is essentially a being cast into in the world, a being-in-the world (*BT* 204/ SZ 161)—this, too, holds, and for the very same reason: the divine Logos has to descend into beings, has to become concrete and visible. God has to become flesh. Philosophy cannot comprehend such an incarnation. Even less can it cause it to occur. But it can show that at least as a demand such an incarnation is implicit already in Heidegger's

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217 Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 9–10.
218 Martin Heidegger, Einfürung in die Metaphysik,. Gesamtausgabe, vol. 40 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1983, 143. 141. Citations of this sort refer to Martin Heidegger, **[complete citation]**.
219 Ibid., 143.
220 Ibid., 139.

understanding of authenticity. In this sense already *Being and Time* can indeed be called, as Nietzsche called the philosophy of German idealism, a "*hinterlistige Theologie*," an "insidious theology", although we may want to question the pejorative adjective "insidious."