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HEIDEGGER AND THE QUESTION OF THE POLITICAL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis begins with the thought that politics today is in a kind of distress, and that Heidegger's thought can point toward ways of understanding this situation. Rather than offering another contribution to the theme, "Heidegger's philosophy and politics," it questions the apparent obviousness of the concepts of politics and philosophy. The thesis asks about the grounds of politics, and argues that Heidegger's thought can help illuminate the ancient and contemporary interweaving of the political with the philosophical.

Two lecture courses, concerned with Greek texts, are read closely. The first is Heidegger's lecture course of the winter semester of 1924–25 (*Platon: Sophistes*). This course begins with Heidegger's most extended discussion of Aristotle, and of the relation between *phronesis* and *sophia*. It has been argued that Heidegger "privileges" *sophia*, and that this "Platonic bias" has a direct connection with his politics in the 1930s. It is argued in this thesis, however, that *phronesis* contains a more important relation to Heidegger's work, although in the end he is concerned with the *limits* of both *phronesis* and *sophia*. When Heidegger turns to the main part of the lecture course on Plato's *Sophist*, it is not in order to *privilege* being or philosophy, but rather in order to argue that "existence in the *polis*" draws Plato toward grasping the necessary interweaving of being and *non*-being.

The second lecture course is from the summer semester of 1942 (*Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"*). It offers Heidegger's most extended consideration of the *polis* and the political. It is argued that what Heidegger means by the *polis* is the "site of being" only in the sense of being the locus of the interplay of being and non-being. In this thesis I take Heidegger's reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* to be a meditation upon the relation between law and sovereignty. The interpretation of *Antigone* turns on whether any foundation of politics can be represented as such. This problem unsettles any concept of politics, including democratic politics. With Hölderlin's "poetizing," Heidegger suggests the possibility that "democracy" can neither abide with nor overcome the problem of sovereignty.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
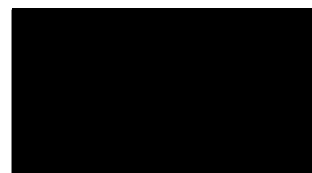
Daniel Ross.

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I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of my friends and family in the production of this thesis, and especially to ackowledge the generosity of my supervisor, Dr. Michael Janover, without whose patience and wisdom this thesis would not have been possible.

Note on References and Terminology

References given in footnotes are in general and where possible to English editions. German texts and editions consulted can be found in the Bibliography. The exception is Heidegger's *Sei und Zeit*. In this case, all footnotes refer to the German pagination, reflecting the fact that there are now two English translations, both of which include the German pagination in any case. Responsibility for all translations from German lies with the author. When Greek texts are referred to, the traditional numbering system is used for Plato and Aristotle, and the usual (Loeb) line numbering is used for Sophocles and Aeschylus. Editions and translations consulted can be found in the Bibliography.

With regard to Heideggerian terminology, "*Sein*" is translated as "being" without capitalization, and "Da-sein," which will remain untranslated throughout, will always be hyphenated, following Heidegger's instructions for later editions of *Sein und Zeit*.

INTRODUCTION

> *"It is imperative.*
> *It is even the imperative of imperatives.*
> *One is to begin—so says this imperative—by turning to the things*
> *themselves."* John Sallis.[1]

Imperative, beginning, the things themselves. A sequence of three, then, yet not necessarily an ordered sequence. Is it possible to speak of what comes first in this sequence? In the way it is formulated here, the imperative seems to come before the beginning, if such a thing is possible. But what is begun according to this imperative, that is, the turn to the things themselves, itself seems to imply that the things themselves are there first of all. The beginning, then, would be what comes at the end of this sequence. From the things themselves, to the imperative that directs to the things themselves, to the beginning of what is begun by the imperative. What is being spoken about, therefore, is what comes before the beginning, and what gets beginning going. What remains ambiguous, however, is whether speaking in such a way is already to have begun, or whether it is to pause before the beginning, to introduce the beginning, whatever that would mean. To find oneself speaking would seem to imply already having begun to speak, to already be within or after the beginning. The imperative, and the things themselves, would then simply be what is there before beginning, before beginning to respond to the imperative to turn to the things themselves.

The imperative being spoken about here, of course, seems specifically to be the imperative of phenomenology. It is thus an imperative not of a branch of philosophy, perhaps, but of an idea of philosophy, or of a concept of method for pursuing those questions claimed by philosophy. The imperative of phenomenology is to begin by turning to the things themselves. If we cannot reduce this to the organizing principle of a branch of knowledge, nevertheless we can at least give an historical account of the origin of this imperative. It is an imperative that begins with the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl and is thought again in another way in the work of Martin Heidegger. It is the imperative to do the work of phenomenology.

[1] John Sallis, "Daydream," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 (1998), p. 397.

The imperative in question, then, had its own beginning. And this beginning was the thought that philosophy had in a sense lost its way, had given itself other imperatives that lead to other beginnings. Rather than turning to the things themselves, for example, philosophy had sometimes begun with the problem of "who" is thinking, or "how" thinking *knows* what it thinks. With such thoughts, philosophy gave itself the imperative to begin with the difference between "subject" and "object." Even this imperative, however, was itself a consequence and a translation of an earlier beginning, that began with the difference between what is sensible and what is intelligible. That philosophy loses its way seems then to have its beginning in Plato, even though "the thing itself" (*to pragma auto*) is itself a reference from Plato. From its Husserlian beginning onwards, then, phenomenology was the thought of a *need* for *another* beginning. And the source of this need was the thought that with this distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, with "metaphysics," the things themselves had been forgotten.

Heidegger had to come to the phenomenological imperative along a certain path, but by 1924 Heidegger was well and truly a phenomenologist. So during the 1924–25 lecture course at the University of Marburg, for example, Heidegger explicitly formulates the phenomenological imperative:

> Now an introduction into phenomenology does not take place by reading phenomenological literature and noting what is established therein. What is required is not a knowledge of positions and opinions. In that way, phenomenology would be misunderstood from the very outset. Rather, concrete work on the matters themselves must be the way to gain an understanding of phenomenology [*Vielmehr muß konkrete Arbeit an den Sachen der Weg sein, auf dem ein Verstandnis der Phänomenologie zu gewinnen ist*].[2]

Again, the phenomenological imperative comes out of what it is not. The way to the phenomenological imperative is shown, has its beginning, through a sense of the wrong ways that could be or have been taken. Rather than knowledge or opinion, phenomenology is a matter of concrete work, work that concretely pursues the things themselves. Already, however, an opposition is forming itself between the way that pursues knowledge and opinion, and the way that works concretely, that goes to what is itself concrete, *die Sachen*. Such a distinction itself seems to at least mime the metaphysical distinction between sensible and intelligible, between what is something in itself and what is merely something apprehensible in thought. Is it possible to avoid the suspicion that the phenomenological imperative, precisely as the imperative of phenomenological *Wissenschaft*, excludes metaphysics at the same time as confirming it?

[2] Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 6–7.

It is not a question of refuting the phenomenological imperative, but rather of liberating it from phenomenology itself. This too will *become* Heidegger's task. The imperative to begin by turning to the things themselves is not an imperative *of* phenomenology. Rather, one beginning begun by this imperative is the beginning of phenomenology. But this does not exhaust the imperative to turn to the things themselves. Even in 1924, when Heidegger appears to be decidedly within phenomenology, the imperative to turn to the things themselves immediately becomes a matter of "science and life" being "brought to a decision."[3] What is at stake is not the possibility of being educated as a phenomenologist, but rather the possibility that, in turning to the things themselves, a decision about existence will emerge for the one turned. Even in 1924, then, there is a sense in which this imperative escapes the phenomenological.

Can this imperative be applied to the political? Politics, certainly, exists, but the political thing itself is enigmatic. It is not immediately obvious that any phenomenological reduction would bring the political thing itself into appearance and availability for description. The tendency, perhaps, is to resort to phrases such as, on the one hand, human plurality and human difference or, on the other hand, human togetherness and community. The political "itself" appears at first thought to be itself divided between division and unity. This division of the political "itself" seems to threaten the existence of the thing itself, in the sense that it tends toward an amalgam of contradictory elements. The second thought is then to combine these elements, to mix them together, with phrases that grasp for the political thing as, for example, a "community of difference." The political itself then seems to refer either to some kind of balance of opposing elements, or else to an unstable, unorderable imbalance of elements. Thus even this combination of elements leaves the political itself divided between "interpretations" of the "fact" of this entwinement of opposing elements. The political is then the relation between "balance" and what interferes with balance, between "harmony" and "chaos," "order" and "disorder."

Such a method seems to depend on the possibility for *language*, for making statements, to approach the political thing itself and have it show itself. A relation is already presupposed between the thing itself and language as the means of exhibiting the thing itself. Language is the means, the "middle," between the thing itself and its apprehension. This is the presupposition of phenomenology. Appearance depends upon the understanding of the relation between the thing itself and its availability for description in language. But when what is in question is

3 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

the political, it is possible that language "itself" is immediately involved in the fact of the thing in question. If the political is a kind of being-in-between separation and unification, being-in-between orderability and disorder, then it may turn out that the political is a thing *from out of* the fact of language. The question of the relation *of* language to the exhibition of the thing itself may then turn out to be secondary to the way in which language itself is grasped as giving the very possibility of the existence of the political. It may turn out that there is no more to the political than the interpretation and translation of two phrases from Aristotle, interpreted and translated in themselves, *and* in their relation to each other—*zoon politikon* and *zoon logon echon*.

Or it may turn out that language, rather than constituting the possibility of the political, is what *prevents* and *prohibits* the political from appearing. It may turn out that the very thought that language is what *exhibits* the political thing is already to have determined the political in such a way as to have lost and abandoned the political. Perhaps thinking that language can *give* access to the political is already to have determined the political "metaphysically," as, for instance, the "relation" between "theory" and "practice," or "thought" and "action," or in terms of the relation between an "ideal" and its "realization." Perhaps "language" blocks access to the political itself, or perhaps the political thing opens out from the *fact* of blocked access, from the fact of a kind of *im*possibility of finding a way through. Such a possibility would seem to take the imperative to turn to the political thing itself away from any possibility of being *included within* phenomenology. The question of the political would then need to be addressed prior to any phenomenology.

Such thoughts bring the question of the political into the orbit of the thought of Heidegger. There is nothing immediately obvious about this, as Heidegger never appeared to offer a "political philosophy," nor to indicate that his work held great political significance. And, of course, to the extent that Heidegger's "own" politics related to his thought, this would at the very least seem to indicate a great *error* in thought, that his thought must somehow have lost its way. If it was possible for someone to ask Heidegger when he was going to write an "ethics," then it must surely have been equally possible to ask when he was going to address politics.

Of course, Heidegger's politics remains as a problem for thought, a problem that should not be forgotten. Work has been done—and much work remains to be done—to understand the relations between Heidegger's politics and this thought. It is certainly impossible to approach the question of the political through Heidegger's thought without also approaching the questions raised by the decisions Heidegger

took during the period of National Socialism and its aftermath. Nevertheless this does not indicate that the most fruitful approach is *necessarily* to thematize Heidegger's "politics" first of all, to try to solve this problem before pursuing other questions. Nor is it clear that the best way is to treat Heidegger's work as a marshland to be drained of its political, ideological, or mythological elements, so as to leave behind the proper soil of philosophical substance, if any should remain.

Yet there is also a sense in which this is the very procedure adopted here. The attempt here is to approach the question of the political as it appears in the thought of Heidegger. This is not a matter of purifying Heidegger's thought of political accretions first of all, in order subsequently to expose what remains. Nevertheless, it *is* an explicit attempt to approach what remains in Heidegger's thought that still has something to tell us about the political. It is an attempt to *find out* what there is in Heidegger's work that cannot simply be disposed of. As such, this attempt to find out risks finding out that it is itself simply an *invention*, a discovery of what is "in" Heidegger that works by "artificially" leaving out what is *also* there, obviously enough, to be found. In this sense, it may often be the case that what is found *here* contradicts but does not rule out other and opposed findings. It is not a matter of locating the "true" substance of Heidegger's thought, but of following a vein of thought that perhaps continues to hold promise.

There is no attempt here to "survey" Heidegger's thought in any kind of complete sense. The possibility of distilling an essence of Heideggerianism is explicitly ruled out. The multiplicity of paths taken and abandoned by Heidegger makes difficult any kind of clear schema for the "development" of his thought. There is no doubt that when Heidegger changes direction, he also "keeps" what he leaves behind, just as there is no doubt that Heidegger's later "advances" are frequently able to be found in an anticipatory way in his earlier work. The differing moments to be found in Heidegger's thought from its beginning to its end remain constantly in a kind of "dialogue" with each other. This is indicated, for example, by the "prefaces" and "postfaces" Heidegger frequently added to subsequent editions of important texts.

Two of Heidegger's lecture courses will be read, one prior to and one following the publication of *Sein und Zeit*, one prior to and one following the advent of National Socialism. They are the lecture course of 1924–25 at the University of Marburg, published in 1992 as *Platon: Sophistes*, and the lecture course of 1942 at the University of Freiburg, published in 1984 as *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister."* The first lecture course interprets Aristotle and Plato; the second interprets Hölderlin and Sophocles. The first of these lecture courses will be read in a way that follows Heidegger's "reverse" sequence, beginning with his long excursus on Aristotle's ethics, and then reading his account of Plato's *Sophist*. The second course will be

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read "outwards" from the centre. Heidegger's few pages on the Greek *polis* are examined, and subsequent chapters follow his reading of Sophocles and finally Friedrich Hölderlin.

A difference between the two courses immediately reveals itself, a movement from the "philosophical" tradition to the "artistic" or "poetic" tradition. There is therefore immediately a temptation to try to draw conclusions about the significance of this "difference" for Heidegger's politics. Yet is this significance that the concern for the "poetic" indicates a loss of philosophical rigor, and hence a fall into an aestheticized politics; or is it rather that the "overvalorization" of philosophy is responsible for Heidegger's political error, and that the *turn* to another kind of thinking is the *response* to this error? It is necessary to affirm this "difference" without thereby imagining that with it everything has been "explained," nor that the difference is absolute. What must also be affirmed is what joins these lecture courses together in terms of a "continuity" of thought. And this will also mean seeing *both* courses in terms of the light they shed on *Sein und Zeit*, and the light shed upon them *by Sein und Zeit*.

One thread followed here is the notion that what must be retrieved from Heidegger is the thought that the question of being is immediately and pervasively intertwined with the problem of non-being. The question of being is also, and nothing other than, the question of non-being. This point is perhaps both too simple and too obvious, yet forgetting it is one way in which it has been possible to misinterpret Heidegger's work. Remembering this point means seeing that Heidegger's thought is always of *finite* existence, and that this finitude is the "ground" of *possibility* and *existence*. Turning to the political in Heidegger means trying to grasp *how* the problem of being and non-being transform the question of the political such that it can no longer be contained within the "metaphysical" distinction between the sensible and the intelligible. Yet this does not indicate that it would be possible to approach the political in a way that escapes metaphysics, for it may be that "non-being" in its entwinement with being is the very fact that means that all approaches to the political involve the trace of the metaphysical. And what this will also mean is that the political is immediately a question of beginnings, and of the impossibility of beginnings, of imperatives and the impossibility of imperatives. If the political is a question from *before* metaphysics, then it will be necessary to ask whether and how the political has a beginning, and whether and how the political is itself the response to an imperative.

Chapter One introduces the problem of the relation between the discourses of philosophy and politics, by postulating the *possibility* that philosophy may be

unable properly to pursue the political. This hypothesis is followed in order to examine the conditions for any approach to the political through language. The political is the name for the problem of "community," of the community of discourse, and the community of the "we." At stake in the political is the relation between any "we" and the positing or presupposing of the "we." Yet if the political can thereby be formulated as an aporia, there remains the risk that "politics" will then be nothing other than the suspension or interruption of positing, and that it will never be possible to translate from this aporetic thought *to* politics.

Chapter Two begins by placing in question the thought that politics exceeds philosophy in the sense that politics is not only theory but *also* action. Heidegger has been criticized for misreading Aristotle's account of the relation between theory and praxis, and for "forgetting" the place of *phronesis* in Aristotle's thought. This is challenged through a reading of the opening excursus of Heidegger's 1924–25 lecture course. In fact, the Aristotelian conception of *phronesis* is central to the development of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, yet *phronesis* is also transformed in the course of its "translation" into the terms Heidegger will develop in *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger also demonstrates that *already* for Aristotle *sophia* "recedes" in the face of two "facts": the mortality of Da-sein, and the impossibility for *logos* to find passage through to the *archai* as such.

Chapter Three begins with both an account of "facticity" in Heidegger and an account of the facticity of "Greece." Da-sein is both more than it factually is yet nothing other than what it is, and between this "more than" and this "nothing other" lies, once again, the problem of negation. Plato's *Sophist* is described by Heidegger as a way into the problem of non-being and its relation to *logos*. The sophist is the figure that exposes that the "not" is disclosive, and who exposes the fact that *logos* is *pragma* in the mode of *praxis*. Heidegger indulges in a curious reversal of the traditional translation of Plato that can only be understood from out of the "praxical" conception of *logos*. It is not that non-being is the ground of the possibility for the sophist to be deceptive, but rather that deception, the possibility of going awry, of being lead astray, is the possibility for being false. This offers a hint toward Heidegger's later account of Greek existence, which, already in 1924, is described as always being an existence *within* the *polis*.

Chapter Four approaches "Heidegger's politics" directly through reading the rectorate address of 1933, yet also obliquely, in the sense that the address is a point of departure that only returns to Heidegger at the end of an extended reading of Walter Benjamin's "Zur Kritik der Gewalt." Although the rectorate address engages in an apparent "mixing" of philosophy and politics, the address also frames itself as *after* the first and *last* philosophers, Prometheus and Nietzsche. Heidegger's "voluntarist" statement that the highest freedom is to give oneself the law is

investigated by pursuing Benjamin's enigmatic argument that non-violent settlement of conflict is possible. This in turn is related to Benjamin's distinction between "mythological violence" and "divine violence." Prometheus perhaps occupies a kind of median position between these two violences, in a way that suggests that the story of the first philosopher might be something other than the founding myth of politics.

Chapter Five begins with the enigma of National Socialism, and with the danger that this enigma can be interpreted in a way that grounds "ethics" in the utterly unethical other. Against Simon Critchley, it is argued that Jean-Luc Nancy's attempt to rethink the ground of politics cannot be reduced to a ground in an ethics of justice and absolute injustice. An outline of the "retreat of the political" described by Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe is presented, in order to draw parallels with Heidegger's account of the *polis* in his 1942 lecture course. The *polis*, according to Heidegger, cannot be any kind of model for politics, and cannot be grasped according to a "concept" of the political at all. The *polis* was what remained worthy of question for the Greeks, yet it is only today, after the withdrawal of the *polis* in the face of "politics," that the *polis* becomes available for another questioning. The *polis* must be understood as both the "pole" and the "swirl" or "eddy." Rather than constituting an "ontological" or "Platonic" anti-politics, this account of the *polis* is an account of the "site" of the human entanglement with non-being, where existence is at stake and in play.

Chapter Six begins by relating Derrida's account of confirmation as "iterability" to Heidegger's account of confirmation as "discovering" the thing in its self-sameness. The problem of confirmation is thereby related to an "aporetic" need for law to *stand*, and Sophocles' *Antigone* is considered in terms of a "staging" of the aporia of law. Heidegger discussed *Antigone* in 1935, but his return to the tragedy in 1942 is notable for displaying a previously absent concern for the figure of Antigone herself. Antigone figures the impossibility of beginnings or, rather, as Heidegger translates it, she commences in pursuit of the impossible. Heidegger translates Antigone's words as stating that *her* actions are determined from *beyond* Zeus and Dike, that is, beyond all blood- and death-ties. Heidegger's interpretation of the tragedy re-stages in the figure of Antigone the aporia of law, and makes difficult any attempt to reduce Heidegger's "politics" in this course to any kind of theologico-politics grounded in "being" or in the sovereignty of the exception.

Chapter Seven begins by differentiating a "restricted" from a "general" sense of democracy, where the latter indicates the most general formulation of the sovereignty of "the people." Schmitt's critique in 1933 of the "binarism" of liberal conceptions of democracy is presented, in order then to refigure the "idea" of democracy as a threefold political articulation. In the idea of democracy, it is

argued, the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of law is mediated or "carried" by the sovereignty of democracy *as such*. This "idea" is contrasted with another possible thought of democracy, where democracy is no longer an idea but rather is "poetizing democracy." Heidegger's account of Hölderlin's poetizing is thus interpreted in relation to this other possibility for thinking democracy. Rather than offering an "ontological hypostasis" of the political, Heidegger's account of Hölderlin's poetizing is thought as an attempt to rethink the impossible conditions of "founding." Thus Heidegger's enigmatic analyses of Hölderlin's "Ister" hymn, and in particular of the structure of courage, forgetting, and hospitality, gesture toward a thought of "politics" as grounded in the possibility of a "not yet." The "poet" is not determined by Heidegger as the divine, sovereign, founder. Rather, just as Antigone is determined from beyond Zeus and Dike, so too the poet is both *between* the human (or the people) and the divine, and yet also *beyond* the gods. The poet is not the god, nor are the gods simply absent, but the poem builds a "staircase" for the *descent* of the gods. How we understand Heidegger's relation to the question of the political depends on how we understand this thought, taken from Hölderlin, of divine descent.

PART ONE. THE PHILOSOPHICO-POLITICAL, 1924: ARISTOTLE AND PLATO

Chapter One

Requesting Politics

Let us begin by imagining a person who makes the following statement: "Philosophy is not the discourse to tell us about politics." It is not difficult to imagine a *defense* of such a statement. Jacques Rancière says as much when he asks whether there *is* such a thing as political philosophy, whether political philosophy is not just the symptom of the attempt by philosophy to rid itself of politics, of the particular, extra-philosophical logic of politics, a logic of disagreement.[1] What could philosophy's response possibly be to the statement that it is constitutionally incapable of telling us about politics? Several predictable paths suggest themselves. Philosophy can ask for proofs or justifications, for the source or ground of such a statement. But such demands from philosophy are, precisely, philosophical demands, the demands to defend the truth of statement via the methods of philosophy. For the author of this statement, such demands are irrelevant, and only show the inability of the philosopher to think the truth of statements that lie beyond its bounds. The philosopher could argue that only by implicitly or explicitly referring to the claims of philosophy could anyone believe such a statement *was true*, or claim to know the *meaning* of such a statement. Only through philosophy could such a statement be uttered *self-consciously* or *reflectively*, and hence only through philosophy can it really be uttered at all. More than that, the very words and concepts employed in such a statement can never be separated from the history of their understanding, which necessarily includes the history of their understanding by philosophy. How can we understand what "philosophy" *is* without *reference* to philosophy, without somehow participating in it or communicating with it. The presence of the word "discourse," the philosopher might say, is a dead giveaway that the author of this particular statement has been influenced by recent trends of thinking, trends which owe much to recent philosophy, which itself of course owes much to all the (Western, but not only

[1] Cf., Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

Western) philosophies which preceded it. We might as well say that were it not for Socrates such a statement would not even be possible.

But all these arguments put by the philosopher fail. They fail because this statement excludes interrogation of its own terms by philosophy. Philosophy may claim to sit in judgment on such a statement. It may claim that the author of the statement pretends to be speaking from beyond philosophy, but that secretly they must in fact *be* a kind of philosopher. But regardless of any of this, the author of this statement is *not interested* in whether philosophy either attacks or defends this statement—philosophy, it is asserted, is not qualified. The philosopher may cry that this is merely violent assertion, an interpretation that does violence to reality but, violent or not, the assertion stands. Before such a stance, all the arsenal of philosophy is powerless. This is a limit or boundary of philosophy that cannot be passed. Philosophy withdraws.

How can such a thing be permitted? We must admit that nothing that has been said thus far concerns politics at all, and hence in fact we can equally make the same claims regardless of the object of the statement. If philosophy withdraws before this statement, then must it not just as quickly withdraw before the statement "Philosophy is not the discourse to tell us about truth," as well as the statements "Philosophy is not the discourse to tell us about discourse," or even "Philosophy is not the discourse to tell us about philosophy"? And, indeed, philosophy does find itself in retreat before these statements. But here philosophy finds its mettle, and proclaims, "Ah, *solipsism*. That's all very well, but whoever makes assertions such as these simply proclaims that they are uninterested in thinking. Our ruling is the following: Philosophers, continue. Such statements have nothing to say to *us*." And yet there remains something vaguely troubling in this dismissal of the case by the philosophical tribunal. Is not such a ruling in some way *succumbing* to such a statement? This statement forbids us to interrogate it, the philosophers say, and therefore it is our decision to refuse to interrogate this statement. We will not hear it, it cannot speak to us, it has absolutely refused any sign of courtesy, etiquette or recognition toward our work. Philosophy may even conclude that this ruling of solipsism is in fact the only sound possibility—and not only philosophically, but *politically*.

Nevertheless, the annoying suspicion remains that such a judgment may not have finally negated the meaning, the significance, even the possible *truth*, of such a statement. Can we rule out that there is some truth, and some *value* in *stating*, that it is not philosophy that can tell us about politics? Can we deny with certainty that when philosophy tells us about politics it falls wide of the mark? It is in fact no surprise that statements very similar to the one we have been considering here have been made by real people making real statements. Do the theses "Concerning

Feuerbach" not imply that philosophy, to the extent that it *is* the "institution" or "school" Philosophy, necessarily misunderstands itself in a manner that prevents any real grasp of the political thing?[2] And "philosophers" themselves, often under the banner of *pragmatism*, have also proclaimed the profound insufficiency of philosophy for any genuine thinking about politics. Is it plausible to dismiss all these claims and arguments simply by invoking the commandment against solipsism? Conversely, must philosophy simply accept the* when such statements are made, to the effect that philosophy is excluded from having anything to say about this topic, it has no choice but to silently respect these boundaries that have been set for it?

Two things must be said.

Firstly, there is a difference between the situation as we first drew it, and the examples we have now brought forward as "real cases." This difference is that *our* author made his statement and said nothing more. The statement, once uttered, stands alone, forever confronting and frustrating philosophy, refusing to be drawn into dialogue. It is possible to imagine a philosopher trying to *covertly provoke* a response that is in some way philosophical, say by speaking in the name of some other discourse (a Trojan horse strategy), but our author will not be drawn. In all the real cases, however, authors are not satisfied with merely making such an assertion and promptly retiring. Such assertions are defended with (philosophical, non-, quasi-, pseudo-, crypto-philosophical) arguments, and they in fact become qualified assertions. Theory *also* belongs to praxis. Pragmatism is not an anti-philosophy, but a philosophy that philosophizes the limited place of philosophy. Such arguments do not say that philosophy has nothing to tell us about politics. They say that philosophy does not tell us *enough*, that it requires a supplement. Pragmatism, as a philosophy, is philosophy *plus*. The problem with pragmatism is that it makes such arguments from within philosophy, trying at the same time to surpass and to save philosophy, to save it from being trapped within its own being-philosophical. Pragmatism presumes too quickly that it knows what it means "to be philosophical," and consequently what it means to speak in a way which is

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[2] And, of course, the eleventh thesis, the one that refers to "the philosophers," is only the culmination of the prior theses. For example the second thesis, that on the one hand sounds like it comes from the pragmatic school of philosophy, while on the other hand in principle excludes itself from this school: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking that is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question." Karl Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach," *Early Writings* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 422.

something more than philosophical. Pragmatism condescends to philosophy, while wishing to retain for itself philosophy's marks of authority.[3]

Marx, perhaps, maintains a greater respect for philosophy, and for him this means taking seriously the problem of how it is possible to make an exit from philosophy. Marx at least had the insight to recognize that if he is to criticize philosophy for the little secure space it has found to nest, if he is to think the limits of that space, then he not only must not but *cannot* do so from within its bounds. And yet so many of the arguments and justifications imitate philosophy, sound philosophical, that we are forced to wonder whether Marx has really left philosophy's space behind, really left philosophy's cave to find another light *beyond* philosophy. This is not finally to claim Marx once more as a philosopher who merely dreamt he was anything else. Marx's relation to philosophy demands to be thought, a demand put to philosophy, a spectre haunting philosophy. Thus it is *Marx* who first demands that philosophy cannot simply dismiss as solipsism our opening statement.

Secondly, we have stated that there is a difference between our authors and the actual examples of such statements. We have stated that this difference is that in the actual examples the authors always present arguments and reasons, justifications and proofs, that they surround any such statements with a discourse that it is impossible to say bears no relation to the philosophical. From where then does our original statement draw its power and its hold over philosophy? From this: that it is the beginning and the end of the discourse that it is. It is the end because it closes off all dialogue with philosophy. Further statements can be put about politics—politics is such and such—but these too simply stand, in the shadow of the exclusion of philosophy, impervious to it. It will be a discourse that, like much "actual" political discussion, carries on with no interest in the arguments or the questions of philosophers.

The imperviousness of such discourse is thus also that it *begins* with the assertion that closes off philosophy, that it begins with the decision to remain blind to philosophy, to forget philosophy. It emerges apparently from nothing, opens a path for itself. This is why the assertion is violent, it might be claimed, but to some degree all statement, and especially all *opening* statements, are such an act of violence. Openings, beginnings, if there are any, are always *sovereign*, where

[3] Cf., Charles Sanders Peirce, "Definition and Function of a University," *Values in a Universe of Chance* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), p. 332. Peirce here rethinks his own relation to pragmatism, such that philosophy returns to haunt it. If pragmatism thinks the thing through its *application*, its use, thus thinks knowing *through* doing, then philosophy returns with the question of the "ultimate application," that is, the end of ends. In other words, pragmatism must confront Aristotle. Cf., Samuel Weber, *Institution and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), ch. 2.

sovereignty must always be heard in both a political and a theological register, or as the preeminent secularized theologico-political concept, if we wish to speak the language of Carl Schmitt. Philosophy, perhaps even more than other "disciplines," has always stood on the ground of its opening statements, its axioms, its necessary laws, its indubitable truths, its statements of fundamental paradox. At least since Hegel, philosophy has asked itself how it is possible to *begin* to do philosophy. Is it any *less* violent to begin with a question? Is it even the case that to begin by asking a question is a "less-closed" opening than to begin by making a statement? Is there a question that is so necessary that it is not firstly the *decision* to ask it, to pursue it, and hence the violent decision to break into "reality" with this question rather than another? Even if true philosophy is *physis*, emergence, is this *physis* any less a violence by which philosophy is instituted? We cannot say which opening is more violent or less violent without having some gauge by which to measure violence, which would mean a measure, an opening, *before* the opening.

And this is the point. An opening is never a pure opening. This is not reducible to the statement that any opening is a decision, even if it is impossible to take the "fact of decision" out of any opening. It is possible to claim that the opening opens itself, or that the opening opens itself from out of the open. It is possible to open with such a statement. After all, with what resources is it possible to *judge* openings? Only with those resources that come from that which is already opened, which does not at all mean the judge escapes the problem of opening. There is never a pure opening. And indeed in this case, here, we did not really, in fact, begin with the statement: "Philosophy is not the discourse to tell us about politics." Our beginning, it seems, was to *imagine* a *person* who made this statement.

Why a person? Does it make a difference if this statement is "made" by a computer? Would this take us back to the "philosophical" claim that statements depend on self-consciousness? Does the statement sound to "our" ears more sinister if it is a robot-machine, an automaton, that tells us that we do not need philosophy for politics? Does it then begin to sound, if it hasn't already, like a slogan from the age of machine politics? Would it be *less* sinister if these were the first words translated from dolphin language? Such questions are more or less trivial, yet it does not appear arbitrary that we decide to imagine a person making this statement.

Are we therefore inevitably lead to a philosophical or non-philosophical politics of humanism, a pragmatism that invents itself firstly and lastly from out of a celebration of the nexus of human frailty and human ingenuity? Or are we thereby forgetting what this name "person"—that we immediately tend to assimilate to the general category of the "human"—might *mask*? Are we imagining rather too quickly that we know who or what our "person" *is* and, as corollaries, what it means to say "there is philosophy," "there is discourse," "there is politics"? Could it

be that all statement-making, all opening assertions, all declaring or proclaiming, depend upon *imagining* that such a thing as a person is doing such a thing as making a statement? The question then becomes, what is imagination such that a person can be imagined as a statement-making person? Such a train of thought would appear to make imagination into the power of creating persons, and a person as that necessary fiction, a *persona*, which is demanded by the idea of a statement-making thing. It is not that persons make statements, nor that they imagine, but on the contrary it is that in order to grasp the thing "statement-making," it is necessary to imagine the thing "person."

Is imagination thus the final source of the violence of instituted statement? Is it that we dwell within the self-created worlds of imagination, and that even our statements about this are a kind of fiction or dream woven by this creative force, this magma of imagination? But in this case at least imagination is not so quickly able to be proclaimed origin—it is not the first word. "*Let us begin* by imagining..." The beginning is thus the call to a beginning. Of course this does not eliminate the problem of opening, and of the opening of opening, even if it brings it to the fore, or lets it show itself from within the manifest beginning. Who sends the call? Who hears the call? Does the "us" here refer to *both* the sender and the receiver? "We" are the ones who begin, the ones who belong to the beginning. "We" are the ones who set out at the beginning of this discourse that begins "Let us begin..." Is everyone whose eyes pass along the first line of this introduction thereby inducted into a community? Is it possible, having read these first three words, to have already *rejected* the path proclaimed in this attempted beginning? This community seems uncertain of its existence. Furthermore, if we speak of a *we*, of a community, have we not already begun to speak of a region that is properly the place of politics? Can one speak of a community before politics? Is this a philosophical question? Such questions suggest that with the "Let us begin..." we have already begun to speak of philosophy *and* politics.

Our question, once again, is begged by the statement: "Philosophy is not the discourse to tell us about politics." The "we" is repeated here as an "us," and here it seems *not* to be the community of philosophers, but a community to whom philosophers do or do not speak. A question, then, of what is the *place*, and what is not the place, perhaps no longer the place, of philosophy. Is the community that is prepared to begin with this question, then, something like the "community of the question" which Derrida names in the opening of "Violence and Metaphysics"? This community of the question, a community of decision, of absolute initiality, a threatened community unsure of its own possibility, is announced by Derrida as the only possible community of philosophers today, the day after the possibility that

philosophy died.[4] They are thus those who, after the possibility that "we" are *after* philosophy, "are still called philosophers." Does *our* beginning hold on to the possibility that philosophy survives, that it can still be asked about as an object which is identifiable and able to be found in the world today? Does it call to a community (perhaps a community remaining to be founded) that, as Derrida states, would still be called philosophers, "in remembrance, at very least" of the necessity of unrelenting questioning?[5] *Or*, does it announce, by announcing the impossibility of philosophy speaking about politics or political community, the death of philosophy as a community of philosophers? This would seem to be the alternative Derrida is posing, in speaking of the possibility of founding, today, a community of philosophers around the question of the death, yesterday, of philosophy. A community founded on the question of whether what founds it can no longer be found or founded.

The uncertainty of the "us" in "Let us begin...," therefore, is not merely the possibility that there will be no readers. After all, an argument put by an author, even without readers, may well be construed as the argument of a community that is interior to the author. The uncertainty of the "us" is rather that there is perhaps no community to begin with this beginning. Perhaps not even the author can begin with this beginning, but only pretend to; perhaps the *persona* of belonging to such a community is no longer a mask that can be "truthfully" worn. It is not possible to say for certain that it is possible to begin with this question. Put another way, the "us" is not only called for, or called forth, but *requested*. "*Let* us..." To whom is this "let" directed? Is it that the community of the "us," in agreeing to the beginning, "lets" the beginning begin? Or is it that only once there is a "letting" of the beginning that the "us" for whom this is the beginning becomes possible? Is this letting happen of the beginning a return to the force of imagination, to a fiction which gives itself permission to come forth, to found a community of those for whom the beginning is the beginning? It is certainly a deceit, for whenever an author says "Let us begin...," permission is asked for without really being asked for. The author begins regardless. More precisely, this phrase ("Let us begin...") indicates an illocutionary statement marked by an irresolvable ambiguity: does it perform the beginning that it simultaneously announces and opens; or does it perform the act of *requesting* the beginning? Can the formality of "Let us begin..." be dismissed as questionable politeness, or does it express/conceal a kind of necessity, the necessity that community be staged?

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[4] Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference* (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 79–80.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Having arrived at the *issue* of community, it is still doubtful that anything has been *said* about politics. This is perhaps not surprising, to the extent that what has been said bears the marks of philosophical discourse, and the possibility that such discourse can tell us anything about politics is what has been placed in question. Yet even before this question, having entered into the question of the community and the community of the question, there is thus the possibility that, even perhaps without saying anything *about* politics, what has been said is already in some way *political*. Is speaking always already to be acting politically? But what does it mean to say that discourse is political? Before beginning to answer this question, it must be noted that we are now doing what our opening statement forbade—trying to say something about politics with what appears to be the discourse of philosophy. Perhaps the asking and answering of this question in philosophical discourse preclude reaching the point of saying something about politics. But is there another way of seeking to know about something than asking about it and trying to answer? In other words, is there an alternative to questioning, which appears to be the philosophical method and the opening to philosophy *par excellence*?

Perhaps not, but is it possible that by failing to *ask about* questioning we have already determined the essence of questioning in a particular way, and hence that we have too quickly assumed a determinate form for the opening and method of philosophy? This is what is suggested by Samuel Weber's apparently violent translation of the title of Heidegger's "*Die Frage nach der Technik*," not as "The Question Concerning Technology," but rather as "Questing After Technics." Weber does not deny that in "questing after" technics, Heidegger is asking questions, but he draws attention to what is lost in the standard translation. To question *concerning* something cannot help but sound like a formal matter of asking questions about a subject matter with which one is concerned, or interested in, which stands before us prior to its being opened up by questioning. To quest after something is to pursue it, but Weber wants us to hear it also as "to open to something." To quest implies a search for what is worthy of searching for, to question what remains question-worthy, which is to say what remains a question. Does something remain worthy of question because we have not yet found the answer, or does becoming worthy of question imply a kind of lateness, a *no longer* being unworthy of questioning?

This suggests that "quest" has not only the spatial sense of "seeking after," of "looking for." A temporal sense of "question after" is also brought into play, a sense that the project of questing "is situated in a certain *aftermath*."[6] And this temporal

[6] Samuel Weber, "Upsetting the Setup: Remarks on Heidegger's 'Questing After Technics'," *Mass 'Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1996), p. 61.

sense cannot simply be placed in the futural, for aftermath suggests that what is quested after is *no longer there*, a quest for what ceases to remain. If we understand questioning in this way, then it is not only that the "subject matter" of our questions is not yet present, not only that what we seek comes to light in the course of questioning, thus not only a matter of the phenomenological method, but that, in some cases at least, what we seek in questioning, and why it comes to *be* in question, is a matter of something that is in some way past. And it is this *being-past* of what is in question that makes questioning something that is directed toward the future. In the same way that Weber/Heidegger suggests that questing after technology is situated in a certain aftermath, in the same way that Derrida suggests that questing after the community of the question is situated in a certain aftermath (of philosophy), it is possible that *questing after politics* is also situated in a certain aftermath.

What is it that we are hoping will be heard in the "request" which entitles this introduction? Firstly, what should be heard is that what is at stake is the possibility or impossibility, today, of letting there be, of permitting or bringing forth, a politics. It is thus a matter of the possibility or impossibility of demanding, requiring, needing, a politics. But this is complicated by the thought that perhaps politics has *always* been a matter of questing after politics. At least since Aristotle, politics is less a matter for questioning, a topic or subject, than it is a quest, life's *end*, if not in fact that end that consists of bringing into life a life that is beyond present life. And, thus, if the situation today is different, if we are situated in an aftermath, it lies in being after the quest after politics. Are "we" now *after* the quest after politics? This begs the question: what are we after? To re-quest politics, then, is itself ambiguous: is it to *call for* a re-thinking of politics, and hence for a new politics, a politics that takes stock of the path that has been taken and the roads that have now been closed, in order to find what has been missed until now; or is it simply the demand (but an injunction derived from what law?) to cover again the ground that has been absolutely and irreplaceably lost, to trace the paths of political thinking, a thinking now at an end beyond any renewal? In speaking of *re-questing* politics, then, there is an echo of Derrida's *retrait* of metaphor, and especially of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's *retrait* of politics. At the same time, it will not be possible to avoid addressing the possible *difference* between Heidegger's questing after..., and Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy's *retrait*.

For Heidegger, concerned with technics, this means moving from the question concerning technology to the quest after the *essence* of technics. This essence must be sought by asking where the thought of technics comes *from*. The technical or technological is not first to be understood as that which belongs to technics or technology, i.e. not as anything technological, but as that which belongs to *techne*.

The quest after technics therefore necessarily involves the return to the Greek sending, the forgetting of which (including the forgetting by the Greeks themselves) constitutes the aftermath in which the issue becomes technics rather than *techne*.

Heidegger himself makes possible the thought of an analogy between the logic that seeks the essence of technology and a quest for the essence of the political. In 1942 Heidegger asks about the meaning of the Greek word *polis*.[7] Can the *polis* be understood as a *political* institution? Can it be understood according to *political* concepts and categories? This would be like trying to understand *techne* on the basis of technical concepts and categories. "The political" is not what belongs to "politics," as though that could be grasped as a stable and timeless concept. "The political" must, first of all, be that which belongs to the *polis*. One cannot *apply* political concepts to the *polis*, for it is the *polis* which first makes possible any "political" concepts whatsoever. The quest after politics therefore necessarily involves the return to the Greek sending, the forgetting of which (including the forgetting by the Greeks themselves) constitutes the aftermath in which the issue becomes politics rather than *polis*.

That to interrogate politics profoundly we must return to the Greeks—this is hardly a sentiment unique to Heidegger. If anything, it is the claim that *defines* the tradition of political thinking, a tradition that has not ceased endlessly to re-generate itself. If an example is necessary, it is possible to cite Cornelius Castoriadis, and in particular the paper entitled "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy." Castoriadis begins questioningly concerning politics and toward its past, and with an invocation of the *community* of questioners: "How can we orient ourselves in history and politics?"[8] For Castoriadis this is the question of "our" relation to Greece; his answer is—not a model, but a *germ*. Politics, for Castoriadis, is staked on this distinction. Why Greece? Because Greece is "our own origin," the site of the creation of democracy and philosophy. Only from within the Greco-Western tradition can "the political question" become thinkable: "Politics and philosophy *and* the link between them have been created here and only here."[9] What is this political question? Castoriadis, unlike many "political thinkers," tries to say what politics "is" as well as what it is not. About the Greek creation of politics and philosophy he says the following:

[7] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 80.

[8] Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Greek *Polis* and the Creation of Democracy," in Reginald Lilly (ed.), *The Ancients and the Moderns* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 29.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

> By politics I do not mean court intrigues or fighting among social groups over interest or position (both of which existed elsewhere), but a collective activity whose object is the institution of society as such. In Greece we have the first instance of a community explicitly deliberating about its laws and changing those laws.[10]

This is the Greek germ. It is not that the Greeks are a model in the sense of a form to be imitated. The germ is the *"historical instituting process,"* the self-institution, self-creation, self-questioning of the *polis*.[11] "We posit our own laws." Castoriadis distinguishes the act of institution, *instituting society*, from the preservation of what is instituted, *instituted society*. The former is the social imaginary "in a radical sense."[12]

This distinction between instituting society and instituted society mirrors the distinction made by Walter Benjamin in "Critique of Violence" between law-positing violence and law-preserving violence. As with Benjamin, for Castoriadis this instituting or positing thus becomes a matter of judging and choosing, of decision without law. It is a matter of what could be called the aporia of law, or the aporia of constitution. What is at stake in the difference between calling this a matter of violence (Benjamin) or a matter of imagination (Castoriadis)? Is it that "imagination" conceals a deception and that this deception is the condition for "democracy"? Castoriadis speaks in the name of democracy, and he can, taking Greece as his germ, argue for quite a radical conception: direct over representative democracy, against the modern hierarchical-bureaucratic (technical) apparatus, possibly against any and all state apparatus.

But Castoriadis can have nothing to say about the "we" who posit our own laws, who are instituting society, who choose democracy. He can recognize the "element of arbitrariness" about this "we," the *demos* (adult, male, free citizens of Athens). But this *who* that posits the *Grundnorm* is merely, for Castoriadis, a question of *fact*.[13] Yet what democracy means depends entirely on where the boundary stones are placed, who within the territory is included within the community, and what the *"Grundnorms"* that regulate the democratic process (or the decisions about how to begin democracy) are. For Castoriadis, the people, the community, are already *factually* there, and they have already begun to deliberate about their laws. They have already established, instituted, implicitly or explicitly agreed upon, a procedure for deliberation, that is, they have already agreed upon the law of laws, and on the rules and partitioning of speech. To speak of an unavoidable element of arbitrariness, to speak of the *self*-imagination of society,

[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

rather than of the violence of positing law, does not itself appear to be an arbitrary decision, but rather one that makes possible a series of violences in the name of the preservation of (instituted) democracy.

Does this *explain* the choices Castoriadis makes about sacred democratic texts? For Castoriadis these texts will be (at least in this article) two in number. Castoriadis recognizes that to conceive the historical happening of society or political community as "self-institution," implies that "the field of art" is not merely epiphenomenal. For Castoriadis Athenian *tragedy* is a democratic art due, more or less, to its *function* within democracy. It is an aesthetic technics that serves democracy. In the language of Castoriadis, it is an "institution of self-limitation."[14] In other words, tragedy, the art of democracy, is not a law, does not directly guide the efforts of the legislator, does not prescribe one decision rather than another, and yet *Antigone* ("perhaps the most profound play, from the point of view of tragedy's political dimension") "formulates the fundamental *maxim* of democratic politics."[15] That tragedy is capable of this, its political dimension, derives from its "ontological grounding," its message: Being is Chaos. And also from the fact that this Chaos resides also in man. This fundamental maxim of democracy, therefore, is that possessing *phronein* is not enough. Democracy means *there must be* decision, but decision means an absence of guarantee, it means there must be risk, it means risking catastrophe. Castoriadis, thus, mimes Heidegger's reading of the "Ode to Man" in *Antigone*, which he conducts in both *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1935) and the 1942 lecture course.

And yet Castoriadis does not end with the ontological grounding of tragedy, he does not end with *Antigone*'s fundamental maxim. He does not appear wholly satisfied with this grounding, with this maxim, as though there lurked too greatly the danger of a formalism or an emptiness about this democracy. Democracy thus conceived is "very difficult to defend." The grounding is too groundless; the maxim too lawless. Burckhardtian readings of the "agonistic" essence of the *polis* do not suffice to guarantee that the "we" of political decision is democratically conceived, nor that the decisions of this "we" possess the right spirit. If democracy *needs* law, if it needs the exteriority of a writing which stands, which gives a rule, which possesses a force, then the finitude and groundlessness of tragedy threaten to dwell too close to violent *physis*, and too far from the solidity of effective political aesthetics, which is to say, technics.

Castoriadis wants a "substantive conception" of democracy, and he therefore switches genres, from tragedy to the funeral oration. He finds his substance in

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 54, emphasis added.

Pericles. How so? Here is how Castoriadis ends: the Greeks are for us a germ, *firstly* because they never stopped *questioning* ("what is it that the institution of society ought to achieve?"). Hence the Greeks are our germ because they represent the being-without-limit, the endlessness, of thinking and questioning. And yet democracy, politics, demands, for Castoriadis, self-limitation and a substantive conception—a measure. What Pericles offers to Castoriadis, for all his insistence on the need to hear nuances beyond translation, is the possibility of ending his consideration of the Greeks as our germ not with questioning but rather answering: "And second, I mean that in the paradigmatic case, Athens, they gave this *answer*: the creation of human beings living with beauty, living with wisdom, and loving the common good."[16]

For all the democratically-spirited embrace of the agonistic, for all his rejections of the possibility of a law of laws, the conception of politics as the self-imagination of society longs for a "substantive concept" that threatens to violently suppress what it ostensibly celebrates. And the resolution of this contradiction is precisely the one that as Rancière notes is utterly conventional for political philosophy: to begin, not with a law of laws, but with the "spirit" of the law. On the basis of this spirit, law is determined, but the equality of this determined law is firstly the equality of a mood in common, a voice in common.[17] It is a song that is not a hymn to the finitude of being but on the contrary a technicized aesthetics, which is equally an aestheticized technics—aesthetico-technics—or, in Rancière's terms, the aesthetics of *policing*, which is the elimination of politics. Art, Pericles' funeral oration, polices politics—this in sum is the position taken by Castoriadis in the name of philosophy. The question about the "proper" institution of society, "genuinely" opened up in Greece, and supposedly interminable, receives its answer already in the Greece that opened it up. The germ threatens to become the model when the endless questioning becomes a decided answering. Castoriadis invents his Athens by choosing his genres. It is possible to hear the violence of the *move* from tragedy to funeral oration in a precisely formulated observation by Nicole Loraux: "This is the essential point: tragedy involves by its very nature *an opposition of two voices*, an *agon logon*, whereas the funeral oration is a discourse that expects no reply."[18] And, it ought quickly be said, that the funeral oration expects no reply is *not* because it is addressed *to* the dead, far from it, but because it is addressed to the *living*, in the

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 56, emphasis added.

[17] Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, pp. 67–8.

[18] Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 216.

name of the dead, or rather, in the name of the spirit of the dead, the dead that cannot be spoken *to*, cannot be countered.[19]

In speaking of self-limitation, in searching for a substantive conception of democracy, and in locating it in the monological funeral oration of Pericles, Castoriadis fails to pursue the quest after politics. But this failure is already present at the beginning, with the invocation of imagination. Is not imagination, as conceived by Castoriadis, the sign of the technicized-aestheticized conception of the origin of politics? Castoriadis, following the tradition of political philosophy, wants to de-emphasize the violence of the "institution of society" in order to emphasize its imaginative aspect. To recognize this violence would be to recognize that at the beginning is not the imagination of a *we* who posit our own laws, but the act or event of the ambiguous and impossible demand or request to let us begin, a demand that continues to haunt or threaten the beginning itself.

The fear of this initial violence is what distresses Castoriadis to the point of wanting guarantees against the risk he himself acknowledges is unavoidable. The concept of self-limitation, of a law that is somehow not a law, for a self that is somehow not a self, is the result of this distress. Out of fear of violence, of the risk of catastrophe and death, Castoriadis resorts to a "paradigmatic case" in order to assert the strength, the philosophico-aesthetic force, of beauty, wisdom, and the common good. That is why the texts of self-limitation are chosen once and for all, why they are paradigmatic, why they are an act of continuous remembrance that cannot really be the place of disagreement, the object of a reply. In shifting genres from tragedy to funeral oration, Castoriadis opposes self-limitation—that technical-aesthetic extra-legal law that for Castoriadis defines politics in its essence and its possibility—to the irrationality of mortality, of death that flows from the *failure* of self-limitation, the failure to contain violence and dispute by proper literary *citation*. Castoriadis, in the end, is less lodged between the tragedian and the great politician than he is typical of the philosopher—he is not nearly as far from the harmony of the parts in Plato's *Republic* (and the importance of the "guardians" in that harmony) as he would apparently like to think.

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[19] And, if Nietzsche can be trusted, this funerary monologue *arrives* in Greece precisely because Greece, that is, the *polis*, has reached its end, its own funeral. Continuing to exist after its end, in its own aftermath, the *polis* needed the funeral oration in order to forget the lost *polis* itself, to forget *through* its oratorical re-conjuring: "On the other hand, one should not invoke [*berufen*] the glorificatory speech of Pericles: for it is only a great optimistic illusion [*ein grosses optimistisches Trugbild*] about the supposedly necessary connection between the *polis* and Athenian culture; immediately before night comes upon Athens (the plague and the rupture of tradition [*die Pest und der Abbruch der Tradition*]), Thucydides makes it rise resplendent once again, like a transfiguring evening glow in whose light the evil day that preceded it could be forgotten." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 174.

29

Perhaps Castoriadis did not listen closely enough to Sophocles. Bernard Stiegler listens to Greek tragedy with an ear that is more finely tuned that does Castoriadis. Stiegler, too, draws together technics and death, but in a way that fundamentally opposes the paradigm outlined by Castoriadis:

> The tragic Greek understanding of technics is, however, quite different. It does not oppose two worlds. It composes *topoi* that are constitutive of mortality, being at mortality's limits: on the one hand, immortal, on the other hand, living without knowledge of death (animality); in the gap between these two there is technical life—that is, dying.[20]

Technical life—that is dying. Again the mortal, the human, condition emerges from a remembrance of the dead. But Stiegler acknowledges more explicitly that, if there is remembrance, this is a sign not of a genuine and authoritative aesthetic that will save "us" from the forgetting of technicity. Rather, technicity itself is the entire possibility of memory—there is no remembrance that is not technical, that does not depend upon some recording instrument or apparatus. There can be no day of remembrance, for instance, that does not depend on the technics of ceremony or of ritual. But this technics, the *instituting* of memory, is necessarily always also a forgetting, in fact the process of forgetting itself. What must be remembered, for the future of the quest after politics, if there is one, is this: technical life, that is, dying, is also the possibility of disagreement, of violence, not only over who is remembered or what deaths forgotten, but about the order of memory and technics itself. Politics, if there is any, is the living or dying possibility that an order of memory and technics will be placed at stake, put at risk.

Perhaps Heidegger, no democrat, pursued questioning further than the self-limited answers of Castoriadis. Perhaps the Greeks are less of a *model* for Heidegger than they are for Castoriadis. Yet is not the *polis* for Heidegger that which remains most worthy of question?[21] But this precisely does *not* mean that the Greeks were the ceaseless questioners of the *polis*, nor that their answers form the best path for our questioning politics. Rather, it is due to the *absence* of Greek questioning of the *polis* that it remained *fragwürdig*, and it was at the moment when the Greeks sought to answer questions concerning the *polis* that they (and subsequently the entire West) forgot the *questionworthiness* of the *polis*. Is the right to question and change the laws of a society necessarily equivalent to placing the *polis* as such into question? Cannot questioning—as a political and even a democratic *process*—itself

[20] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 186.

[21] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 80.

become automatic or technical, such that these procedures in a way prevent *another* questioning, and thereby condemn questioning to being forgotten? We might say that for Heidegger it is possible to question without really asking, without taking the measure of what one is seeking. In forgetting this essence of the *polis*, one ends up it really questioning but rather answering, determining, inventing, what one war *from* the *polis*—beauty, wisdom, the common good.

That the *polis* happens, that it is an event, an emergence, that it is historical, that it does not follow the logic of a concept or of an idea, means for Heidegger, as for Castoriadis, that the quest after the *polis* is drawn toward the *techne*, the art, *of* the *polis*. Tragedy is what emerges from this *physis* of the *polis*. Again, tragedy is what draws the thought of life in the *polis* toward ontological considerations. It might even be possible to say that for Heidegger too tragedy gives a limit to democracy. It is significant for Heidegger that it is not in a philosophical text that the relations between these terms—*polis*, being, humanity—are most profoundly thought. And this is because what must first be asked is whether "thought," or thought *alone*, is the appropriate vehicle for coming to see these terms in their relation. Philosophy cannot be the site in which the *polis* as what remains *fragwürdig* appears, because it too quickly assumes its method of questioning concerning whatever object is presented for its contemplatio¬ Heidegger agrees with Castoriadis that the event of the *polis* must not be understood only sociologically, anthropologically, or politically. But Heidegger recognizes that an event, the institution of the *polis*, is what *cannot* be questioned, precisely because it *is* an event. The violence of institution lies in the fact that thought cannot grasp it through its concepts and categories. It will be necessary to ask what is gained in adding "poetizing" to thinking. Perhaps Heidegger does not thereby intend to "mythologize" the origin of politics, but rather to draw attention to the inevitability of resorting to something other than "thought" when the origin is in question.

The *positing* of the *polis* immediately makes it a matter of idealism. Castoriadis asserts that the event of the *polis* is an act of absolute presupposition, but this becomes idealism when he renounces questing after this event, and when he institutes the forgetting of this quest in the name of the remembrance of the concept, the position, of the *polis* itself. The concept stands, it stands above, as a guide, and consequently it *must* stand. In the name of the remembrance of the necessity of the *idea* of the *polis*, Castoriadis must begin to forget the violence of its institution. Heidegger, with Benjamin, quests after a remembrance of this violence that undoes this ideality. "Art," *techne*, tragedy, cease to be the supports of this ideality, the *polis*, but on the contrary expose the violence of this opening. But what does this mean for politics, and for the request for politics? Does the exposure of the violence of the institution of the *polis* lead us anywhere other than exactly where Castoriadis fears:

to the forgetting of and indeed the end of politics? Can there be a "politics" *of* the exposure of positing, of beginning? Alexander García Düttmann poses this question in an article on Benjamin's "Critique of Violence." He poses it not in the form of a question but in the quasi-"Hegelian" form of one question countering another:

> The question, therefore, of whether in the end positing does not disappear in its absolute presupposing and is forgotten in its absolute remembrance can be countered, from a speculative point of view, with the other question of whether the suspension of presupposing and the forgetting that goes along with it does not expose the ideality of positing to an "endless iteration of the alternation between different determinations, each of which calls up the other." These two questions are about the difference between a 'true' and a 'bad' infinity, between the endless exceeding of a limit and the sublation of finitude.[22]

Translating this abstract formulation more closely into the terms we are favoring here, we can ask: how can we reconcile a demand that we remember that "the political" is what is sent to us from out of the *polis*, with the demand that we remember the violence of the institution or positing *of* the *polis*, a finite and yet absolutely presupposed event? If "politics" is nothing other than the suspension or interruption of positing, then is this nothing other than a statement of the *impossibility* of translating *from* the aporia of positing *to* any kind of "concrete" politics? And for the direction taken in what follows, this means: if tragedy is *not* for Heidegger the idealist "spirit" of the law of the *polis*, and if it *is*, in a "Hölderlinian" sense, nevertheless the *law* of the Greeks, the law of technical life, that is, dying, then is this law the end of any quest after politics, as a statement of its *impossibility*, or is it on the contrary the condition of the possibility of such a quest, or request.

[22] Alexander García Düttmann, "The Violence of Destruction," in David S. Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 168.

Chapter Two

Stating the Obvious

> "*The often-evoked unity of theory and praxis has a tendency to give way to the predominance of praxis. Numerous views define theory itself as a form of repression—as though praxis did not stand in a far more immediate relationship to repression [w i e* wenn nicht Praxis mit jener weit unmittelbarer zusammenhinge]. *For Marx, the dogma of this unity was animated [*beseelt] *by the immanent possibility of action [*Möglichkeit der Aktion] *which even then was not to be realized. Today it is rather the opposite that emerges. One clings to action because of the impossibility of action.*" Theodor W. Adorno.[1]

> "*It must seem that so long as we are without an expert diagnosis of our present situation, any attempt to raise the question of the relation of technology to ethics remains at an unacceptable level of abstraction.*" Robert Bernasconi.[2]

If we ask about the relation of politics to philosophy, no statement is more obvious than that politics must exceed philosophy, because politics involves not only theory but also action. Politics may have its philosophies, its theories, its ideals and its reasons, but it is nothing if it is not also the enactment, the application, the putting into practice, the living out in praxis, of what politics "thinks." But the obviousness of this position serves to conceal the ground of its own possibility. What makes the enunciation of such a position possible is firstly the presupposition that theory or philosophy is not itself a form of praxis, not itself an action and a decision, a kind of living-out. Philosophy is an inactive pursuit, depen- ·nt upon the possession of time for leisure, or else it is something confined to schools or academies. Secondly, what

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[1] Theodor W. Adorno, "Resignation," *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 172; cf. Adorno, "Resignation," *Kritik. Kleine Schriften zur Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), p. 146.

[2] Robert Bernasconi, "Technology and the Ethics of Praxis," *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae* (Tokyo), 5 (1987), p. 93.

is presupposed is that action stands to theory in the relation of content to form—political theory is the form, the image, the blueprint, from which political action is crafted. Politics, according to this schema, is something like a *product*, unfolding from out of its *causa formalis*, theory, philosophy, and into its *causa materialis*, which is its material taking-place in the form of action.

Both of the above citations from Adorno and Bernasconi display a complex relationship to the "obviousness" of this opening statement. Bernasconi appears to reproduce the structure of our opening, merely translated into the terms of ethics rather than politics ⁓ ⁓s, the possibility of ethical action in relation to technology, depends firstly on possessing knowledge—having a diagnosis—of the situation. With knowledge, with the appropriate theory, comes the possibility of acting. Adorno appears to defend the autonomy of thought in a world where the invocation of the *unity* of theory and praxis threatens that autonomy. In a world where action receives the highest value, and where action is everywhere demanded, the unity of theory and praxis means the obliteration of theory. But, where theory is obliterated, action, even while reigning supreme, in fact becomes an impossibility. Without theory, action becomes mere activity. In this way both of these citations would appear to reproduce the traditional schema, according to which theory is what *informs* and hence makes possible ethical or political action.

What such a reading leaves out, however, is the degree to which both of these citations are *ironic*. What Bernasconi wishes to question in his paper is the very idea that ethics, or practical action, consists in the application of rules, determined by theory, to a given situation. And this has implications for the search for an ethics appropriate to the technological age. It means that no "expert" diagnosis of the situation can suffice to determine for it a suitable ethics. This is not only a matter of the specialization and fragmentation of all "expertise." More importantly, grasping the present situation cannot be reduced to a "technical question" about gathering sufficient knowledge for the production of an ethics.

> It is simply not the case that having provided ourselves with the required
> information about where we are and having agreed upon that, we could then set
> about tackling the question of what we are going to do about the current situation.[3]

Thus our initial citation from Bernasconi, which was the opening line of his paper, is ironic at the very least to this extent: that the content itself exposes the insufficiency of the form in which its opening supposition is expressed.

In Adorno's case, the very title of his late, short paper—"Resignation"—is suffused with irony. Having recently suffered "the reproach of resignation," the title not only announces the theme but is also the ironic pronouncement of an

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

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illocutionary act of resignation. Even if Adorno is here in some way *really* announcing a withdrawal, this does not negate the irony of the title. Countering the "interruption" of thinking by praxis, by a praxis that dwells within the impossibility of action, Adorno refers to an "open thinking" that "points beyond itself." Adorno's is a thought of thinking as properly "the force of resistance" (*"die Kraft zum Widerstand"*), which, maintains a firm grasp on *possibility*. Yet, as such, it remains a thought "without security" (*"ist nicht gedeckt"*). But this thinking is "a figuration of praxis [*eine Gestalt von Praxis*] which is more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than in a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis."[4] And Adorno really goes quite far in defending "the thinker," identifying the "happiness visible to the eye of the thinker" with "the happiness of humanity." He concludes, fully exposing the irony of the paper's title: "Whoever refuses to permit this thought to be taken from him has not resigned."[5] Adorno's defense of the autonomy of thinking, his defense against the interruption of thought, a defense which in our opening citation seemed to question "the often-evoked unity of theory and praxis," in fact comes to defend the purity of thought precisely on the grounds that it is more closely related to praxis than "praxis" "itself."

Both of these citations, then, operate ironically to put into question the obviousness of the thought that political theory or political philosophy *serves* the production of political praxis, that theory is something technical, something that will make action possible by acting as a guide. But if we cannot say that theory "guides" praxis, that it gives action its methods and its aims, how can we ever relate theory back to praxis? Such a question, concerning the unity of theory and praxis, in fact already presupposes their absolute separation. It presupposes the technical interpretation of thinking and praxis: "thinking as a mere instrument of action."[6] And this "technical interpretation," where *everything* is only action, has something to do with the *impossibility* of action that Adorno diagnoses. For it is the ubiquitous subordination of theory to practice, the ubiquity of the administered, instrumental, world, which results in activity and activism that is nothing but *pseudo*-activity, dwelling in *pseudo*-reality, such that even "political action" (*"politische Tathandlungen"*) can sink to mere "theatre.[7]

In other words, there is something in the opening citations from Bernasconi and Adorno that is *not* ironic. In the citation from Bernasconi, we may say that what is not ironic is the observation that we are *without* a diagnosis of the present situation, or in want of understanding of the present situation. And it is this very being-in-

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[4] Adorno, "Resignation," *The Culture Industry*, p. 174–5.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 174.

[7] *Ibid.*

want in relation to the present situation that means that our situation in relation to ethics is also that of being-in-want. "It might even be suggested that the situation of technology *calls for* an ethics of *praxis*."[8] What is perhaps both ironic and not ironic in Adorno's citation is his "expert diagnosis" that action is impossible, impossible because of something about the "present situation," something that means that what appears as action is only pseudo-activity, and what appears to thought to be real is only pseudo-reality. But what does this mean? From where does the possibility arise that "action" or "reality" has the character of something only false, *pseudos*? References to "the administered world" and the observation that "at the present moment, no higher form of society is concretely visible" do not suffice to account for the *possibility* of pseudo-activity and pseudo-reality today.

In both of these citations, what is at stake, and what opens up the obviousness of the schema of theory and praxis with which we began, is the question of "today," of the "present situation." There is something about the present situation that remains to be understood, and there is something about "today" that means that what might once have been obvious about ethics or politics, about theory and praxis, has been brought to radical doubt.[9] What provokes thought is the question of "today," but something about "today" provokes thought about what might have been obvious once and no longer is—something (politics, praxis) that has withdrawn from us. Such language is not Adorno's but rather that of Heidegger in the 1951–52 lecture

[8] Bernasconi, "Technology and the Ethics of Praxis," *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae*, p. 107. In order to begin to understand this "being-in-want" of understanding of the "present age," and how this "being-in-want of understanding" is itself related to the "call" for an "ethics of praxis," it suffices to read Werner Hamacher's essay "Premises," which begins with the sentence, "Understanding is in want of understanding." Here, it is understanding "itself," and not simply the "understanding of the present age," that is defined, impossibly, by its being-in-want of understanding. And this condition of understanding, to the degree to which it is understood, has the effect of shaking "the privilege of technique and technology." What is it about understanding that shakes this privilege? Nothing other than the fact that if understanding is in want of understanding, it points outward to something other than understanding in itself, as something that we think we understand. Understanding stands as what points to an "other," an other of understanding itself, and hence to the ex-posure of what we might call the "technical understanding of understanding." The understanding of the present situation (that is, of technology) and the being-in-want of understanding of the present situation therefore converge. And it is in this convergence that the "call" for something other than an "understanding" becomes visible. Again, all this is said by Hamacher, as a few lines from the concluding paragraphs suffice to demonstrate, even if they remain to be understood: "Understanding does not so much set out in search of the other as set out *from* it. [...] It is the path of understanding toward the siteless, the unsecurable, toward the 'otherness' of understanding—toward an understanding of Being other than as position—and is therefore, once again 'perhaps,' already other than understanding." Hamacher, "Premises," *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 41–3.

[9] Cf., Werner Marx, *Is There a Measure on Earth? Foundations for a Nonmetaphysical Ethics* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 1–3.

course published as *Was heißt Denken?*, a course animated by the thought—"*Most thought-provoking* [das Bedenklichste] *in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.*"[10]

But what does it mean to talk of "today"? When is "today," when does the "present situation" begin? This is something to which Heidegger addresses himself in a very brief indication in the 1951–52 lecture course. To reproduce all too schematically the sequence of "thoughts," Heidegger says the following concerning what is most thought-provoking. He says, firstly, that we are not capable of thinking as long as that which must be thought about withdraws. But withdrawing is not nothing—it may be what is most present in all our present, what most makes a claim on us. We are drawn toward what withdraws. But if it is "we" who are drawn, then, effectively, it is "we" who *point* toward what withdraws. As what points, "man" is a sign. Thus Heidegger comes to the line from Hölderlin's hymn "Mnemosyne": "We are a sign that is not read..." And Heidegger comments:

> We who? [*Wer wir?*] We today's humanity; the humanity of a "today" that has lasted since long ago and will still last for a long time, so long that no calendar in history can give its measure. In the same hymn, "Mnemosyne," it says: "Long is/The time"—the time in which we are a sign, a sign that is not read.[11]

Heidegger, like Adorno, appears to say that thinking is the sign that points beyond itself, toward what withdraws, toward what *has* withdrawn, today. And this "today" that is thought-provoking in its not-yet-thinking, has something to do with "the essence of modern technology." And in stating this Heidegger draws us back to his paper on technology:

> Take note that I say "in the realm of the *essence* of technology," and not simply "in technology." A fog still surrounds the essence of modern science. This fog, however, is not produced by individual researchers and scholars in the sciences. Humanity does not make it at all. It arises out of the region of what is most thought-provoking—that we are still not thinking; none of us, including me who speaks to you, me first of all.[12]

[10] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 6. And note that Heidegger's first response to this formulation is precisely to raise the question of thought and action (p. 4): "True, this course of events seems to demand rather that man should act, without delay, instead of making speeches at conferences and international conventions and never getting beyond proposing ideas on what ought to be, and how it ought to be done. What is lacking, then, is action, not thought " The irony of *this* thought, however, immediately becomes clear: "And yet—it could be that humanity has for centuries and until now acted too much and thought too little."

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

What is thought-provoking about today is most of all to do with the enigma of technology. But if today means the today of modern technology, then how is it that it has lasted since long ago—how long is long ago? We know the answer, with which Bernasconi explicitly agrees: that to answer the question about the essence of modern technology we must go back to Aristotle.[13] For Heidegger, questioning about the Greeks, and about Aristotle in particular, *is* a questioning about today, about what most characterizes what is most mysterious about today.

This is also the conclusion of Richard Bernstein who, in "Heidegger's Silence?: *Ethos* and Technology," closely examines Heidegger's quest for the essence of technology through a reading of Aristotle. And he does so precisely in order to question Heidegger concerning the relation of politics to philosophy. In examining Bernstein's argument, what will become visible is the ground upon which the concern or unconcern of Heidegger's "ontological" thought with "ethics" will be decided. What will be at stake for Heidegger is on the one hand a "before"—to think that thought which lies before the separation of theory and practice, before the separation of ethics and ontology—and on the other hand it concerns a "tomorrow" or a "to come"—what is at stake, precisely today, is how we are to approach an ethics or a politics which is yet to arrive. If "ethics" is something we do not simply happen upon *today*, if it is still to come, then the stance we take toward this "yet to come" cannot itself be "ethical." Bernstein pursues Heidegger's thought a certain distance before retreating, or perhaps rather Bernstein only *apparently* pursues Heidegger's thought. For Bernstein, all Heidegger's concern with "ethics" or "action" is only a ruse of thought, in the name of thought, a betrayal in fact of Greek or Aristotelian thought. But what will also become clear is that the first scene of battle, for those concerned with Heidegger's "ethics" and "politics," is staked out in terms of the presence or absence of *"phronesis"* in the text of Heidegger.

Bernstein's reading of Heidegger

There are two points of departure for Bernstein's reading of Heidegger, which, to confine them within questionable departmental boundaries are, on the one hand "politico-philosophical," and on the other, "ethico-philosophical." The first point of

[13] Cf., Bernasconi, "Technology and the Ethics of Praxis," *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae*, p. 95: "I share with Gadamer the belief, learned from Heidegger, that modern technology can only be understood in terms of its derivation from Greek metaphysics. Aristotle's account of *techne* as it is found in the Sixth Book of his *Nicomachean Ethics* is the key document here. Indeed, Aristotle's formulation of the relation between *techne* and *phronesis* has been decisive for the subsequent understanding of the relation between ethics and technology."

departure is the phenomenon of "Heidegger's Nazism," or, more specifically, not the *fact* of Heidegger's being a National Socialist, but the failure *after* the fact to measure up, directly and unambiguously, to its significance:

> What is still most scandalous and incomprehensible is not what he did and said in 1933–4, but his refusal after 1945 to confront *directly* and *unambiguously* the full horror of the *Shoah* and the barbaric crimes of the Nazis. How can we explain why Heidegger—who claimed that what is most thought-provoking about our epoch is the refusal to think—failed himself to think through the most shocking events of the twentieth centu y that "call forth" thinking?[14]

This point of departure is thus the question of where Heidegger's politics leaves his philosophy. After the fact of Nazism, Heidegger did not *think* enough, did not *say* enough. The second point of departure is what, via Bernard Williams, he refers to as "Socrates' question," the question of "how one should live." And if we are still haunted by this question, and if Heidegger's "Nazi involvement" prompts us to it, it is because it "compels us to *question* Socrates' question—it forces us to ask what is the relation of philosophy to the question, 'how one should live'."[15] We "want to know whether philosophy can or cannot 'answer the question'." If the first point of departure is how politics bears upon philosophy, the second is how philosophy bears upon ethics, of *whether* philosophy has any relation to ethics.

Bernstein recognizes that these questions, insofar as they *are* ethico-political questions, must necessarily be questions "of today." He therefore asks, firstly, what Heidegger's diagnosis of the present is, and secondly, what he has to say, as a consequence of this diagnosis, about what we should "do." The texts to which he turns are thus Heidegger's consideration of "technology" and its "essence," and his letter on humanism, with its reflections on "action" and *its* "essence."

The latter text is used to establish the gap between "ethics" and what Heidegger calls *ethos* or "originary ethics" ("*die ursprüngliche Ethik*"). *Ethos* means *Aufenthalt*, "place of dwelling" ("*Ort des Wohnens*"), "the open region in which the human being dwells."[16] *Ethos* is what permits that which most belongs to the human being in its essence to appear. And, insofar as this understanding is drawn from Heraclitus, and insofar as the human *is* human, the human being dwells in the nearness of god. Thus it is the case that *ethos* is what precedes all ethics, as what first allows the possibility of ethics to appear. If "ethics" is defined as what ponders the

[14] Richard J. Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?: *Ethos* and Technology," *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 80. Thus Bernstein here follows George Steiner. Cf., Steiner, *Heidegger* (London: Fontana, 1992, 2nd edn.), p. 123.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[16] Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'," *Pathmarks* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 269.

abode of the human being, then this is "originary ethics," but this originary ethics then in fact precedes any division between ethics and ontology. Originary ethics would ponder what allows *both* ontology and ethics to appear. Bernstein poses a mock question, "But still, we want to know what this understanding of *ethos* as abode or dwelling place has to do with 'ethics'."[17] It is a mock question because Bernstein grants to Heidegger that this "originary ethics" is not the obliteration of ethics. It will perhaps turn out to be less clear whether he accepts that "originary ethics" is so far from being the obliteration of ethics that it is in fact the condition of its possibility. Nevertheless, he willingly concedes:

> It should be clear how superficial the objection is that Heidegger is not concerned with "ethics." On the contrary, given his understanding of *ethos* and "the original ethics" as pondering "the abode of man," then this is Heidegger's primordial (obsessive) concern.[18]

Bernstein continues to follow "The Question Concerning Technology," reading carefully through Heidegger's account of *Gestell*, of the danger, and through the reference to Hölderlin—that where the danger lies, so also lies the growth of the "saving power." How can the saving power grow? Bernstein cites Heidegger: here and now in little things, that we may foster the saving power in its increase, and by holding always before our eyes the extreme danger. It is at this point that Bernstein begins his critique. What question does he ask? "But what are we to *do*?" The emphasis is Bernstein's. Heidegger fails to provide directives; this thought abides purely within the realm of the theoretical, the *bios theoretikos*, and remains, in its infinite questioning, an infinite *postponement* of "ethics" and "action."

> But what are we to *do*? In one sense, Heidegger is telling us this is the *wrong* question to ask. For this question still tempts us to think that human activity can counter or master this danger. Rather the answer to the question, "What are we to do?" is to ponder, to recollect, to reflect, to question, to think, to prepare, to wait.[19]

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[17] Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?", *The New Constellation*, p. 88. Note that Heidegger himself asks precisely this question: "For it must be asked: if the thinking that ponders the truth of being defines the essence of *humanitas* as ek-sistence from the latter's belongingness to being, then does thinking remain only a theoretical representation [*ein theoretisches Vorstellen*] of being and of the human being; or can we obtain from such knowledge directives [*Anweisungen*] for active life [*tätige Leben*] that can be kept handy [*an die Hand geben*]?" And he immediately offers an answer that would certainly sound to Bernstein's ear like something approaching philosophico-political "Platonism": "The answer is that such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass [*ereignet sich*] before this distinction. Such thinking is, insofar as it is, recollection [*Andenken*] of being and nothing else. Belonging to being, because thrown by being into the preservation of its truth and claimed for such preservation, it thinks being. Such thinking has no result [*Ergebnis*]. It has no effect [*Wirkung*]." Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'," *Pathmarks*, pp. 271–2.

[18] Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?", *The New Constellation*, p. 89.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–5.

What is peculiar about the progression of Bernstein's argument is that, having *appeared* to recognize that Heidegger's "ontological" thinking cannot be separated from an ethical concern, he ends up *concluding* that Heidegger does not tell us what to do, and hence that his thought, concerned *only with* thought, is really telling us to do nothing, and hence is avoiding all ethical responsibility. Bernstein is incapable of even considering whether what Heidegger is talking about *is* a kind of "doing," let alone of asking himself whether this kind of demand put to thought to "tell us what to do" might in fact be the very metaphysical relation of theory to practice which he analyses through Heidegger in *apparent* good faith.

Bernstein places Heidegger's thought purely within the realm of the theoretical, as *mere thinking*, in spite of his *apparent* acceptance of Heidegger's claim to be trying to grasp a thinking that originates *before* the separation of ethics and ontology, and to be trying to elucidate a thinking that is neither practical *nor* theoretical. Secondly, Bernstein is arguing that in the course of Heidegger's *method*, in Heidegger's returning to the Greeks, and due precisely to Heidegger's abhorrence of the practical, he fails to attend to Greek thought *properly*. Heidegger asks about the relation of *poiesis* and *techne*, but he "never does justice to what distinguishes *praxis* from *poiesis*, or *phronesis* from *techne*."[20] Heidegger's failure to do justice to *phronesis* is, he claims, a failure to do justice, to think through, the "human condition of plurality," the "ambiguity and contingency in our everyday public engagement." Where *poiesis* is not corrected by awareness of *praxis*, which is the philosophical (that is, Platonic) error *par excellence*, then *the* politico-philosophical error will follow: the *polis* will be something made, something planned and accomplished, and the philosopher will be the author of the plan, the ideal city. And where Heidegger *conceals* aspects of *praxis* and *phronesis*, Arendt and Gadamer (Bernstein's major supports, with Taminiaux, of his reading of Aristotle and Heidegger on Aristotle) *draw upon* these concepts in order to *confront*, as opposed to merely pondering, *the* question: how are we to respond, today, to what is happening in the technological age?[21]

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 125. William McNeill, in his critique of Taminiaux's reading of Heidegger, makes the point that to argue against Heidegger on the grounds that he reduces *praxis* to *merely thinking praxis* is to remain wholly within the opposition between the theoretical and the practical: "Taminiaux's argument precisely maintains and reinscribes the opposition of thinking and acting, of *theoria* and *praxis* even in their phenomenological transformation, and thus regards the 'thinking of being' as a *mere thinking* opposed to practical involvement, withdrawn from the world, and removed from the realm of political plurality. Thus, Taminiaux reads even the later Heidegger's claim that thinking is the accomplishment (*Vollbringen*) of action as another symptom of a 'Platonic' leaning". And when in the same note McNeill comes to characterize his own presentation of Heidegger, he does not fail to indicate that if we can speak of such a thing as a Platonic bias, it is as much Aristotle's as it is Plato's: "[B]y contrast, we shall try to show how and why these very oppositions are already undermined in Heidegger's early thought, and why the thinking of being cannot be adequately or fully understood in terms of the Platonic-Aristotelian privileging of *theoria*."

For Bernstein this *concealment* of *praxis* and *phronesis* is why Heidegger's ethical and political *response* is *only* to *talk about* the possibility of a "poetic revealing." Arendt reveals what Heidegger conceals: that "'the possible upsurgence of the saving power' may be revealed in action (*praxis*) and not only in 'poetic dwelling'."[22] This statement is remarkable mainly for the way in which it ignores everything Bernstein has painstakingly reconstructed in Heidegger's account of *poiesis* as bringing-forth. Bernstein ignores everything in Heidegger's thought that tends to put into question whether "poetic dwelling" is absolutely distinguishable from "action." He seems determined to conclude that *praxis* and action are entirely absent from Heidegger's "ethics."

Only the first of many questions that intrude themselves here, it seems necessary to ask how Bernstein intends to maintain this distinction, this absolute separation, between *praxis* and *poiesis*. In order to maintain the distinction between *praxis* and *poiesis*, would it not be necessary to argue either that *praxis*, action, is not a bringing-forth, does not bring anything forth, including the bringing forth of itself *as* action (in which case what *is* such action—how does it act, what kind of event is it?), or else to argue that *poiesis* should *not* be understood as bringing-forth at all? In speaking of Heidegger's "response" as *merely* poetic revealing, Bernstein seems to understand by poetic revealing something merely poetic, something that belongs only to "aesthetics," something therefore inactive and essentially impotent. In so doing, Bernstein is bound to miss the question that Heidegger's formulation demands: if we hear in "poetic revealing" not merely "poetry" but also, as Heidegger clearly does, a relation to *poiesis*, and hence to something like "production," how is this to be reconciled with the assertion at the beginning of the "Letter" that what is at stake, beyond the practical and the theoretical, is a thinking that has no *effect*? In reading Heidegger, it will become clear that perhaps the main difference between these readings of Aristotle is not the *failure* of Heidegger to attend to *praxis* or *phronesis*, but rather the way in which they understand the meaning of the *distinction* between the various *aletheuein*. For Bernstein, the "concepts," Aristotle's system of concepts, are treated as *pragmata*, as things, to be dealt with and handled. In this more than anything else, Bernstein shows that "thinking," Bernstein's thinking, continues to be both *poiesis* and technics.

For Bernstein, it is on the basis of the purity of the distinction between *praxis* and *theoria* that he reaches his conclusion. This conclusion takes the form of a convergence of his *ethico*-philosophical question with his *politico*-philosophical question. Heidegger does not tell us "how one should live," he does not give ethical

William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 100, n. 10.

[22] Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?", *The New Constellation*, pp. 127–8.

directives, he is unconcerned with *praxis* and *phronesis*, and for this reason Heidegger cannot confront the political in its concreteness, in its contingency and in its humanity. According to Bernstein's conclusion, the concern with *ethos* is in fact nothing other than a kind of flight from "ethics," a flight into the actionless pondering of *theoria*, a flight the *purpose* of which is both a flight from the reality of history—from the "silent screams"—and a flight from responsibility—a self-absolution of responsibility for "Auschwitz."[23] But it is Heidegger's thought itself that puts into question the very terms of Bernstein's position.

Heidegger, 1924: Aristotle and Plato

> *"We must not allow ourselves to be led astray by this kind of dichotomizing and see the systematization of concepts as what is essential in it. On the contrary, the* deloun *remains what is essential, i.e., the showing and revealing of the matter at issue."*
> Martin Heidegger.[24]

When in 1924 Heidegger prefaces his lecture course on the *Sophist* with a long excursus on Aristotle, it is the culmination of an encounter with Aristotle's work that had been in progress since at least the moment in 1907 when Heidegger received a copy of Brentano's dissertation on the manifold meaning of being in Aristotle. The importance of this encounter with Aristotle for the "genesis" of *Sein und Zeit* is only now beginning to be grasped.[25] Even if in 1924 Heidegger already

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[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 133–4: "This is much more—and much worse—than a 'Platonic bias' or even a blindness to the human condition of plurality. It is as if in Heidegger's obsession with man's estrangement from Being, nothing else counts as essential or true except pondering one's *ethos*. Furthermore, we can begin to question the Heideggerian discourse of response and responsibility. When Heidegger explicitly discusses responsibility in 'The Question Concerning Technology' it is exclusively in regard to the co-responsibility in the occasioning of the four causes in bringing forth, *poiesis*. He tells us that this sense of responsibility has nothing to do with our normal 'correct' understanding of moral responsibility. It becomes clear that the only response that is really important and appropriate is the response to the silent call of Being, not to the silent screams of our fellow human beings. If *Gestell* is the destining of modern technology, if it 'claims man,' then 'mere' human responsibility for Auschwitz is absolved."

[24] Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 198.

[25] Cf., especially William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye*, p. x. Also cf., Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). The exception remains those who were present at the lecture courses delivered by Heidegger prior to *Sein und Zeit*, such as Gadamer, who attests that the influence of Heidegger's

sees the Greek understanding of being in terms of *techne*, nevertheless he cannot be accused of failing to attend to any of the other *aletheuein*, or of failing to attend to the system by which Aristotle organizes them. This lecture course is of decisive importance in seeing the evolution of the way in which Heidegger understands the relation of ethics, politics, and philosophy, and for trying to determine Heidegger's own relation to the work of Aristotle.

There is a strange irony at work in the Aristotelianism of Bernstein and Taminiaux. Both criticize Heidegger for failing to attend to the importance of *phronesis* in Aristotle, and both point to Aristotle's act of *distinguishing phronesis* from the other "intellectual virtues" as the decisive feature of Aristotle's analysis, and as what Heidegger forgets or conceals. For these critics it seems sufficient to *refer* to this supposed result of Aristotle's philosophical labor in order to have *demonstrated* the errancy of Heidegger's own philosophical labor. This demonstration has all the appearance of placing the author Aristotle in the position of (philosophical) authority, as though the "truths" which constitute the results and the effects of Aristotle's work, of Aristotle's *theory*, could be unproblematically handed down from past to present, to establish the correctness of asserting that there is such a thing "*phronesis*" that has nothing to do with "*poiesis*" or "*techne*." And this correction, for which the philosophical authority of Aristotle remains unquestionable and imponderable, is intended also to correct that "Platonic bias" that would make (in-active) philosophy the highest form of thought and the origin of political and ethical thought. As though it were possible to locate, without interpreting wildly, an Aristotle, more "advanced" than his predecessor, for whom philosophy, or *sophia*, was not the highest, or for whom *praxis* in the *polis* had nothing whatsoever to do with a bringing forth or a making. And without even beginning to question the supposed *obviousness*, within the Platonic dialogues, of that fault or error which would enable us without question to judge "Plato himself" *guilty* of such a Platonic bias.[26]

Yet Heidegger himself appears, in the opening of the lecture course, also appears to view Aristotle as representing an "advance" over Plato. In the short

reading of Aristotle upon the formation of Heidegger's thought generally was transparent. Gadamer specifically mentions Heidegger's reading of the Aristotelian differentiation between *techne*, *episteme* and *phronesis*, conducted "in the critique of Plato," as Heidegger's "first, decisive step away from 'philosophy as a rigorous science'." Cf., Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Greeks," *Heidegger's Ways* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 141.

[26] John Sallis questions the obviousness of this kind of reading of Plato in "The Politics of the *Chora*," in Reginald Lilly (ed.), *The Ancients and the Moderns* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), see esp. pp. 59–61. For Sallis this reading of (or failure to read) Plato depends upon a suppression or reduction of the *chora*, a suppression or reduction that begins with the reading of Aristotle.

section at the beginning that "explains" why a course on Plato begins with Aristotle, Heidegger states unequivocally: "We will presuppose that Aristotle understood Plato."[27] The reason for this, he states, is that the later always understand their predecessors better than the predecessors understand themselves. "That implies no value judgment on Plato," he adds, for what Aristotle said is what Plato "placed at his disposal [*in die Hand gab*], only it is said more radically and developed more scientifically."[28] If Heidegger's "presupposition" is guilty of following a certain tradition with regard to the relationship between Plato and Aristotle, we must nevertheless not assume too quickly that Heidegger is guilty of a "technical understanding" of philosophy and its progress.

The paragraph that presupposes that Aristotle understood Plato is the same one that attempts to state something about why the lecture course seeks to understand the past. Certain themes can immediately be picked out: this past is not something detached; we are this past itself; but this is not so simply by being friends of the past, by cultivating tradition; tradition is the past become obvious, obvious and hence obscured; what must occur is that what has become obvious must be made transparent in its foundations; to understand history means to understand ourselves, in some way to appropriate that past; to appropriate means to know oneself as indebted (*Schuld*) to that past; it means discovering that if philosophy believes it can have a wholly new beginning, then it is guilty (*Schuld*) of an omission, a neglect.[29] We can certainly ask whether Heidegger can be sure that Aristotle is not guilty of an omission with respect to his reading of Plato, and whether Heidegger is not indebted to Aristotle's guilt. It may be that all inheritance is guilty and precisely in this way, which does not make it any less our inheritance.

We are not "accepting" Heidegger's justification, if it is that, of reading Plato via Aristotle. But it is worthwhile noting that Heidegger is clearly, obviously, stating that *reading* Plato *or* Aristotle, is an *act* of interpretation, an act which is a "bringing forth" without thereby being necessarily a *"neu anfangen."* That the past is *our* past, that it is already clear and something we already know and are comfortable in knowing, is precisely why *understanding* that past involves *doing something* to that past, appropriating it. It is always a *poiesis* and a *praxis*. Aristotle is the "guiding line" ("*Leitfaden*") for Heidegger's reading of Plato, yet what this means remains obscure, since Aristotle does *not* function within the course simply as Heidegger's *authority*.

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 8.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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In what respect does Aristotle constitute this guiding line? The question that organizes Heidegger's long introductory excursus on Aristotle is precisely the question that he is accused of later ignoring—the question concerning the priority of *phronesis* or *sophia* as the highest mode of unconcealing.

Epistemonikon *and* logistikon

Plato's *Sophist*, for Heidegger, is a reflection on being and the possibility of non-being. This reflection is pursued by asking about one of "Da-sein's most extreme possibilities," the existence of the philosopher. The existence of the philosopher is pursued indirectly, by asking about the *"eigentliche Nichtphilosoph,"* that is, the sophist. That the authentic non-philosopher is the sophist already suggests that this question about being will also be a question about speaking, about *legein* and *logos*. The matter at issue is the Greek understanding of the relation of speaking to being, that is, the question of truth, of *aletheia*, and of falsehood, of *pseudos*. Already, before he begins to read Aristotle, Heidegger performs his familiar gesture with regard to *aletheia*: firstly, to indicate its privative character, as something negative. *Aletheia* means no longer hidden. Secondly, this hiddenness has a double character: there is what is hidden initially, as in ignorance, and there is the hiddenness that covers things over subsequently, the concealedness that speech can bring, the "danger" of idle talk. From such an understanding of *aletheia* philosophy receives its double task: of breaking through (*vorzubrechen*) to the things themselves; and of taking up the struggle (*Kampf*) against *Gerede*. Those forms of disclosure which have *aletheia* as their goal are designated by the Greeks as *aletheuein*, those forms of disclosing which remove the world from concealedness, and which appear in "speaking with one another [*Miteinanderreden*], in *legein*." Heidegger performs another of his typical gestures—he states that *legein* is what most basically constitutes human Da-sein, and cites the (Aristotelian) formula: *zoon logon echon*. And he states that *logos* is defined by Aristotle as *apophainesthai* and as *deloun*, as the appearance of what appears, what comes to light, what becomes ob-vious.[30]

But in fact, of the five *aletheuein* that Aristotle enumerates, only four are "of speech": *nous* appears not to be *meta logou*, not to be carried out in speech. The relation of *nous* to the other *aletheuein* and to *logos* will arise later. The remaining four are divided and classified into *two* categories. The principle of this division is itself twofold, determined on the one hand by what kind of *discourse* is involved, and on the other hand by *what* is disclosed in that discourse, that is, determined

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 10–3.

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once from the character of the disclosive *logos* and once from the character of the *beings* disclosed or, more specifically. And this second factor—what kind of beings are disclosed—is *also* grasped as a matter of what kind of *archai* are disclosed, that is, the *archai* specific to the region of each *aletheuein*. This division, then, represents something about the relation of being and *logos*. The kind of discourse that expresses the truth of a certain region of being(s) will itself be determined by that character of being or by the *archai* of the beings proper to that region.

These two categories are *epistemonikon* and *logistikon*. The *aletheuein* which belong to *epistemonikon* are those concerned with "knowledge," with its development and acquisition; at the same time, the region of beings with which they are concerned are those whose *archai* are eternal, unchanging, invariable. *Episteme* and *sophia* (which Heidegger translates as "*eigentliche Verstehen*") belong to this category. The *aletheuein* which belong to *logistikon* are those which are concerned not with knowledge but rather with a different kind of truth—they are concerned with deliberation and with *bouleuesthai*, which Heidegger translates here as "circumspective consideration, deliberation."[31] These discourses concern those beings that can be otherwise. *Logistikon* includes *techne* (which Heidegger translates as "*Sich-Aus-kennen*," know-how), and *phronesis* (*Umsicht [Einsicht]*, circumspection [insight]). Heidegger briefly explains the classification:

> *Techne* has to do with things which first have to be made and which are not yet what they will be. *Phronesis* makes the situation accessible [*die Situation zugänglich*]; and the circumstances are always different in every action. On the other hand, *episteme* and *sophia* concern that which always already was, that which humans do not first produce.[32]

What is the status of this distinction between two orders of modes of *aletheuein*? Is knowledge or deliberation involved when making such a distinction? Can a statement that divides the modes of *aletheuein* be part of a discourse that belongs within *one* of those modes, or must it by definition lie beyond all "aletheic" discourse? If the making of a distinction between *epistemonikon* and *logistikon* could by definition not be made by a discourse that merely belongs to one of these, then could it belong to *nous*? But if *nous* is not *meta logou*, not within discourse, then it must be some kind of "making a distinction" that is not "making a statement." In short, out of what relation of being and *logos* does the potentiality arise of making, or observing, a distinction between two orders of *aletheuein*?

Without raising these questions directly, Heidegger addresses himself to them, in a form that may be taken as *either* responding to them or concealing them. He

31 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
32 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

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states that "this initial and most primitive ontological distinction" does not arise from a philosophical consideration, it is not invented (*konstruiert*). Rather, it is "a distinction of natural Da-sein itself."[33] What is "natural Da-sein itself," and what does it mean for a distinction to *arise*? Da-sein "in its natural mode of Being," Heidegger states, is Da-sein in its concern with those things that lie closest, the objects of its own production, those things encountered in its everyday concerns. What comes to "natural Da-sein," what comes naturally to Da-sein, is the distinction between this world of Da-sein's own creation, the world of the changeable, of technics, on the one hand, and on the other hand the world of the invariable, of "nature itself" (and we are immediately led to wonder to which of these worlds Da-sein "itself," in its naturalness, belongs). The distinction appears as something happened upon—humanity finds itself within the distinction between *physis* and *techne*.

There is therefore an ambiguity in Heidegger's response to this distinction between *epistemonikon* and *logistikon*. That the distinction is ontological, that it is initial and primitive, means neither that it is the deepest and most profound ontological truth, nor that it is *merely* the first step from which ontological method must depart. It is tempting to conclude that, because Heidegger implicitly *raises* the question of the origin of the *knowledge* of this distinction, that he thereby *questions* that distinction, or that he questions the discourse that claims to make, discover or establish it. But Heidegger is clear that this distinction is not merely something construed or invented, not merely the setting beside each other of two regions of being *by* some kind of "theoretical knowledge." "Rather, this distinction articulates the *world*; it is its first general ontological articulation."[34] What it *is* possible to conclude is that, in raising the question Heidegger, unlike Bernstein, is aware that *if* the *aletheuein* are multiple and divided, if there are different *kinds* of thinking, then, even if this distinction *falls* upon "natural Da-sein," it is nevertheless the case that the ground upon which it is possible to *think* the division of the *aletheuein* can become questionable.

So, it is as though this distinction were in fact something obvious, and that the making of this distinction, or the discovering of this distinction, were simply the most obvious thing, or rather the *first* obvious thing. But, just like the move from Aristotle back to Plato, or just like the description of the phenomenological method generally, what is at stake is a move back from the clear to the obscure, to make what is obvious into something that is on the contrary "transparent" ("*Durchsichtig*"). And Heidegger finds this "method" also in Aristotle. If we happen

[33] *Ibid*.
[34] *Ibid*.

upon this distinction which articulates the world, the question inevitably becomes which *one* of these orders of *aletheuein* best takes beings out of unconcealment—what is the *malista aletheuein*, the *most* disclosing discourse? *The* ontological question becomes a question about discourse, about *which* discourse is the most properly ontological. On the one hand Aristotle does not hesitate to conclude that the highest form of *epistemonikon* is *sophia*, while the highest form of *logistikon* is *phronesis*. But on the other hand, Aristotle does not proceed directly to or from the highest, but on the contrary from those modes which are most immediately "visible," from *episteme* and *techne*.[35] The question which Heidegger takes from Aristotle, and which guides the entire reading of Aristotle in the lecture course, is the question about the "highest" mode of disclosure, the question of the priority of *sophia* or *phronesis*. But the *form* in which this question is pursued—a form that is at least *quasi*-phenomenological—is also borrowed by Heidegger from Aristotle. Only through an "ever sharper grasp" of the most visible, of *episteme* and *techne*, can the guiding question be approached.

Episteme *and* techne

For Heidegger's Aristotle, the pursuit of being, or the investigation into the way in which being becomes available, opens with this distinction, natural for Da-sein, between two *classes* of *aletheuein*, *epistemonikon* and *logistikon*. Within these two classes falls four ways of pursuing being: *episteme*, *techne*, *phronesis*, and *sophia*. But how do we pursue the character of these four ways in order to draw conclusions about which one is the way to the uncovering of being itself? How do we discover which way to being is the "highest"? For Heidegger's Aristotle, if we can pursue each of these four ways, in each case it is a question of two things: in the first case, there is the question of what beings are uncovered by each way of uncovering beings; in the second case, there is the question of the manner in which each way relates to the *arche*, to that out of which the beings come to be, and hence, come to have the potential of being uncovered.

Episteme is knowledge. It is for this reason that in the above paragraph it is necessary to ask about "four ways of uncovering being(s)" rather than about "four kinds of knowledge" or "four ways of knowing being." *Episteme*, knowing, is one way into beings, and with Aristotle the point *seems* always to be the distinctions *between* ways rather than their interrelatedness. And yet it is not long before a problem emerges. What we know about *episteme* is that it belongs to

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

epistemonikon—it concerns those beings that are not changeable. Knowledge, of plants, animals, the universe, is always so. Individual beings, plants, animals, may die or are born, but our knowledge of these things, insofar as it *is* knowledge, is immutable. Knowledge always is—for Heidegger it is clear that the way Aristotle understands knowledge, as what is everlasting, what is never interrupted, has its origin in the Greek understanding of the relation of being to time. Being means being in the present, those beings that *are* in the present, and it is these beings, present beings, which are the basis for the Greek conception of being in general. Beings are interpreted as to their being on the basis of time grasped according to the present.[36]

If *episteme* is understood as a relation to beings defined as being-in-the-present, then the basis for the understanding of *episteme* is as a spatial relation to those beings. This is the problem. Knowing is a "being-positioned" (*"Gestelltsein"*), "a tarrying being-present to beings" (*"ein Daseisein-beim-Seienden"*). Knowing, as "being-positioned," means being in position for the uncovering of beings, having the "outward look" (*"Aussehen"*) of beings available. But at the beginning of this section we described *aletheuein in general* as the uncovering of being. Would not all uncovering of being consist of some kind of coming-to-*know* being? Have we not grasped "knowing" *in terms of* "uncovering," which would again tend to suggest that the unconcealment of *aletheia* and the uncovering of *episteme* encompass the same region? And yet the thought that *episteme*, as a being-in-position, a positionality, has available only the "outward look" of beings does not *sound* like it is a true grasping or knowing or penetrating of being itself.

In other words, if *episteme* and *aletheia* as such are both defined in terms of "uncoveredness," on what basis are they to be distinguished, and on what basis is *episteme* to be considered as falling short of the highest way of pursuing being? It is tempting to say that we already know the answer. If, as Heidegger states, Aristotle defines knowledge in terms of being as being-in-the-present, and if as a consequence of such an understanding of being knowledge is defined "positionally" (a relation *to* beings, a looking *at* beings, and hence a being *outside of* beings), then this "metaphysical" understanding of the relation of being and time must be at the heart of the limits of knowledge as a way of encountering "truth." There is a sense in which this is Heidegger's analysis. "Knowledge" for the Greeks does not name something utterly other than "knowledge" or "science" today, and in both cases the limits of knowledge are set by the metaphysical conception of being which underlies it.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

But this character of knowledge as "being-in-position" not only reflects the Greek understanding of being as being-present. The "positionality" of knowledge is also the consequence of that relation to the *archai* that is peculiar to *episteme*. Knowledge, as positionality, is not only something spatial as something that looks from the outside. Knowledge, as positionality, also means that it is built upon supposition and presupposition. Knowledge is built upon a ground, the collection of suppositions with which it begins. What is therefore peculiar to knowledge is that it is something teachable, communicable, that is, *forgettable*. And with this, the "positionality" of *episteme* has another "temporal" consequence apart from its immutability. For what is peculiar to knowledge, to a science of facts, is that, even though it is defined as a positionality toward beings that has their uncoveredness available, nevertheless this uncoveredness need not be something constantly present. We can learn facts, forget facts, or even learn facts while *never* grasping the presuppositions that establish the "factuality" of the facts. We can impart knowledge without imparting *all* the facts, without imparting the *basis* for that knowledge, and without *understanding* what we know. And this peculiarity of knowledge derives less from the fact that knowledge is *in* a position or *takes* a position than from the fact that it is grounded upon a positing which is *not* available, which remains hidden. In other words, what remains hidden to knowledge are the *archai* upon which it is built. It is the relation to the *archai* that determines the relation of the way of pursuing being to *aletheia*. Even though *episteme* is an *aletheuein*, and even though it is defined first of all in terms of "uncovering," the limitations of *episteme* are the limitations of the two senses of "position": knowledge is outside looking in (at beings); knowledge is built upon that which is posited and which remains hidden from its view (the relation to the *archai*).

The way in which Heidegger phrases this conclusion itself raises questions. In short, the conclusion we have reached is that even though knowledge is conceived in relation to the uncovering of beings, because the origins of that knowledge remain occluded, in fact beings do *not* become available. Heidegger writes:

> Thus *episteme* is an *aletheuein* which does not make beings, and specifically the everlasting beings, genuinely available [*nicht eigentlich verfügbar macht*]. For *episteme*, these beings are precisely still hidden [*verdeckt*] in the *archai*.[37]

The questions exposed here may be summarized: (1) In what way does *eigentlich* function in this context? Is Heidegger's "genuine" availability of beings a translation of Aristotle's search for the "highest" *aletheuein*, or does it anticipate the language of *Sein und Zeit*, in which case what Heidegger is stating here is that

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

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"knowledge" can never reach the limit of Da-sein's "proper" relation to being? (2) If the beings remain unavailable because the *archai* remain hidden, then is the *arche* another name for being, being "itself"? This conclusion is perhaps inescapable.

In the lecture course of 1924–25, *techne* does not appear to have the significance it has for the later Heidegger, for the Heidegger of "The Question Concerning Technology" or even for the Heidegger of *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Eventually, *techne* comes to be the word for the essential characteristic of humanity—humanity as that which, remaining mortal, is something other than one animal among others. At this early stage we will not hear any statements such as *"Techne* is the active violence of knowledge."[38] Here, Heidegger seems to treat *techne* within its place, within the Aristotelian scheme, a limited place, and one limited specifically by the supposition that *techne*, belonging to *logistikon*, is subordinate to *phronesis*. Here, *techne* is not an *eigentliche aletheuein*. Admittedly, it is already possible to see in 1924 why *techne* (which concerns those beings which change in the sense that they are to be *produced*) is the same as *physis*—what is involved in both cases are beings coming to be properly what they are.[39] But in 1924–25, the fact that objects of *poiesis* come to be properly what they are, according to the guidance of *techne*, is confirmation of the fact that Aristotle's conception of *techne* is grounded in the Platonic "idea."[40] In reading Heidegger on *techne* here, what is at stake is not a diagnosis of the present, but an account the end of which is the beginning of *another*, more proper, *aletheuein—phronesis*.

Before Heidegger conducts his analysis of *techne*, he includes a short discussion about the relation of *episteme* to *praxis* and *poiesis*. The word he uses for *poiesis* is *Herstellen*, producing, while for *praxis* he uses *Handeln*, acting. Up until now, he states, we have not been able to see in *episteme* something that is more or less included in all modes of *aletheuein*. But insofar as *episteme* is a task, it is a *praxis*, which strives to uncover beings, to know the *alethes*. Nevertheless initially and for the most part knowing is in service to making, to *poiesis* or to *praxis* in the proper sense. In other words, Heidegger seems to be saying that knowledge—to the degree and to the extent that it *serves*, and in spite of the analysis of *episteme* as an autonomous mode of *aletheuein*—tends toward *techne*, which is that mode of *aletheuein*, that way of pursuing being, which concerns those beings that are produced, that are the object of production, of *poiesis*. Or perhaps it is better to state

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[38] Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000, new trans. Gregory Fried & Richard Polt), p. 176.

[39] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 18.

[40] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 32–3.

it as the tendency for *episteme* to emerge from *out of techne*. To define *episteme* to the exclusion of *techne* would mean absolutely separating that pursuit of knowledge which merely strives to uncover beings from that which then is able to be put to use in "making." In other words, it would mean defining as absolutely different i character the kind of knowing peculiar to science and the kind of knowing peculiar to technology. Heidegger does not want to become trapped in a circle of means and ends concerning *episteme* and its relation to *techne*. The demand for interpretation is to grasp that each can be thought without denying that one inevitably and even from the beginning tends to become the other.

As with *episteme*, *techne* is grasped according to those beings with which it is concerned, and by the relation that it maintains to its *arche*. *Techne* is that *aletheuein* which concerns those things that are produced, and as such it is a kind of "guiding" ("*Führung*"). It is therefore something that comes before a *poiesis*, a preparation, not in the sense of pure theory, which would bring it back to being nothing other than *episteme*. Even though *techne* comes before *poiesis*, therefore, in a sense the reverse turns out to be true: *techne*, to be proper, must be determined from out of that which it *causes*. Concerned with those beings that are its end, *techne* is always a relation of "for which" ("*Dafür*") and "in order to" ("*Dazu*").[41] Unlike *episteme*, *techne* does not have its end in the striving for the *alethes*, but rather in those beings which are not yet but which it intends toward. *Techne* is that way of pursuing being which knows being insofar as it is a guide that leads to those beings that without *techne* would not be.

This understanding of the way in which *techne* exposes the beings with which it is concerned is reflected in the way in which Heidegger describes the relation of *techne* to its *arche*. As with *episteme*, for *techne* the *arche* remains outside that knowing of the beings with which it is concerned, but in each case the reason is different. Is this because the *arche* is the thing produced itself, the work, or *in* the work, and the thing itself is outside the technical knowing which makes that thing possible? Heidegger states that this is not the case. It is not that the *arche* lies within the work, but that it lies within the *producer*, within the one for whom *techne* is a mode of *aletheuein*. Here, Heidegger is concerned with what distinguishes the *poiesis* of *techne* from the *poiesis* of *physis*. The beings of *physis*, those beings that become what they are, a flower, say, contain their *arche* within themselves, but the work which emerges from *techne* has its *arche beside* the work. When the productive activity comes to completion, when the work, the *ergon*, finally emerges, *techne* comes to an end and thus does not know its object. *Techne*, which is always "in order to," ends in an object that is always itself "for the sake of something." *Techne* is not that mode of

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

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aletheuein which can know that for the sake of which the work is produced. *Techne* knows the work only *until* its completion.

This distinction will also be crucial when it comes to determining the relation of *phronesis* to *sophia*. Those who turn to *praxis* as the holy grail which will liberate us from the all-encompassing instrumentality of the ubiquitous "technics" of the later Heidegger's diagnosis of the present, frequently cite the fact that *praxis*, unlike *poiesis*, has its end in itself, in the doing well of the action that it is. The ideal politician, the true Aristotelian politician, guided by *phronesis*, engages not in the instrumentality of production, but in the acting well that is the end in itself of political *praxis*. What is at stake here is the possibility of escaping from the circle of ends and means. It is a circle that seems to haunt the entire Aristotelian schema of the *aletheuein*. The distinction between *episteme* and *techne* relies upon the claim that *episteme* is not simply the "theory" that serves as the basis for technical production, that *techne* is not easily reducible to "applied" *episteme*.[42] Those who declaim Heidegger's "forgetting" of *phronesis* tend to read as unproblematic Aristotle's distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* as the difference between activity that has its end outside itself (*poiesis*) and that activity the end of which lies within the activity itself (*praxis*). Thus *praxis* and *physis* are in this regard "the same," as kinds of becoming that have their ends within themselves, to the exclusion of *techne* and *poiesis*. *Poiesis* serves *praxis*, and not vice versa. But as soon as one admits the possibility that an action may *have* its reasons and purposes, the circle of means and ends reappears. *Praxis* with a purpose, or *praxis* that is part of some larger *praxis*, risks contamination by *poiesis*.[43] And a "political philosophy" which makes *phronesis*, in Aristotelian terms, "the highest," without thinking its way into (or out

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[42] Heidegger reads into Aristotle that the relation of *techne* and *episteme* is also something historical or, rather, that the relation is tendential. If *techne* is that world of knowing *things*, that situation in which humanity finds itself in being-separated from *physis*, then *episteme* is in relation to *techne* nothing but the *development* of this separation. *Techne* tends toward separating itself, freeing itself, more and more from things, from the *pragmata*. *Techne* tends, in other words, toward *episteme*. We will see this argument when Heidegger states that *sophia* is the continuation of this tendency, to the point of stating that *sophia* is the completion of *techne*. Cf., *ibid.*, pp. 63–5.

[43] Cf., Bernasconi, "The Fate of the Distinction between *Praxis* and *Poiesis*," *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 8: "But what does it mean for *praxis* to govern *poiesis*, or for the practical to be the principle of the productive? [...] The important point is rather that the practical is construed as the final cause of *poiesis*, as is indeed suggested by the reference to the *hou heneka* in the previous sentence. *Praxis* may bear its own end in itself, but how can it be the cause of *poiesis* without being conceived as an external goal? And if we grant to Heidegger that the doctrine of the four causes has its source in the experience of making, then Aristotle's reference of *praxis* to causality—be it the efficient or the final cause—places it within the referential teleology of *poiesis*. In this way *praxis*—at the very time that it is privileged over *poiesis*—comes to be interpreted in the light of *poiesis*, and *phronesis* is referred to *techne*." And cf., Bernasconi, "Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 28 supp. (1989), pp. 137–8.

of) this circle of ends and means, risks ending with the ethical commandment (a commandment that is contradictory to the degree to which it claims to be either ethical or a commandment): action without purpose.[44]

But what is immediately at stake in the manner in which the *arche* for *techne* remains in concealment is the relation of *techne* and *phronesis*. At the most immediate level, at the most *obvious* level, the distinction between *techne* and *phronesis* is to be found in what we have just observed: whereas for *phronesis*, in action as such, the end lies in the activity itself, in the case of *techne* the end is beside the work. To this extent *techne*, like *episteme*, is an outward seeing, that can guide the production of a being, but which upon the completion of that production finds itself without access to the *arche* of what it has produced. But *techne* is also, like *phronesis*, a *logistikon*, and what is common to both *techne* and *phronesis* is not only that they concern beings that are subject to change. *Logistikon also* signifies something about the way in which being is pursued, and what it signifies is a kind of looking around and deliberating. And this in turn signifies a certain relation to *decision*. At the end of his analysis of *techne*, Heidegger refers to "technical circumspection" (*"der technischen Umsicht"*).[45] This circumspective quality indicates firstly that *techne* is not merely theory, but rather is that taking account of a situation, taking stock of what is necessary, and what is possible or available, which makes the activity of *poiesis* able to *begin*. And, as will be the case with *phronesis*, *techne* gathers itself and comes to a kind of limit, the "uttermost" (*"Äußerstes"*), to the point where it can take hold and take action, where it breaks in (*"An- und Zugreifen"*).

If *techne* and *phronesis* are both circumspective and decisive, if they are both that way of pursuing being which breaks in and allows the beginning of action, then this appears to reinforce the thought that what distinguishes *phronesis* from *techne* must be the relation to its end. But it also brings *techne* and *phronesis* together within the same constellation. *Techne* and *phronesis* are not separable according to the criterion of whether they have a relation to action, for they are both that kind of looking

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[44] This is what is at stake when Heidegger observes that *phronesis* cannot be the *arete* of *techne*. We might think that, as *techne* has its end outside itself, *phronesis*, which also concerns those things subject to change, would give *techne* its end, its completion. But to conceive *phronesis* in such a way, to see it as a giver of ends, would imply that *phronesis* is the kind of thinking which *has* its ends and comes to completion. But, as we shall see, even if *phronesis* is the kind of thought that concerns *decision*, it is nevertheless "situated," and situated within *praxis* that is always *ongoing*. And there is a strong sense in which this is Bernstein's error: to conceive of *phronesis* as that *guide* to the *proper use* of technics, as the *arete* of *techne*. And this is not only an error concerning *phronesis*, but equally concerning *techne*, for it is to make of *techne* something that "we" control, use, choose. But the *arete* of *techne* is in fact just the "doing well" of *techne* itself, its own *development*, which occurs not according to our decisions concerning its ends nearly as much as through its own "logic," trial and error, the discovery of what *works*, etc. Cf., Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 37–8.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

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which is nothing other than coming to that limit, that decision, where action commences or breaks in. *Techne*, as much as *phronesis*, makes possible a breaking in, and hence even in this account of *techne* there is an anticipation of *techne* as "the active violence of knowledge."

Heidegger concludes his interpretation of *techne* in 1924–25 with its relation to the Platonic "idea." *Techne* is on the one hand the guide, the plan, the conception of the end in advance, and as such finds its ground in Plato. Or, rather, the "idea" is grasped by Plato on the basis of "technics" or a technical understanding of being. On the other hand, however, for Heidegger Aristotle's *techne* can be heard not merely as instrumentality and plan, but as circumspection and decision, as those ways of pursuing being that seize and break *into* being. This is not only to suggest that already in 1924 *techne* is something more that merely the instrumental, metaphysical, and essentially Platonic understanding of "technics" that Heidegger will later diagnose. It is also to suggest that if *techne* and *phronesis* are those forms of deliberation that relate to *poiesis* and *praxis* respectively, then the relation of *poiesis* and *praxis* also cannot be understood in terms of the relation of means to ends.

Phronesis *and* sophia

The discussion of *episteme* and *techne* is preliminary to the analysis of *phronesis* and *sophia*, and more specifically it is the way in which the ground is laid for a decision about whether *phronesis* or *sophia* is the highest way of knowing. This question of priority is Aristotle's. When Heidegger is accused of concentrating solely on *techne* in Aristotle to the exclusion of *phronesis*, and when this is taken as evidence that Heidegger's thought is concerned purely with the theoretical to the exclusion of the practical, certain things are necessarily forgotten. First among these is *sophia* itself, for it is a strange brand of neo-Aristotelianism that counters the priority of theory over practice by pointing toward Aristotle's account of *phronesis*, without in turn accounting for the fact that for Aristotle *sophia* is higher than *phronesis*. It is difficult to bring Aristotle to arms against Heidegger's "mere thinking" if *sophia* is the highest *aletheuein*.

Secondly, it is to forget that almost from the very beginning Heidegger's project commences from the observation that philosophy has dwelt too comfortably and too long within theoretical vision. Heidegger is already arguing in 1916 that another kind of breakthrough is needed, a "breakthrough into true actuality and actual

truth" ("*Durchbruch in die wahre Wirlichkeit und wirkliche Wahrheit*").[46] In 1924, when Heidegger is immersed in phenomenology, and when he does not hesitate to refer to phenomenological science, nevertheless it ought not be forgotten that what distinguishes Heideggerian from Husserlian phenomenology is precisely the wish to escape purely "theoretical" vision as the object and vehicle of phenomenological description. And the form of this escape is to suggest that theory, which views the world in terms of presence, does not come first, is not the first kind of sight, but begins only when we start to *notice* things in a certain way, when things are awry, and when there is time to *take* notice. "Things" are initially taken in terms of use, as objects of *techne*. Only subsequently does this way of knowing things open the possibility of another way of being-in-relation to things, in terms of presence, that is, *episteme*. What distinguishes Heidegger's phenomenology is the way we are involved with things *already*, the way we are already in a situation, being-in as such. It is this kind of knowing proper to being in a situation that Heidegger discovers in Aristotle's account of *phronesis*. In order to grasp where Heidegger stands on the relation of theory and practice, it is necessary to understand what he makes of Aristotle's decision concerning the priority of *sophia* over *phronesis*, *given* the degree to which *phronesis* is at the heart of Heidegger's thinking.

Before deciding the priority of *sophia* over *phronesis*, however, Heidegger first considers the way in which *phronesis* may be delimited against (*abzugrenzen gegen*) *techne*. And, again, this is a question not only of what distinguishes one from the other, but of their interrelatedness, of the way in which the consideration of each mode of *aletheuein* involves taking apart and putting together the others. *Phronesis*, like *techne*, relates to those beings subject to change, but *phronesis* differs from *techne* in relation to the *telos*. Whereas for *techne* the *telos* lies next to or outside of the knowing of *techne*, that is, in the work, the product, this is not the case for *phronesis*, the *telos* of which lies in *zoe* itself. *Phronesis* resembles *techne* in that it takes the form "if such and such is to come to be, then this or that must happen."[47] But whereas with *techne* that for the sake of which such and such must happen is the *ergon*, in the case of *phronesis* that for the sake of which such and such must happen involves the acting person, Da-sein. And to the extent that the *telos* involves Da-sein, the *telos* and the *arche* are one.

The way in which phenomenology names the same thing as *phronesis* is already emerging. *Phronesis* is that kind of knowing, that way of revealing being, that (1) has Da-sein as its *arche* and its *telos*; and (2) has Da-sein as its *telos* precisely in the sense

[46] Heidegger, cited in Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 65.

[47] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 35.

that Da-sein is already in the world and involved with the world, and that Da-sein's involvement is *toward* the world, in the sense of "care" ("*Sorge*"). Da-sein, in its concernfulness, is always for-the-sake-of something. The analysis of Da-sein begins with a "being-in" that exceeds "purely theoretical" intentionality. Da-sein is "in" the world as something more than a spectator, beyond mere onlooking, "mere theatre," beyond *theoria*.[48]

If *phronesis* involves Da-sein, if Da-sein is somehow *thematic* for *phronesis* (as *arche* and *telos*), and if *phronesis* is a mode of *aletheuein*, a way of uncovering, then Da-sein must be such that it has the possibility of being covered over. And Heidegger does not fail to find in Aristotle an indication of the source of this possibility. *Phronesis*, unlike *episteme* and *techne*, requires *sophrosune*, because while knowledge is forgettable, what threatens *phronesis* is not forgetting but distortion or confusion, a different kind of covering over (1140b13). A disposition (*Stimmung*) of Da-sein in the end either conceals Da-sein from itself or reveals Da-sein to itself. And this potential for a *Stimmung* to conceal is not an event that may or may not occur, but a continuously present danger, against which *phronesis* is a constant struggle (*einem ständigen Kampf*).[49] Da-sein is always in a mood. This obviously foreshadows the account in *Sein und Zeit* of the danger of *Gerede*, a danger that one never escapes, and which, *as* talk, seems to have its ground in a potentiality of *logos*.

But this being-covered-over, and the possibility of a circumspective and deliberative knowing that can wrest Da-sein away from being-covered-over, is in fact the presupposition of all phenomenology as such. "To the things themselves" expresses nothing other than this. The paradox of Husserlian phenomenology, perhaps all phenomenology, is that in its origin is a distrust of *logos*, while in its method (and it is nothing but method), this distrust is necessarily overlooked in the carrying out of phenomenological description. But if it is not unjust to formulate such a paradox of phenomenology, this is nothing other than the expression of the following problem: does the origin of Da-sein's possibility of being-covered-over lie in *logos* or in perception itself, in *nous*? It may turn out that the relation of *nous* and *logos* is more important than, *prior* to, the question of the priority of *phronesis* and *sophia*. But that *phronesis* is identifiable more or less with phenomenology in general is indicated by the fact that *phronesis*, as the possibility of wresting Da-sein from the danger of *Stimmung*, is conceived as a task, *Aufgabe*, to be seized in an anticipatory, projective, *decision*. It is indicated too by the fact that Heidegger translates in

[48] Cf., Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 101: "*Phronesis*, however, is not at all like a speculating upon [*Betrachtung*] the situation and the action; it is not a taking stock [*Bestandsaufnahme*] in the sense of disinterested establishment [*Feststellung*], it is not a study of the situation in which I find myself." And on the relation between *theoria* and speculating, the spectator of the theatre, cf., *ibid.*, p. 44.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 36–7.

precisely the same terms two passages of Aristotle that describe and summarize *phronesis*: "such a disposition [*Gestelltsein*] of human Da-sein, that it has at its disposal its own transparency [*daß es über die Durchsichtigkeit seiner selbst verfügt*]."[50]

There would appear to be a limit, however, to the correlation of *phronesis* and phenomenology. Even if we argue that *phronesis* is phenomenological in the sense that it involves Da-sein as a being that is concerned with and intending toward the world, phenomenology does not share with *phronesis* the same *kind* of concern, a concern for what Da-sein's decision *is*. Likewise, *phronesis* is not the attempt to *describe* Da-sein's concern with the world, but is that kind of circumspection that serves as a kind of guide to action (*als Führung der Handlung*).[51] And even if *phronesis* is not an *eidos* in relation to *praxis* (as *techne* tends to become in relation to *poiesis*), even if *phronesis* is not a plan or an accompaniment to action, but rather is "co-constitutive"[52] with action—there at every step—nevertheless *phronesis serves praxis*. *Phronesis* is not autonomous. And thus, even though Da-sein is the *arche*, and the *arche* is the *telos*, and hence *phronesis* is involved with its *arche* and its *telos*, nevertheless *phronesis* does not consider the *arche* and *telos* inasmuch as *they are arche* and *telos*. *Phronesis* is neither ethics nor science, but only a view of a concrete action and decision.[53] Thus the way in which *phronesis is* involved and concernful is what means that it is *not* phenomenology or even phenomenological ethics.[54]

Heidegger might be thought to be preparing the ground for *sophia* to become the true basis for Heidegger's own philosophy. If *sophia*, unlike *phronesis*, grasps the *arche* and the *telos* as such, would it not be the true science of being, the true origin of phenomenology? But the very first statement about *sophia* that Heidegger makes is that "even *sophia*, which ultimately aims at the final principles of beings, is an *aletheuein* which does not have the *archai* as its exclusive and proper theme."[55] Understanding the implications of this limit of *sophia* will be crucial to

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[50] *Ibid.*, p. 35. This is Heidegger's translation of 1140b5f. On p. 37, Heidegger translates the description of *phronesis* at b20f., as follows: "*ein solches Gestelltsein des menschlichen Da-seins, daß ich darin verfüge über die Durchsichtigkeit meiner selbst.*"

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[54] But, on the other hand, perhaps phenomenology itself could be considered to be a kind of view of a situation, and of a concrete action and decision. It does not seem impossible to consider the decision to do phenomenology as itself a kind of preparation for a decision, an attempt to come to grips with a situation in order to facilitate action. Perhaps in this way *phronesis* lies buried in phenomenology, if not in everything that can be called "philosophy."

[55] *Ibid.*

understanding Aristotle's conception of the relation of *phronesis* and *sophia*, and to an understanding of Heidegger's relation to Aristotle in general.

There is a sense in which the account of the modes of *aletheuein* is quasi-historical. To understand the relation of these modes it is not sufficient to delimit them against each other in terms of the beings that are thematic and the relation to the *arche*. There is also a sense in which they form something like a progression. Understanding Aristotle's account of *sophia* means understanding this progression, and the basis for thinking this progression is a certain difference between humans and animals, and Heidegger finds an account of this difference at the beginning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

The difference between humans and the animals, in Book Alpha of *Metaphysics*, is not described in terms of the possession of *logos*, even if we cannot imagine separating *logos* from the difference in question. Here, the difference is the kind of memory humans and animals possess. For whereas animals may possess memory, and hence may be capable of being taught, they do not possess the kind of memory that allows for the connecting of experiences into a single experience. In other words, what is peculiar to humanity is a certain relation *to* memory, to put memory to use. Humans not only *learn* but are capable of acting with the past *in mind*, of using memory as a tool, taking advantage of memory through deliberate repetition and procedure. Memory, then, as the condition of possibility of *emperia* and technics.[56]

If *techne* depends on a certain kind of memory, and a certain repetition, then it depends on time, or, rather, on *taking* time. *Phronesis*, unlike *techne*, does not learn through failure, but it does benefit from experience—*phronesis* takes a while. *Techne* and *phronesis* are those *aletheuein* concerned with things, with the variability of things but, in taking time, they tend toward "freeing" themselves of things, to free themselves from *handling* things. In taking time, *techne* tends toward *episteme*, toward a looking and an *emperia* concerned not with production but simply with knowing. Thus *episteme* depends on a certain achievement of time, on *scholazein*, leisure, a certain tarrying with things as opposed to handling them. And, beyond *episteme*, there is the possibility that, in having time and taking time, contemplation turns in a certain sense into pure *aisthesis*, and in another sense past the things and toward the *archai*. This ability of Da-sein to take time as the origin of a certain

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[56] We may ask: what makes this difference of memory? If the difference between humans and animals is that for humans memory is not simply a possession which may intrude upon experience but is rather a *tool* that we choose to deploy in *emperia*, then it is not memory that is the condition of technics, but rather technics that makes the possibility of (humanity's peculiar) memory. And this thought, and this "critique" of Heidegger, is what we will find in Bernard Stiegler. See Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), part 2.

"taking place" of the division of the modes of *aletheuein* from *techne* to *episteme* to *sophia*, is less a theory of the leisure class than it is a fundamental potentiality of Da-sein as such. *Sophia*, then, is this furthest development of contemplation, this furthest departure from *poiesis*. On the one hand, *sophia* takes *aisthesis* as a point of departure, and on the other hand it is a countermovement to *aisthesis* that intends toward the *arche*.[57] And, in this quasi-historical sense, *sophia* is nothing more than the "completion" ("*Vollendung*") of *techne*.[58]

If *sophia* is the furthest development of this having time and taking time, such that it becomes nothing other than contemplation, then it is that mode of knowing which happens for no sake other than itself. If that for the sake of which *phronesis* is carried out is Da-sein or *praxis*, in the case of *sophia* it is nothing other than for the sake of *sophia* itself. *Sophia* is that grasping of beings which, unlike *phronesis*, is autonomous. Since it is not bound by any "for the sake of which," it is free to pursue the *ultimate* "for the sake of which," that ultimate "why" or reason for anything. But what can the ultimate "for the sake of which," the ultimate *ou eneka*, the ultimate *telos*, be, other than the final *good* that orients all things or, more simply, "good" in itself? And this is the paradox of the relation of *sophia* and *phronesis*:

> With this characterization of *sophia* as aiming at an *agathon*, Aristotle comes in questionable proximity to another relation to beings: *praxis*. For *praxis* is oriented precisely toward the for the sake of which. Thus if *sophia* aims at the *agathon*, then it seems that it is ultimately a *praxis*, whereas the preceding has shown precisely that it is free of *chresis* and is a pure *theorein*. Thus the difficulty is that we have here a comportment of Da-sein which, on the one hand, relates to something determined as *agathon*, yet, on the other hand, it is not supposed to be *praxis* but *theorein*.[59]

Heidegger's resolution of this paradox is the assertion that *agathon* is not to be understood ethically but ontologically. Does he impose this "ontological" character of *agathon* on Aristotle? Does Heidegger thereby *revert* to the distinction between *theorein* and *praxis*? Does he exclude ethics in *favor* of ontology, and hence *decide between them*?

Before it is possible to draw such conclusions, it is necessary to ask why the "*agathon*" is happened upon at all in this context. The place at which Heidegger comes across the *agathon* is at that point in Aristotle's quest after *sophia* in the first book of *Metaphysics*, where he is considering *sophia* in terms of its *archai* and its *aitia*, its origins and its causes. The *agathon* is the name of that final cause, the *telos*. The *agathon* is the cause in the sense of the ultimate end, the "why" of anything, the why

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[57] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 67–8.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 47. Heidegger derives this from the point at which Aristotle speaks of the usage of "*sophia*" within the technical world to signify the achievement of excellence, as the *arete* of *techne* (1141a11f.).

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

of the "movement" or "change" in something. What, then, would it mean for *sophia* to aim at the *highest agathon*, the "why" of "why," the "autonomous" (*"eigenständig"*), what stands alone, in the sense that it aims at what is in no way guided but only the "guide" (*"Führung"*)? For *sophia* to question about this highest *agathon* would be strictly speaking to ask an unanswerable question. Were an answer possible, were it possible to give a name to or account of this final "for the sake of which," then it would be possible to ask about this "why" and *its* "why." Even *sophia*, therefore, does not have the *archai* as its proper theme. The highest *agathon* is strictly unpresentable. Aristotle is giving a version of the question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" and, again, what is at stake is the end of the circle of ends. If we can give the end of ends a name—and we always can give it a name: *"agathon," "god," "goodness," "world," "being"*—these are names for the question rather than the solution. But they are not even names of a question, for a question that is in principle without answer ceases to be a question. Yet neither does this simply erase the question of the ultimate "why."[60]

If we accept that the traditional concept of "ethics" implies a relation to "value," then it is clear that stating that the *agathon* must be understood ontologically is not a decision *between* "being" and "ethics." Heidegger is insisting that if by *agathon* we intend the ultimate "for the sake of which," then this can in no way be a matter of "value" insofar as "value" is part of the world of beings, the world of what *already* is. Nevertheless, insofar as the *agathon* is that which determines beings in their coming-to-be, in their coming to be completely what they are, *sophia* is *not* absolutely separable from *phronesis*. *Sophia* is a peculiar *phronesis*, directed to an *agathon*, but an *agathon* that is not a *prakton*.[61]

If this account of *agathon* tells us about what is thematic in *sophia*, that is, if *sophia* is concerned with the ultimate "for the sake of which," then the inevitable question is whether Da-sein possesses the potentiality to pursue *sophia*. *Sophia* cannot be the

[60] Cf., Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 184–5, where Heidegger addresses this question in relation to Plato's idea of the *agathon* and its relation to Da-sein's "world": "What we must, moreover, learn to see in the *idea tou agathon* is the characteristic described by Plato and particularly Aristotle as the *ou eneka*, the *for-the-sake-of-which* [*das* Umwillen], that on account of which something is or is not, is in this way or that. The *idea tou agathon*, which is even beyond beings and the realm of ideas, is the for-the-sake-of-which. This means it is the genuine determination that transcends the entirety of the ideas and at the same time thus organizes them in their totality. The for-the-sake-of-which, as *epekeina*, exceeds [*überragt*] the ideas, but, in exceeding them, it determines and gives them the form of wholeness, *koinonia*, communality [*die Gehörigkeit*]. If we thus keep in mind the *ou eneka*, characteristic of the highest idea, the connection between the doctrine of ideas and the concept of world begins to emerge: the basic characteristic of world whereby wholeness attains its specifically transcendental form of organization is the for-the-sake-of-which. World, as that to which Da-sein transcends, is primarily determined through the for-the-sake-of-which."

[61] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 85.

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highest *aletheuein* if it is a mode of access of which humanity is incapable. This question is raised by Aristotle via *mythos*, in that story of the genesis of philosophy according to which *sophia* arises from *thaumazein* (982b11f.). The myth repeats the quasi-historical progression of the modes of *aletheuein*. The *thaumaston*, Heidegger notes, is "that which is awry" ("*was nicht stimmt*"). Thought begins when something is not right, in the not-being-right of something "lying right at hand" ("*was vor der Hand liegt*").[62] When something is missing, when it is lacking, when it is not right, when it shows itself as something we have failed to understand, in want of understanding, then it arises as a matter for questioning. Philosophy is born from the movement from what is at hand, to things insofar as they present themselves, to the origin of beings as such.

The movement from what is *nicht stimmt* lying right at hand to what is *nicht stimmt* in beings in their generality is that movement in *Sein und Zeit* from *Zuhandenheit*, from what is at hand (equipment, the *organa* of *techne*), to *Vorhandenheit*, beings as present and as objects, hence as "objective" and capable of *episteme*. This movement, which begins with a "breach" ("*Bruch*"),[63] opens the possibility of knowing things "theoretically."[64] And the movement that opens the questioning about the "origin [*Entstehen*] of beings as a whole" mirrors what in *Sein und Zeit* will be the third kind of being-in-the-world of Da-sein: "existential" being, Da-sein as "understanding." The structure of the relations of *techne*, *episteme*, and *sophia* as recounted in the myth of philosophy's origin is therefore repeated in the structure of the relations of *Zuhandenheit*, *Vorhandenheit*, and existential understanding. And in terms of the *agathon*, the ultimate "for the sake of which," a marginal note by Heidegger is significant. What characterizes being-in-the-world as existence is "world" as such, the arising of world as world, "the worldness of the world" ("*die Weltlichkeit von Welt*"). But in Heidegger's note he corrects this. "*Besser: das Walten der Welt.*"[65] What is added here is more than just the standing-there, the holding sway, of the world, but rather the prevailing of the world. In the *Walten* of the world can be heard the worlding of the world, the appearing of the world as world, the event of world, as the ultimate "for the sake of which," something which cannot be grasped theoretically, nor understood as a matter of ethical "goodness." *Walten* means the prevailing, the coming-to-be-there of the world, which is the coming-to-be-there-for-Da-sein of the world. *Walten*, another kind of breacʰ translates *agathon*.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 87. And this gives us another way to think about what Heidegger meant when he said that what Aristotle said is what Plato "*in die Hand gab*" (*ibid.*, p. 8).

[63] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), p. 75.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

[65] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

Having recounted Aristotle's recounting of the myth of the origin of philosophy, Heidegger observes that Aristotle uses the word *aporein*, from *aporos*, without passage. (*Walten* and *aporia* will reappear, bound to each other, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*.) *Thaumazein* arises because the onlooking of Da-sein reaches a point where it does not get through. Da-sein is therefore in "a peculiar intermediate position," on the way to knowing and not getting through, on the way toward what is no longer the obvious. *Sophia* stands alone, because it continues to tread the same ground, where it already was, between the obvious and the transparent, without ever reaching the *telos* of a final "for the sake of which."[66]

But if *sophia* is determined in this way, as a being underway and a never getting through, as never reaching a final "for the sake of which," the way in which *sophia* is a possibility or not for humans remains ambiguous. If *sophia* concerns the *agathon*, even if this is understood "ontologically," if it concerns a "for the sake of which," even if this is *aporetic*, then is it or is it not the case that for humanity, in the end, *sophia* amounts to the same as *phronesis*? And, insofar as the *determination* of the question concerning *sophia* remains that of the possibility of a discourse about those things which always are, and insofar as this is *also* a discourse about the aporia of the impossible *agathon*, the impossible aporia of the *Walten*, what is at stake is the potentiality for a proper, *eigentliche*, discourse of ethics, the potential for a discourse of ethics to stand on its own, as something autonomous, *eigenständig*:

> This determination will make understandable at the same time the sense in which there can be a science such as ethics with regard to human life, insofar as ethics deals with the *ethos*, the being of man, which can also be otherwise. The question is to what extent there can be a science of something like that, if indeed proper science [*eigentliche Wissenschaft*] is concerned with beings which always are.[67]

Phronesis *and* sophia *and* Sein und Zeit

When Bernstein brings the "silent screams of our fellow human beings" to bear against "the silent call of being," his concern may be translated into the terms of Aristotle. Heidegger decides for *theoria* over *praxis*, *sophia* over *phronesis*, and in so doing loses sight of what concerns us, and must concern us, most of all—that is, precisely that which concerns *us, humanity*. To lose sight of ourselves, even in the quest for *sophia*, to lose our concern *for* ourselves, and for ourselves as with others, as political beings, is the gravest kind of error. According to Bernstein, Heidegger is profoundly guilty of this "Platonic" error.

[66] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 88.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

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What does Heidegger have to say about the possibility that *phronesis* is the highest mode of human knowledge? It is possible to make this claim, he states, insofar as *phro..esis*, concerned with *das Da-sein des Menschen*, is the *spoudaiotate*, the gravest, *meisten Ernst*, of all the forms of knowledge.[68] Even if *sophia* concerns the highest beings, these are not the beings that most concern humanity in its existence. The end of *phronesis* is to "render Da-sein transparent in the accomplishment of those actions which lead humans into the *eu zen*."[69] And if *phronesis* is the gravest knowledge, and insofar as no one is alone, *politike* is the highest knowledge. But to whose "conception" is Heidegger, via Aristotle (1141a21f.) referring? "Accordingly, *politike episteme* is genuine *sophia*, and the *politikos* is the true *philosophos*; that is the conception of Plato."[70]

In other words, if a battle is staked out here for the proper appropriation of Aristotle, then what lies in the background are two ways of *rejecting* Plato. For Bernstein, the Platonic *politeia* is the conflation of *techne* and *sophia*, such that *politike* is nothing but an *eidos* of the *polis*, with the necessary consequence that "human plurality" is forgotten as the philosopher becomes architect and *Führer* of the perfect city. With the thought of *phronesis*, Aristotle signifies the possibility of the remembrance of the contingency of the human, the "disruption" which is the essence of the political.[71]

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[68] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[69] *Ibid.*

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] One of the most illuminating of the accounts of this political difference between Plato and Aristotle is by Jacques Rancière. For Rancière, it is the difference between "archipolitics" and "parapolitics." Platonic "archipolitics" is the project of the complete realization of the *arche* of community, or community as *arche*, the achievement of *physis* as *nomos*, with "nothing left over," the result of which is "the total elimination of politics as a specific activity." Rancière also describes this as the constant translation of the law into its spirit. This means that for "archipolitics" what must be eliminated is *nomos* as technics or sophistics. Sophistry as technics is the sign of that split between *physis* and *nomos* or, rather, of a split within *physis*. Aristotle's "parapolitics" begins with this split, with the *definition* of politics *as* this split. "Parapolitics" begins with the remembrance that the specificity of politics is disruption, a disruption which haunts every real or imagined *politeia*. But this fact, the disruption which is the political essence, the constant possibility that the *demos* will make itself heard anew, is not only the remembrance of human contingency. It is equally what *calls for nomos*, for law or rule in the most general sense. "Parapolitics" in a sense comes back to "archipolitics," to the need for an order of *politics*, for "political philosophy," but this time in the name of politics rather than in the name of its elimination. Political *praxis* becomes the attempt to "solve" the contradiction between politics as disruption and politics as the *nomos* which manages this disruption, the politics of institutions. Hence Rancière argues that Aristotelian "parapolitics," rather than being simply a remembrance of "disruption" that disturbs all politico-philosophical logic, is in fact "the quintessence of political philosophy" and "Aristotle is always the last resort of all its 'restorers'." "Aristotle in effect offers the endlessly fascinating figure of an easy embodiment of the contradiction implied in the very term." Cf., Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), ch. 4.

For Heidegger, Plato represents the conflation of *sophia* and *phronesis*. The philosopher, the one who possesses genuine *sophia*, is the one who possesses true knowledge of the political. It *appears* that Heidegger agrees that what is decisive here is a failure to attend to distinctions. And again, the consequence is the raising of the knowledge of human existence to the level of the absolute. Thus both rejections of Plato centre around Plato's hubris, the fact that Plato attributes sovereignty to the philosopher, for whom theory is the highest *praxis*. Sovereignty as the "politico-philosophical" as such.

That is to say, the question regarding the priority of *phronesis* and *sophia* is a question about the limits of Da-sein, about the relation between the human and what lies beyond the human, the divine. On the one hand, *sophia* is determined in relation to the animal. *Sophia*, as a certain way of taking memory, of handling memory, that is peculiar to humanity, and that makes of humanity that animal for whom there arises the possibility of *poros*, is the completion of *techne*. On the other hand, *sophia* arises precisely from that wonder that results from "going awry," from *aporos*. *Sophia* is determined on the one hand in relation to the animal and on the other in relation to the divine, as that which exceeds the changeability of the human. Originating from "taking notice" of the ultimate *archai*, *sophia* is destined never to gain passage, which is why the *archai* never become its proper theme. But this aporia, this inability to get through, is why *sophia* "tarries constantly" (*"hält sich ständig"*) with what is everlasting.[72] The question concerning the priority of *sophia* and *phronesis*, which may as well be the question as to whether *phronesis* may be *conflated with sophia*, is the question of the potentiality for mortals to exist within such a constant tarrying. Is there available for mortals, that is, for Da-sein, a theorizing directed toward the *aei*? "That is in a certain sense possible, and in a certain sense impossible."[73]

The question of the possibility or impossibility for Da-sein, the mortal, of a thinking toward the *aei*, is a question about the (ultimate, that is, ontological) *agathon*. What is the nature of the *agathon* for the mortal, Da-sein? What Aristotle provides, Heidegger states, is the thought that the *agathon* of Da-sein, the mortal, is that in which human Da-sein attains its "completion" (*"Vollendung"*).[74] A human life is judged from its end, from a completed life (*Biou teleion*) (1100a5), from that point where it is completed absolutely, no longer subject to contingency and change, so much that the end even *includes* what comes after the end (1101b6f.). But a human life is nevertheless still only the life of a human being, and the good that is

[72] Heidegger. *Plato's Sophist*, p. 92.
[73] Ibid., p. 93.
[74] Ibid.

its proper completion is nevertheless still only a human good. All beings (a fish, say) have different goods, different ends. The *agathon* of the human being is still therefore only *an agathon*, something subject to variation, changeable. This is necessarily so *unless* human being is the being of beings. Unless human being is a being in the most proper sense, unless the human *agathon* is the *agathon* as such, *phronesis* and *sophia* must remain separated. And insofar as human being is mortal, and insofar as the divine exceeds the mortal, that is, insofar as the being of Da-sein is not *aei*, insofar as Da-sein has its time, *phronesis* maintains its finitude.

Insofar as the above statement remains a question, we are poised on the hinge between Divisions I and II of *Sein und Zeit*. At this point in *Sein und Zeit*, in the quest after being, a quest conducted through Da-sein as that being for whom being is a question, Da-sein has been illuminated as that being constituted by "care." But whether it is possible to go any further toward being itself will depend upon the character of this illumination of Da-sein. It will depend specifically upon the question of whether the inquiry has gotten Da-sein "as a whole" into view.[75] It is not enough that Da-sein *is* an understanding potentiality-for-being which is concerned about its being. Unless Da-sein has the potentiality-for-being-a-whole, it will not be able to get itself wholly in view, and being itself will therefore also elude Da-sein. What separates Aristotle and Heidegger is this coming-into-view of Da-sein as a whole, *given* Da-sein's mortality. For Aristotle, the question of Da-sein's ultimate end, the ultimate "for the sake of which," and the possibility of *judging* that end and hence that existence, arises only *at* the end, and this is Da-sein's completion. But for Heidegger Da-sein, the mortal, stretched between birth and death, never *has* its end: "as long as Da-sein exists, it must always, as such a potentiality, *not yet be* something." This is at once a thought drawn out of Aristotle (until we have the end, we do not know the end), and a questioning of Aristotle (Da-sein never has its end).[76] For Da-sein, the "end" itself belongs to what is

[75] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 230.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 233. This characterization of the difference between Heidegger and Aristotle is not completely fair to Aristotle, since Aristotle is aware of the strangeness of judging happiness from out of the end. Can the dead be said to be happy? The difference is in the object of analysis. For Aristotle what is at stake is happiness, judgment, life, and this means Aristotle can ask the question from "outside" of the *bios* in question, whereas for Heidegger what is at stake is the potentiality for Da-sein to "have" *itself* as a whole. Nevertheless, insofar as the argument in Book I about knowing and judging a life from its *telos informs* the later argument about the relation of the various *aletheuein* to the *telos*, this difference continues to *matter* for an understanding of the difference between Heidegger and Aristotle.

"outstanding" ("*Ausstand*").[77] Mortality, the temporality of death, distinguishes Heidegger's understanding of Da-sein from Aristotle's.

Where does the decision concerning the priority of *phronesis* and *sophia* stand in relation to *Sein und Zeit*? Is *Sein und Zeit* not asking whether Da-sein is capable of knowing something beyond its own changeability, whether Da-sein is that kind of being which has the potentiality for *sophia*? Such an understanding of Heidegger's relation to Aristotle, however, forgets the point at which Heidegger locates the limit of Greek thought. Insofar as for the Greeks being is thought in terms of presence, as what is constantly present, as *aei*, and insofar as what is at stake in *sophia* is grasping being as the everlasting, *sophia* cannot be the guide for Da-sein's relation to being in *Sein und Zeit*. When in the 1924 lecture course Heidegger begins his "more radical conception of *phronesis*," and when this is considered in relation to Division II of *Sein und Zeit*, what becomes apparent is the degree to which Da-sein, as factical, thrown, projective, mortal, dwells within *phronesis*.

The end of Da-sein remains always something outstanding. This means that its potentiality-for-being-a-whole depends upon the relation between *Sein zum Ende* and *Eigentlichkeit*. For Heidegger what attests to this potentiality-for-being-a-whole is the possibility for Da-sein to be called back to itself, called back in the call of conscience or, in other words, in Da-sein's wanting-to-have-a-conscience. When Heidegger initially takes up the theme of *phronesis*, he wants to explain why *phronesis* is not undertaken in *theorein*, and why it is not the *arete* of *techne*. The argument can be summarized: *phronesis* is each time new, the situation is each time unique, given once only, so that even if time belongs to *phronesis* in the sense that "experience" matters ("*Zur* phronesis *gehört* kronos"[78]), nevertheless *phronesis* is *not* the application of *learned* rules, *acquired* knowledge. Unlike the kind of knowing that takes the form of *theorein*, and unlike *techne*, phronesis cannot be forgotten:

> As regards *phronesis*, there is no possibility of falling into forgetting. Certainly the explication which Aristotle gives here is very meager. But it is nevertheless clear from the context that we would not be going too far in our interpretation by saying that Aristotle has here come across the phenomenon of conscience. *Phronesis* is nothing other than conscience set into motion [*in Bewegung gesetzte Gewissen*], making an action transparent [*das eine Handlung durchsichtig macht*]. Conscience cannot be forgotten. But it is quite possible that what is disclosed by conscience can be distorted and allowed to be ineffective through *edone* and *lupe*, through the passions. Conscience always announces itself [*Das Gewissen meldet sich immer wieder*]. Hence because *phronesis* does not possess the possibility of *lethe*, it is not a mode of *aletheuein* which one could call theoretical knowledge. Therefore *phronesis* is out of the question as the *arete* of *episteme* or *techne*.[79]

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 234.
[78] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 96.
[79] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

Neither *phronesis* nor conscience are theoretical, in the former case because *phronesis* is in each case new, in the latter because the call of conscience does nothing other than summon Da-sein to its ownmost potentiality-for-being itself. And insofar as this means summoning Da-sein to the facticity of its situation, conscience in *Sein und Zeit* is likewise in each case new. Thus although "we expect to be told something actually useful about assured possibilities of 'action' that are available and calculable," such a demand put to conscience would mean nothing other than the end of action: "With its unequivocally calculable maxims that one is led to expect, conscience would deny to existence nothing less than the *possibility of acting.*"[80]

What the call of conscience calls *to* is not ethics as a "scientific" or technical pursuit, but rather to the possibility of an "authentic" relation between Da-sein and its *ethos*. Whether Da-sein responds to this call—that is, whether Da-sein achieves the potentiality-for-being-a-whole that the call of conscience exposes—depends on what authenticity means, and on *whether* authenticity is a possibility for Da-sein. Again, is not the question of whether *Eigentlichkeit* is a possibility for Da-sein "equivalent" to the question of whether *sophia* (translated, we recall, as "*eigentliche Verstehen*") is a possibility for mortals, considering humanity's "slavelike" condition?[81] The unfolding of the possibility of *Eigentlichkeit* in *Sein und Zeit* takes place in a thought about the limits of Da-sein-the-mortal that does not accidentally resemble Aristotle's account of the limits of the potentiality for *sophia*. Nevertheless, the structure of authenticity itself, and of that authentic potentiality-for-being-a-self that is called "resoluteness" ("*Entschlossenheit*"), owes a far greater debt to the structure of *phronesis*.

In his "more radical conception" of *phronesis*, Heidegger begins with the observation that the relation of *praxis* to *phronesis* is not that of *ergon*, lying next to it as its "work," but rather that *phronesis* is "in each step" oriented toward the *prakton*.[82] The disclosure of *phronesis* is carried out "with constant regard toward the situation of the acting being." Furthermore, insofar as the situation of humanity is always to be involved with others, to be a *zoon politikon*, "*praxis* is to be understood

[80] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 294.

[81] Cf., Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 982b29ff., and Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 89-90. One way in which this can be understood is that humanity is slave to its situation, that is, to its mortality. What is a slave, according to Aristotle? A slave is an *organon*, a tool, a piece of equipment. This means nothing other than that a slave does not "have" its end. The end for a slave, insofar as it is *praxis*, is not something the slave possesses, but something that lies next to it (in the master), in just the same way as the end for any *poiesis* is not "included" in that *poiesis*. That humanity is slavelike, then, slave to its circumstances and its mortality, says little other than that Da-sein always has its end as something outstanding, something standing out from itself.

[82] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 95.

as a mode of being with others; and insofar as this is the *telos*, *phronesis* is of the character of the *politike*."[63] *Entschlossenheit* is presented in identical terms in *Sein und Zeit*:

> As *authentic being a self*, resoluteness does not detach Da-sein from its world, nor does it isolate it as free floating ego. How could it, if resoluteness as authentic disclosedness is, after all, nothing other than *authentically being-in-the-world*? Resoluteness brings the self into its being together with things at hand, actually taking care of them, and pushes it toward concerned being-with with the others.[84]

Furthermore, the call of conscience does not call to an ideal of existence, it does not provide an *ergon* in the manner of *techne*, but on the contrary the call of conscience "calls forth to the situation" ("*in die Situation vorruft*").[85] Just as *phronesis* is there already in each step, just as it is co-constitutive with "acting," so too for resoluteness:

> Resoluteness does not first represent and acknowledge a situation to itself, but has already placed itself in it. Resolute, Da-sein is already *acting*.[86]

And, just as Adorno wished to counter *praxis* as mere activity with a thinking that is "actually and above all the force of resistance," so too, Heidegger hesitates to associate resoluteness and action:

> Resolute, Da-sein is already *acting* [*handelt*]. We are purposely avoiding the term "action [*Handeln*]." For in the first place, it would have to be so broadly conceived that activity also encompasses the passivity of resistance.[87]

Resoluteness "*gives* itself the actual factical situation and *brings* itself into that situation." And this being-in-relation-to the situation—Da-sein's factical, mortal situation—that Da-sein gives itself, means at the same time "*constantly* keeping itself free, that is, for the taking back that Da-sein's mortality represents."[88]

Phronesis, like resoluteness, is anticipatory and circumpsective. If *phronesis* is present to action at each step, then this is to say that the action is there already for *phronesis*, as that on which Da-sein has *already* resolved. That *phronesis* is anticipatory and circumspective means nothing other than that in looking around at the situation, what is disclosed *in* the situation is already Da-sein itself *as* acting and on the way toward taking further action. *Praxis* may be the *telos* of *phronesis* but it is not so as the work. "Rather, precisely out of the constant regard toward that which I

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83 *Ibid.*, p. 96.
84 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 298.
85 *Ibid.*, p. 300.
86 *Ibid.*
87 *Ibid.*
88 *Ibid.*, pp. 307–8.

have resolved, the situation should become transparent."[89] Now *phronesis*, as a *logistikon*, is deliberative, it is carried out in discourse, *bouleuesthai*, and insofar as the *telos* of *phronesis* is *eupraxia*, so *phronesis* must be carried out in *euboulia*. But insofar as the *praxis* is constantly "with" the carrying out of *phronesis*, *phronesis* must already have a direction, be directed. And insofar as what *phronesis* is directed toward is the *carrying out* of the action, *phronesis, euboulia*, must end in *boule*, in "the decision, the resolution" (*"der Entschluß, das Entschlossensein"*). It must end in the "bursting forth" (*"Losbrechen"*) of "conclusion" (*"Schluß"*).[90] And this is why *euboulia*, like the call of conscience, cannot be *doxa*, a set of ethical imperatives. Were such a set of directives possible, *phronesis* would be a kind of *episteme*, directed, like *doxa*, toward *aletheia*. But, on the contrary: "*Euboulia* is not directed toward truth or falsity but primarily and exclusively toward being resolved."[91]

But if we are drawing passages on *phronesis* and *Entschlossenheit* together to suggest a kind of translatability, has not this procedure reached a limit with the concept of *euboulia*? John Salllis has voiced this thought: "there is a peculiar emptiness about *Entschlossenheit* that makes it very difficult to identify it with any kind of concrete deliberation."[92] If resoluteness is specifically not any kind of "representing," can it really be deliberative, carried out in discourse, in the sense *phronesis* appears to be? Conversely, if *phronesis* is nothing other than the discourse that accompanies and anticipates *concrete* actions and decisions, does this not mark *phronesis*, in its concreteness, as less close than "empty" resoluteness is to *sophia*? Perhaps this emptiness is evident in passages such as:

> But to what does Da-sein resolve itself in resoluteness? On what is it to resolve? *Only* the resolution itself can answer this. […] The *indefiniteness* that characterizes every factically projected potentiality-of-being of Da-sein *belongs* necessarily to resoluteness. Resolution is certain of itself only in a resolution.[93]

The entire "account" of resoluteness is nothing other than an account of a certain kind of potentiality for "ethics," insofar as this is a relation to the *ethos*, but this cannot lead to any "ethical science" capable of formulating imperatives. Resoluteness is not the possibility of decision, or "choice," but rather the initial possibility for *choosing its choice*.[94] As that potentiality-of-being-a-whole of Da-sein, and hence as the possibility of approaching being, resoluteness is the possibility of

[89] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 102.

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[92] John Sallis, discussion following Jacques Taminiaux, "Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology," *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987), pp. 166-7.

[93] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 298

[94] *Ibid.*, p. 385.

ethics *and* ontology. It is already *ursprüngliche Ethik*. But *phronesis* is not resoluteness inasmuch as resoluteness exists in a profound relation to *Angst*:

> Da-sein *is authentically itself* [*ist eigentlich selbst*] in the primordial individuation of reticent resoluteness that expects [*zumutenden*] *Angst* of itself.[95]

> But *Angst* can arise authentically only in a resolute Da-sein.[96]

This relation exposes the differences between *phronesis* and resoluteness in two ways. Firstly, *Angst*, inasmuch as it concerns Da-sein's being-toward-the-end, reveals that mortality is never for Da-sein a matter of "completion." Resoluteness, resolutely factical, can never have its "end" before it as an ultimate *agathon*, even if it is always immersed in its "for the sake of which." Turning back to the account of *phronesis* demonstrates that resoluteness in *Sein und Zeit* was for Heidegger always within Da-sein's finitude.

Secondly, *Angst* is counter to deliberation. "*Angst* robs us of speech [*das Wort*]."[97] In the face of *Angst*, *logos* withdraws, and most particularly, since *Angst* exposes the nothing, that *logos* which deliberates upon "things" withdraws. Resoluteness is not "carried out" in speech, even while being "decisive" and "circumspective." Thus, although it was the *euboulia* and the *boule* of *phronesis* that apparently made possible our assertion of the translatability of *phronesis* and resoluteness—since it is in describing the good deliberation and the resolve of *phronesis* that Heidegger uses the very terms *Entschlossenheit* and *Entschluß*—it is this very aspect of *phronesis* that separates it from resoluteness. And this withdrawal by resoluteness from all deliberation seems to bring resoluteness, *again*, back within the horizon of *sophia*. This is the case inasmuch as it has become possible to identify resoluteness, which is the *possibility* of ontology and ethics, with "philosophy" itself insofar as by "philosophy" we mean that empty resolve, without end, to *do* philosophy—and inasmuch as *sophia*, philosophy, "settles nothing for human existence."[98]

Nous *and* logos

Have we, then, not finally confirmed Heidegger's "Platonic bias"? *Sophia* is fundamental ontology, which is that peculiar "resoluteness" that never settles

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 322.

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 344.

[97] Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 89.

[98] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 115.

anything. Heidegger's thought, governed by the mood of *Angst*, thrown upon death, withdraws from the world and from action (and especially from action with others). This is the conclusion reached by Taminiaux:

> The deliberate orientation of the Heideggerian reappropriation of *praxis* to the exclusively solitary understanding of Being bears therefore witness to the rejection of Aristotle's resistance to Plato. In fundamental ontology everything happens as though *bios theoretikos* had devoured, and now ruled over, *praxis* totally. Everything happens as though this *bios*, essentially solitary, were the only authentic form of individuation.[99]

The emptiness of resoluteness, which results from the way in which Da-sein is determined in terms of being-towards-death, means that whatever relation it may be possible to draw between *Sein und Zeit* and the Aristotelian account of *phronesis* is subsumed by a passivity that settles nothing, that is not actually concerned with others. And, insofar as Heidegger *maintains* his claim upon *phronesis*, while at the same time reducing *phronesis* to *sophia*, to the *bios theoretikos*, he paves the way for the "thinking on Being" to become "the true judge on human affairs."[100]

Sallis, however, hears another note in the relation between resoluteness and *phronesis*, a note that severs fundamental ontology from *sophia*:

> But, on the other hand, Heidegger does say that in *vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*, in running ahead, in being thrown back from death as possibility, one isn't given any possibilities, one isn't given anything to choose; one can't, as it were, simply remain in that kind of self-withdrawal, one *has to* engage oneself in the factical possibilities, that is, the possibilities we find in a common world, in a world that belongs also to others. And it seems to me that it is in this movement back, this *necessary* movement back, that one would have to locate something like *phronesis*, that is, something like concrete deliberation.[101]

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[99] Jacques Taminiaux, *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 47. Any number of passages might have been cited. For instance, p. 40: "Whereas Aristotle essentially teaches that *praxis* is what individualizes someone in the midst of plurality, Heidegger teaches that *praxis* individualizes someone only in being face to face with oneself. This metamorphosis of the very notion of *praxis* entails—with respect to the Heideggerian analysis of *phronesis*, now understood as resolute assumption of being-toward-death—the absence of a number of features essential in the Aristotelian *phronesis*, especially features that concern plurality and political life in particular. For Aristotle is careful to underscore—by opposing Euripides—that one cannot be a *phronimos* individual endowed with *phronesis* if one cares only for oneself. It is well known that Pericles appeared to him as a model of *phronimos* because of his sagacity and his sense of measure concerning the public matters of the City. Of this point there is no equivalent in *Being and Time* because ultimately resoluteness is radically private, opposed to anything public, and characteristic of a mode of being that relegates opinions into fallen everydayness, in contrast to Aristotle who says expressly that *phronesis* is the *doxastike arete*, i.e., doxic excellence."

[100] *Ibid.*, pp. 44–5.

[101] Sallis, discussion following Taminiaux, "Poiesis and Praxis in Fundamental Ontology," *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987), p. 167.

What is at stake is whether resoluteness, the *emptiness* of resoluteness, is the possibility or rather the impossibility of action, *and* whether it is the possibility or the impossibility of discourse. According to Bernstein and Taminiaux, the relation of resoluteness to ontology and mortality is what prevents it from *saying* anything or *doing* anything. Rather than directly refuting this, Sallis risks the thought that this very impossibility of action and deliberation, combined with the fact that Da-sein, as merely Da-sein, *must* continue, must continue *to be there*, at least for the moment, is what first opens the possibility for action as such, and necessitates deliberation as such. Sallis thus in fact thinks this impossibility for action *more* radically and more broadly than either Bernstein or Taminiaux, for whom resoluteness ends in a particular kind of inactive action (*theoria*) and an unspeaking discourse (fundamental ontology).

When Sallis brings resoluteness back to *phronesis*, and hence back to deliberation, he appears to argue that resoluteness is what first opens those very possibilities that were proscribed for it. Suddenly, thanks to the observation that Da-sein *must* engage, and that engagement as such is always *with others*, we are back in a world of means and calculations, concerned with a technics of ethics, back with those very things Heidegger told us we *cannot* expect from resoluteness or the call of conscience. Sallis' interpretation thereby brings resoluteness within the orbit of Derrida's account of the impossible aporia(s) of the just decision. Derrida describes with strict logic how there is no justice without a decision, that de-cides, hence that distinguishes and decides between what is distinguished. He states, secondly, that this dividing decision therefore begins to *calculate* what *is* divisible, distinguishable. And this decision to begin calculating cannot itself be of the order of the calculable. Thirdly, insofar as a decision *is* a decision, a free decision and not merely following a calculable law, it *must* be a decision about what is *un*decidable, a decision about what can never become a question of means and ends or of calculation as such. Fourthly, far from prohibiting calculation, "justice," and the decision to act justly, which can only come from out of undecidability, *necessitates* calculation, that we begin calculating immediately, and that we calculate beyond what all law demands.[102]

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[102] Cf., Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'," *Acts of Religion* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 252–8. What we have summarized viciously here are the second and third aporias that Derrida delimits in this paper. The way in which Derrida describes what we have listed as the fourth part of the aporia of the just decision, makes clear that to imagine a decision that decides beyond all questions of means always risks reappropriation by another (perverse) means, and Derrida is thereby brought to what is not an arbitrary "example" (p. 257): "This excess of justice over law and calculation, this overflowing of the unpresentable over the determinable, cannot and should not [*ne peut pas et ne doit pas*] serve as an alibi for staying out of juridico-political battles, within an institution or a state, between institutions or states. Abandoned to itself, the

Decision *must be* decision about what remains undecidable—this is the emptiness of resoluteness. Undecidable decision necessitates calculation, and necessitates calculation *now*—this is the implication that Sallis sees *in* the emptiness of resoluteness. But could such an interpretation of resoluteness by Sallis be anything other than violent in relation to the spirit and the law of Heidegger's text? Could the argument that Da-sein must continue to be there, continue to act, and hence continue to deliberate, possibly be strong enough to save resoluteness from the substance of *Sein und Zeit*, with its overarching concern for nothing but being?

Such a manner of formulating the question fails to grasp that *Entschlossenheit* is not one theme among others for Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, and that on the contrary resoluteness *is* nothing other than the structure or the method of fundamental ontology itself. The "method" of fundamental ontology is possible only from out of some kind of decision, hence some kind of "resolve," and this is in fact true for the very idea of method as such. This decision concerning method precedes and initiates the investigation "itself," but calculating this decision about what method to follow is possible only from out of a pre-view, an anticipation, of what is to be investigated. The circularity and in fact impossibility of this structure may usually remain concealed by the fact that most investigations begin with a fairly comfortable sense of what is to be investigated and the way in which it may effectively be pursued and where it may be found. But as soon as the situation is one in which what is being pursued is something that we do not yet have lying right at hand, and hence that we do not yet know and have not yet *thought*, then the impossibility of calculating the decision concerning method becomes visible.

Insofar as method comes at the beginning, it is impossible. And the visibility of this impossibility is nowhere greater than in fundamental ontology, which from the beginning asserts that the method and the substance of the investigation are inseparable. Fundamental ontology *begins* with the thought that we must begin to ask questions concerning being, but it begins *equally* with the thought that, even in

incalculable and giving [*donatrice*] idea of justice is always very close to the bad, even to the worst for it can always be reappropriated by the most perverse calculation. It is always possible, and this is part of the madness of which we were speaking. An absolute assurance against this risk can only saturate or suture the opening of the call to justice, a call that is always wounded. But incalculable justice *commands* calculation. [...] Not only *must* one [*il faut*] calculate, negotiate the relation between the calculable and the incalculable, and negotiate without a rule that would not have to be reinvented there were we are 'thrown,' there where we find ourselves; but one *must* [*il faut*] do so and take it as far as possible, beyond the place we find ourselves and beyond the already identifiable zones of morality, politics, or law, beyond the distinctions between national and international, public and private, and so on. The order of this *il faut* does not *properly* belong either to justice or to law. It only belongs to either realm by exceeding each one in the direction of the other—which means that, in their very heterogeneity, these two orders are indissociable: *de facto* and *de jure* [*en fait et en droit*]. Politicization, for example, is interminable even if it cannot and should not ever be total."

our unquestioningness, we have already begun to think (and ask about) being. Da-sein is nothing other than the embodiment of the duplicity of this "*we* must think being" and "*we* are already thinking being." And it is in this sense that Da-sein is both method and substance of fundamental ontology. The impossible possibility of fundamental ontology is the possibility of beginning to find or invent a method to think Da-sein:

> But does not a definite [*bestimmte*] ontic interpretation of authentic existence, a factical ideal of Da-sein, underlie our ontological interpretation of the existence of Da-sein? Indeed. But not only is this fact one that must not be denied and we are forced to grant; it must be unders ᴄᴅ in its *positive necessity*, in terms of the thematic object of our inquiry. Philosophy will never seek to deny its "presuppositions" ["*Voraussetzungen*"], but neither may it merely admit them. It conceives them and develops with more and more penetration both the presuppositions themselves and that for which they are presuppositions. This is the function that the methodical considerations now demanded of us have.[103]

This "positive necessity" is nothing other than the "necessity" which Sallis observes drives choiceless, voiceless resoluteness back to action and deliberation. The necessity for resoluteness to return to deliberation is what opens the possibility for commencing the deliberations of fundamental ontology. But if Heidegger's account of resoluteness is one *result* of an "ontological" method grounded in an "ontic interpretation" that never escapes its own facticity, can such an account of resoluteness "justify" itself on the grounds that it is what first makes possible that method, and hence that result? Are we not judging the ground from out of the consequence, or both from out of each other? Are we not trapped in a circle of understanding that depends upon presupposing what are supposedly the "results," the propositions or expositions, of the investigation? This is the question to which Heidegger addresses himself in the methodological considerations which were demanded above:

> When it is objected that the existential interpretation is "circular," it is said that the idea of existence and of being in general is "presupposed," and that Da-sein gets interpreted "accordingly" so that the idea of being may be obtained from it. But what does "presupposing" mean? In positing the idea of existence, do we also posit some proposition from which we can deduce further propositions about the being of Da-sein, according to the formal rules of consistency? Or does this pre-supposing have the character of an understanding project in such a way that the interpretation developing this understanding *lets* what is to be interpreted be *put in words for the very first time, so that it may decide of its own accord whether, as this being, it will provide the constitution of being for which it has been disclosed in the projection with regard to its formal aspect?* Is there any other way that beings can put themselves into words with regard to their being at all?[104]

[103] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 310.
[104] *Ibid.*, pp. 314–5.

The observation that ontology begins from "ontic" "presuppositions," from what is already an "interpretation," and from which it never escapes, but which neither can it ever accept, is not an admission of defeat, nor an admission that, as "merely" ontic, the interpretation is destined to remain "subjective." Such a reading would already presume to know what "subjective" means, would already have decided and distinguished the subjective from some other region. It would therefore misunderstand the relation between the ontic and the ontological. Every "ontic" interpretation exists in a relation *to* the ontological that "we" can never simply declare to be false, since there is no "true" ontological interpretation that is not equally grounded in a "decision" about presuppositions, a decision "we" cannot "make" since we begin with what we "find," a decision that gives and risks existence.

As a pro-ject, the "presuppositions" of ontology are circumspective—they already *are* a decision, but they are a decision as an anticipation of a decision to come. Ontology is resolute in that it gives itself the situation and brings itself into that situation.[105] But this resoluteness or decisiveness of ontology is, as Nancy rightly emphasizes, not a question of exiting from ontical interpretations or presuppositions, and for this reason Nancy refers to the "mundanity of decision":

> By this we mean to say that decision is not open to, or decided by anything other than, the world of existence itself, to which the existent is thrown, given up, and exposed. Decision decides neither in favor of nor by virtue of any "authenticity" whereby the world of existence would be surmounted or transfigured in any way whatsoever. The decision is made (it grasps itself, is grasped by itself, surprises itself) right in ontical experience, and it opens to ontical experience.[106]

The mundanity of decision means that the presuppositions of ontology are an ontical interpretation that exposes a thought of being, and can be "thought" *only* by putting something into words for the first time.[107] Only in the decision to put

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[105] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 284, on resoluteness: "The primordial truth of existence requires an equip-imordial being-certain in which one holds oneself in what resoluteness discloses. It *gives* itself the actual factical situation and *brings* itself into that situation. The situation cannot be calculated in advance and pregiven like something objectively present waiting to be grasped. It is disclosed only in a free act of resolve that has not been determined beforehand, but is open to the possibility of such determination."

[106] Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Decision of Existence," *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 82.

[107] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 84: "*Thought in its decision is not the thought that undertakes to found Being (or to found itself in Being). This thought is only the decision that risks and affirms existence on its own absence of ground.* But, quite clearly, this decision itself is not a decision taken by 'thought' about (or in favor of) existence. Here, it is existence that reaches its own decision, as thought." This makes clear that Da-sein is *not* the method of ontology in the sense of the ground through which being can be thought. Rather, in the thought of Da-sein, in giving

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something into words does a decision about the interpretation of being become possible. This *possibility* for an interpretation of being must not be heard as the possibility for a final decision, an end to thought, in which ontology will have found its ground and come to rest securely on it. Rather, "possibility" itself, the *fact* of possibility, is itself the "ground" for decision-as-project, or method, as such. But possibility-as-ground is a groundless ground, precisely in the sense that, *as* possibility, it is equally the possibility of the impossibility of decision, the possibility of a decision that never reaches its limit, without *Schluß*. As never escaping ontic presuppositions, as never coming to rest on any ground that is not the possibility of an absence of ground, Da-sein's (ontological) decision is *suspended*. And this suspension, as Nancy elaborates, must not be understood as mere "floating" within the vague decisionless interpretation of the "they," but rather "chemically," as a state of suspension.[108] Fundamental ontology *never* escapes *"their"* interpretation of being, the interpretation of the "they," and "their" philosophy includes and includes first of all the philosophy of the Greeks. On the contrary, *continuing* to maintain a relation to their philosophy, never finally denying nor admitting the presuppositions of *their* philosophy, the "method" of fundamental ontology is a decision in relation to the "they," in relation to "their" philosophy, that maintains a state of suspension, and hence that risks undecidability.

Fundamental ontology begins from an empty resolve, an emptiness that forces it back, *phronetically*, to a concrete deliberation, forces it to risk putting an

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thought to Da-sein, ontology gives itself the *possibility* of a thought of being. Cf., Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 284–5, which opens the possibility for a slightly more equivocal reading than Nancy wishes to pursue: "And how *is* Da-sein this thrown ground? Only by projecting itself upon the possibilities into which it is thrown. The self, which as such has to lay the ground of itself, can *never* gain power over that ground, and yet it has to take over being the ground in existing. Being its own thrown ground is the potentiality-of-being about which care is concerned. [...] Being a *self*, Da-sein is the thrown being *as* self. *Not through* itself, but *released to* itself from the ground in order to be *as this ground*. Da-sein is not itself the ground of its being, because the ground first arises from its own project, but as a self, it is the *being* of its ground. The ground is always ground only for a being whose being has to take over being-the-ground."

[108] Nancy draws out this thought from a reference by Heidegger in § 35. Cf., Nancy, "The Decision of Existence," *The Birth to Presence*, p. 95: "In suspension, by definition, decision escapes; it does not take place; it can never take place. To the extent that the uprooting is constant, undecidability is the rule." And he continues on p. 96: "Da-sein's 'suspension' in the everydayness of 'average understanding' is therefore not a mediocre floating in average indecision, in vague, more or less myopic glimpses of the 'meaning' of existence (and of the world, and of others, and of thought). But the 'tenacity' proper to this 'suspension' is not a simple firmness opposed, by dualism or dialectic, to floating. *Suspension is suspended, and firmly maintains itself, just in the average ontical floating*. And that is where it decides/reaches its decision. The type of average understanding that 'understands everything' can also be the sharpest, most accurate, most perspicacious intelligence. We think, we write, we read philosophy the way *they* think, write, and read. But what we cannot decide in this way is *the originary undecidability of Being-thrown-to-the-world* (to the '*they*'), in which, by which, and as which the Being of existence takes place."

interpretation of being into words, even though this interpretation can never avoid the risk of not getting through. Nevertheless, although Nancy and Sallis are equally insistent in pointing toward the way in which resoluteness and fundamental ontology do *not* find a passage beyond their ontic presuppositions, an ambiguity remains about the "political" consequences of this phronetic aspect of the ontological project. In the readings of Nancy and Sallis it is the impossibility or the undecidability of decision that *opens* the possibility for politics, but in both cases it does so precisely by making impossible the *determination* of a politics *"within"* this thought. Only in suspending or interrupting the interminable decision of ontology does the inauguration of "political" action or thinking become possible.[109]

Have we then returned, finally, to the distinction between theory and praxis as what lies behind the distinction between "empty" resoluteness and "concrete" acting and thinking? Is not fundamental ontology nothing other than a kind of *sophia*, gazing upon the eternal, whereas *phronesis* is nothing but the *interruption* of *sophia*? *Phronesis*, that is, the possibility of political or ethical action, is nothing other than "the suspension of presupposing [that is, of the positing of the interminable and impossible ontological decision—*sophia*] and the forgetting that goes along with it."[110] And, as such, *phronesis* would be confirmed as something about which philosophy has nothing to say, about which there *is* nothing to say, or all talking about which in fact must really say *nothing*.

What discriminates *phronesis* from *sophia* according to Heidegger, however, is not the difference between acting and thinking, but two ways of seeing and grasping "the whole." If both *phronesis* and *sophia* are a matter of "putting into words," of *logos*, then *what* is put into words in these *aletheuein* is a "perception," *nous*. For *phronesis*, however, it is not a matter of "having a perception" and then translating that perception into discursive form. Rather, the *"Schluß"* is the form

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[109] Sallis' reading of Heidegger's *phronesis* thus resembles Sallis' own reading of Plato's *Republic*, and the relation between "philosophy" and "politics" that he finds in the myth of the cave. What is crucial to Sallis' account is that the philosopher, having exited the cave, having finally gazed upon the sun, not only *does not* maintain a fixed and eternal gaze, but rather finds a positive *"necessity"* in re-turning to the *polis*, of returning and living within the situation of being-with-others, a necessity that springs from the fact that the philosopher *never entirely left* the cave or the city. Cf., Sallis, *Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic Dialogue* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1986, 2nd edn.), p. 450. And cf., Nancy, "The Decision of Existence," *The Birth to Presence*, p. 401 n. 4: "The political stakes are therefore clear, at least insofar as it is a question of holding in check, from within *Being and Time*, a certain style of political 'decisionism' [...]. That does not mean, however, that we will oppose to this decisionism a politics of everyday banality (management of interests + ideology of values), which is not a politics. In no way will we attempt to propose 'a (correct) politics drawn from Heidegger.' We will attempt only to demonstrate the relation in which the thought of *Being and Time* invites us to place praxis and thought itself, and to demonstrate that this relation does not permit us simply to 'draw' a politics from a way of thinking."

[110] Alexander García Düttmann, "The Violence of Destruction," in David S. Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 168.

taken by that *seeing* that *ends* deliberation. *Phronesis* comes to a limit, an *eskaton*, at which *nous* (and *hence* decision) breaks in. The *nous* with which *phronesis* is involved is "in the most extreme concretion," that deliberation which reaches a limit in its grasping of the situation, and that has its end in a "momentary" perception, in Da-sein's being-directed-toward the moment. That *nous* which is involved with *sophia* is without end, directed toward and governed by the *aei*. Rather than being distinguished as inactive theory and active praxis, *sophia* and *phronesis* are distinguished by their relation to *nous*, which is itself distinguished by two (complementary) understandings of time: "Time (the momentary and the eternal) here functions to discriminate between the *noein* in *phronesis* and the one in *sophia*."[111] *Sein und Zeit* does not decide between these two modes of *aletheuein*, and it is an error to interpret it as making such a choice. Heidegger's "decision" is that both the forms of *nous* which underlie *phronesis* and *sophia*, hence both "senses" of time, in fact have their origin in one interpretation of time *and* being. Once this is grasped, it is no longer possible to decide *between* them, for each follows as a consequence of the other. It is in this sense that Heidegger claims to be no longer only doing *their* philosophy.

For Aristotle, of course, a decision *was* possible between *phronesis* and *sophia*. If those matters with which *phronesis* is concerned are the "most grave" for Da-sein, and yet *phronesis* is not the highest mode of *aletheuein*, then this can only be because there is something which escapes *phronesis*, something beyond *phronesis* which continues to govern it. *Phronesis* must not be autonomous. In what way is this the case, according to Aristotle? *Phronesis* is not autonomous insofar as good deliberation depends on the good as such. For *phronesis* to be well carried out, one must possess the good, already *be* good:

> Hence only someone who is already *agathos* can be *phronimos*. [...] *Phronesis* is nothing if it is not carried out in *praxis*, and *praxis* as such is determined by *arete*, by the *prakton* as *agathon*. [...] Insofar as *phronesis*, with regard to the possibility of its correct execution, depends on being carried out by an *agathos*, it is not itself autonomous. Thereby the priority of *phronesis* is shaken, although *phronesis* does indeed relate to human Da-sein.[112]

Phronesis is not autonomous, there is something that exceeds it, and its priority is thereby shaken. But how does this imply a decision *in favor* of *sophia*? How can *sophia* be what stands beyond and above *phronesis*, be that discourse on the good as

[111] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 113.
[112] *Ibid.*, pp. 114–5.

such that would govern *phronesis, given* that, as we already know, *sophia* settles nothing for human existence?

The answer to this question again draws back together what has been taken apart. And, again, this bringing together is dependent upon understanding the *"arete"* of the *aletheuein* "ontologically," that is, *arete* is to be understood as bringing into being in the sense of completion, *teleosis. Arete*, understood ontologically, means a quest.on of ends. Even though *phronesis* and *sophia* have been distinguished on the grounds that the former is wholly oriented toward the moment of decision, and *hence* toward "action," while the latter settles nothing for existence, this keeping-apart of *phronesis* and *sophia* is still thought too narrowly. It *is* still possible to think of *phronesis* and *sophia* in terms of *poiesis*, as bringing into being, as accomplishing. Insofar as an *arete* is possible for them, they must bring into completion what they in fact *are*.[113] The decision between *phronesis* and *sophia* is made on the basis of *arete*, understood ontologically. And, insofar as this is a matter of accomplishment, of bringing something, Da-sein, into its most proper being, that is, insofar as it is a matter of producing Da-sein's existence properly, a question of *poiesis*, the discourse which apparently decides *between phronesis* and *sophia* is a *techne*, and the question becomes a technical one. The question becomes, technically: is it through *phronesis* or *sophia* that Da-sein produces life *best*?

This is, firstly, a question of means and ends. *Phronesis* is not autonomous; it has its end outside itself in *praxis*, and good *praxis* depends upon already possessing the good. Thus even though *praxis* (as opposed to *poiesis*) has no end other than itself, *phronesis* differs from *sophia* in that the latter is nothing other than the accomplishment of itself. *Sophia* "produces" *theoria*, but the *bios theoretikos* consists in nothing other than engaging in *sophia*. These considerations are at the same time technical and ontological. They are technical in that they are a matter of *poiesis*, of production, and specifically of the production of Da-sein itself in its ownmost proper being. They are ontological in the sense that, concerned with Da-sein's ownmost proper being, what is at stake is firstly Da-sein's coming to completion, and secondly Da-sein's *being constantly in* its ownmost proper being. In other words, what Heidegger fundamentally argues is that for Aristotle, for the Greeks, ontology is technical, is productive, is concerned with coming into presence and with remaining in presence. What decides between *phronesis* and *sophia* is not just that *sophia* is its own end, but that, *as* its own end, it means for Da-sein not just the pursuit of the eternal, but is itself a constant and eternal "way of being" for Da-sein.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

But, from the moment of this decision between *phronesis* and *sophia*, a double retreat begins. What decides between *phronesis* and *sophia* is the relation between temporality and *eudaimonia*, understood technically and ontologically. The question is: does *phronesis* or *sophia* bring Da-sein into (produce Da-sein as) its ownmost proper being? Insofar as it is a technical question, what decides between them is a list of arguments, of reasons for considering that it is in doing *sophia* that Da-sein achieves *eudaimonia* (it is that mode in which Da-sein most properly has at its disposal what it *can be*; it is a mode of being which is more cohesive, involving a uniform unbroken perseverance rather than *new* decisions each time; it is that mode of being which is most enjoyable; it is autonomous, in the sense that Da-sein is free from commitments to others in the pursuit of *sophia*; it can be loved for its own sake).[114] And the most important of these technical arguments in favor of the *eudaimonia* of *sophia* is the technico-ontological argument that *sophia* is that mode of being of Da-sein that can and must be constant and permanent, must be taken up in the complete course of the life of Da-sein, as and to the end of Da-sein. This is why Greek "ethics" is nothing other than *ethos*, understood ontologically (and technically) as maintaining an orientation toward being, standing with what is everlasting. The happiness visible to the eye of the thinker is the happiness of humanity.

But this very reason (and reason is the correct word here) for deciding in favor of *sophia* is also what precipitates the first retreat. Insofar as Da-sein *cannot* tarry constantly and permanently with what is everlasting, insofar as it is a (positive) necessity for Da-sein to be-in-the-world of what is changeable, the world of others, insofar as Da-sein belongs to the world of the changeable, that is, dwells within mortality, *sophia* remains impossible.

Eudaimonia as such, most properly, is nothing but *nous*, nothing other than simply seeing "what is there," such that, in this possibility is nothing other than the "ontological condition" (*"ontologische Bedingung"*) of the *"faktischen, konkreten Existenz des Menschen."*[115] The mortality of Da-sein does not only mean that Da-sein does not last, but that, as being-toward-the-end, Da-sein continues to escape itself. There is no pure *nous* for Da-sein (as was already seen at the very beginning of the consideration of *sophia*), and this is what necessitates the second retreat. That there is no pure *nous* means nothing other than that for Da-sein all perception is mediated. In other words, Da-sein is *zoon logon echon*, always within *logos*, and for Da-sein *noein* is *dianoein*, discussing. Da-sein's way of being there is always a being there with *logos*. And *logos* means, first of all, mediation, speaking of something *"as"*

[114] *Ibid.*, pp. 119–22.
[115] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

something, distinguishing *between* things, taking them apart and putting them together, such that perception can be "articulated." The *archai*, insofar as they are the beginnings, that from out of which "things" emerge, cannot be spoken of "as" things. The *archai*, insofar as they are the ends, the end of ends, cannot be taken apart and put together, cannot be cut, separated, distinguished. Thus insofar as *nous* is a possibility for Da-sein in relation to those first and last no-things, it depends upon the way in which it might be that there is a perceiving for Da-sein which is not a *dianoein*. Only insofar as Da-sein is *not zoon logon echon* would such a seeing of the beginnings and ends become possible. And this possibility of a retreat from *logos* depends upon an escape from *logos*, hence on the possibility of a perceiving, a way toward *aletheuein*, that is not governed by *logos*. "That *logos* can recede [*zurücktreten*] here is a fact grounded in *logos* itself."[116]

Da-sein is this double retreat from *sophia*, the retreat in view of Da-sein's mortality, and the retreat in view of Da-sein's being constantly within *logos*, being always within "mediation," that is, technics. Da-sein is technical life—that is, dying.[117] What is perhaps most surprising in these concrete deliberations of Heidegger on *their* philosophy is the degree to which *logos* is severed from, cut off from, the truth. "*Logos* is not the place where *aletheuein* is at home [*zu Hause*], where it stands on its own soil [*bodenständig*]."[118] What is stated here *appears* as the very opposite of those so-familiar formulations in "Letter on Humanism" where language is nothing other than the house of being. Here *logos*, as a showing, as a letting come into appearance, as a signifying, signifies less *aletheuein*, unconcealing, than the possibility for what is "*not*" to come into appearance, for the possibility of deception, of *pseudos*. It is the concrete fact of *logos*-as-mediation, the "as" structure, the putting together and taking apart, the distinguishing and deciding which is proper to *logos*, that first makes possible the showing of what is not:

> *Logos*, insofar as it possesses the structure of *apophainesthai*, of the "something as something," is so little the place of truth that it is, rather, quite the reverse, the proper condition of the possibility of falsity.[119]

Heidegger, then, has returned to the formulation he cited at the beginning of the course—*zoon logon echon*—and what is at stake in this formula is still the relation between *logos* and *apophainesthai*, a matter (of) coming to appear, of "things" becoming obvious. But what has become questionable is the meaning of this obviousness of *logos* itself. That there is the possibility that we can see what *logos*

[116] *Ibid.*, p. 124.
[117] Cf., Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, p. 186.
[118] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 125.
[119] *Ibid.*

makes possible, that is, falsity, is what makes possible *something other* than simply staying at home in *logos*. The possibility of *nous* in relation to *logos* is the possibility of perceiving the way in which the fact of *logos* necessitates the question of understanding that which "is *not*" and yet comes into appearance. *Logos*, the technics of being-with-others, means being-at-a-distance from being, and it implies, not the question of being, but rather the question of non-being.

> It will be shown that truth, unconcealedness, is not at home in *logos*. But if not in *logos*, the positive question arises: where then? From this point we acquire again an orientation toward the central question of the *Sophist*, the question of the Being of *pseudos*, whether there is such a thing as *me on*, whether non-being is.[120]

Politics is so far from being the *praxis* that is governed by the truths of the discourse of *sophia* that it is nothing other than an exit from *sophia*, insofar as *sophia* is understood as the correspondence between truth and *logos*. But politics is equally far from being a *praxis* that must (pragmatically) decide to leave *logos* behind. What is most at stake between *phronesis* and *sophia*, and still for us today, is the taking apart and putting together that makes possible the distinguishing of *phronesis* as *phronesis* and *sophia* as *sophia*. This is a matter of *logos*, and as such a matter of *poiesis*, of technics, of knowledge, and of perception.

Before a discourse on pseudo-thinking or pseudo-activity is possible, which is always a discourse on the ubiquity of technics, what must be grasped is what makes possible the "pseudo" as such. Only by asking from where the possibility emerges of making such a distinction does what is at stake in such a distinction become understandable. Only by understanding that this distinction emerges from a certain (ontological) vision, a vision which Heidegger diagnoses as to a large extent *remaining* "technical," "productive," does it become possible to take sufficient notice of the circle of means and ends. And so long as the "ends" of "political action" are conceived as the *ideas* that animate politics, "political discourse" continues to dwell within theoretico-technics, a *theoria* (or in fact a sophistry) that determines a technics. And hence, no matter to what extent such a "political discourse" imagines itself as escaping *theoria*, it is only through the possibility that such a discourse becomes visible to itself *as* theoretico-technics that politics itself as such becomes possible.

The possibility for "politics" begins, not with the possibility for *logos* to state the truth, but with the possibility for *logos*, and hence the technics of non-being, to become visible. *Logos* withdraws, and therefore draws us toward it. This is what Agamben means when he speaks of the fact that human beings are separated by what unites them, which he names, in Benjaminian rather than Heideggerian terms,

[120] *Ibid.*, p. 129.

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as "communicability." Agamben speaks of the possibility, today, for language to become visible, and of the necessity for an "experiment" which would experience language as such, an experiment in the matter of thought itself, in the power and possibility of thought. Such an "experiment" is "political" insofar as what is intended by "communication" or "language" is *not* the *end* (destiny, goal) of human beings, *not* the "logical-transcendental condition of politics," but rather, in general, this being-together that separates:

> That is why the first consequence deriving from this experiment is the subverting of the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes any ethics a⁻ ⁺ any politics. A finality without means (the good and the beautiful as ends ⌐ ·· themselves), in fact, is just as alienating as a mediality that makes sense ⌐ ··y with respect to an end. What is in question in political experience is not a higher end but being-into-language itself as pure mediality, being-into-a-mean as an irreducible condition of human beings. *Politics is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the act of making a means visible as such.* Politics is the sphere neither of an end in itself nor of means subordinated to an end; rather, it is the sphere of a pure mediality without end intended as the field of human action and of human thought.[121]

[121] Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Politics," *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 116–7.

Chapter Three

Truth is Always a Kind of Robbery

> "*When one possesses Being, why speak of what is not* Aletheia? *Because between the time of Epimenides and Parmenides the social context had changed. The magus had lived apart from the* polis, *on the periphery of society, but the philosopher, by contrast, was subject to the urban regime and therefore to the demands of publicity. He was obliged to leave the sanctuary of revelation: the gods gave him* Aletheia, *but at the same time, his truth was open to challenge if not to verification. Parmenides takes account of* Doxai, *discoursing on 'words of deception.' Faced with* Aletheia *and based on Being,* Apate *displays its powers: it establishes a level of reality where* parphasis *reigns and where Day is mixed with Night. This is the world of the plurality of* Doxai, *the world Parmenides describes when speaking of men who have sought to name two things when even naming one did not seem necessary to them. Here, thought is ruled by contradiction, but contraries are introduced simultaneously in language. Thus,* Apate *is no longer pure negativity; here, light is intermingled with the Night. The scene could almost be described as simultaneously* alethes *and* pseudes. *The philosopher can discover traces of* Aletheia *even at the heart of the 'deceptive' world.*" Marcel Detienne.[1]

The problem with "Greece" is that it remains a *fact*.

The history of "*poiesis*," of the word, is the history of forgetting that it does not refer to "human creation," but rather to *all* "conducting into being what at first was not there" (*Sophist* 219b4f.).[2] It is the history of forgetting, therefore, that *poiesis* does

[1] Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), pp. 133–4.

[2] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), pp. 185–6, "*was zuvor nicht da ist, zum Sein führen.*" And cf., Plato, *Symposium* 205b; cf., Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 59–60.

not refer *only* to *techne*, which does not even yet mean "human production," but to all *physis* as such, to all *ousia* as such, which means not only being but wealth, possessions, that is, what is *available*. If there is such a thing as *techne poietike*, and if this is related in the broadest sense to action, to *praxis*, then this is so first of all because there is a relation between *poiesis* as such and "*pragmata*," that with which one has to deal, that which is there for *praxis*.[3] The forgetting of this original link between the "human" world and the "world" as such then permits the division between the "subjective" and the "objective" worlds. And *this* split between subjectivity and objectivity in turn *then* permits the division between "subjective" and "objective" production, and hence permits the final reduction of *poiesis* which is represented by the split *between* "poetry" and "technics."

The history of the word "fact," however, moves in the opposite direction. "Fact" derives from the Latin "*factum*," the past participle of *facere*, to do or to make. Hence this is the etymology also of the words "facilitate" and "factory." In Latin, something that is in accordance with reality is not a *factum* but a *verum*. A *factum* is originally an act, an action performed, whether of creation, composition, or causation. From this basis the "fact" comes to possess a relation to the juridical *milieu*, to the trial, as the *object* of juridical determination, as in the phrase "after the fact." It is that *action* about which it is possible to determine the truth or falsity of whether someone has "done it." But thereby the concept of "fact" is what makes possible judgment. And judgment itself is nothing more than the *act* of gathering (all the evidence, everything that makes itself visible about a situation), and in gathering passing the limit of decision, *making* a judgment, affirming or denying the fact. It is only later that *this* character of the fact as *available for the act of judgment* becomes central, just as it is only later that the "fact" ceases to be a matter of human doing, and comes instead to name the character of "reality" as such. This passage to the "fact" therefore mirrors the history of the "category." The category is first of all the accusation against the accused in the *agora*, the act of gathering together in a *logos* the arguments for a judgment *against* the accused, *for* the fact of the crime. Category, like fact, passes from the juridical to the philosophical.[4]

The history of "fact," like "category," therefore, and contrary to *poiesis*, is a move *away* from the human world to the world as such, and away from production, from

[3] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 187: "*womit man zu tun hat, und wasfür die praxis da ist.*"

[4] Cf., Joseph Flay. *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 135–6. And note that Flay emphasizes that, already for Kant, the category is a "'*unifying act*,' an activity in which things are unified in one way rather than in another way. The category is thus only a form of 'concept' or '*Begriff*,' a grasp of things, a holding together. [...] the category is in truth the act of categorizing, the judgment is the act of judging, a reversal which Kant himself had begun with his characterization of judgment and category as act."

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making or doing, and toward a thought *of* the world as such, as being available for determination on the basis of truth or falsity. Despite this reversal, therefore, this movement of the word "fact" is perhaps strangely assimilable to the history of *poiesis*, as representing in fact the *extension to* the world as such of the character of being objectively determinable. The possibility of "facts" represents for human action upon the world the possibility of *being* objective, and it is hence what opens the possibility for technics as such.

The brutal facts about Greece

The fact of "Greece" remains a problem for at least three reasons.

Firstly, Greece remains. The remains of Greece remain, are present. We can go there, sojourn there, in texts and, in fact, *physically*. We can know that Greece happened, really, definitely, and it continues to stand there, in ruins, but still holding out to us the possibility of an "experience" of Greece. To "experience" means that Greece can still affect us, that we can still suffer Greece. We can still pass the border and enter Greece, and this means that the facts of Greece are still potentially determinable. What remains, remains to be found. Greece cannot simply be left behind without a *decision* to turn away from Greece, to decline the invitation that Greece continues to extend.

Secondly, all that remains of Greece are remains. Greece, "living" Greece, is no longer *there*. If Greece continues to *offer* an invitation, then our response to this invitation is itself immediately threatened, *both by* the host and by the *absence* of the host. Risking passage across this border, experiencing Greece, means, firstly, delivering oneself into the hands of the Greeks, of the Greek authorities, and hence taking the risk that one's *experience* of Greece may be *only* something subjective, something that the *facts* of Greece may subsequently confirm or *fail* to confirm. Thus the safest journey to Greece is as a tourist, to stick to the established paths and the clearest facts. But passage to Greece may *also* mean risking an experience that is essentially unconfirmable. Being nothing but remains, Greece withdraws, and threatens to be unlocatable, undiscoverable, or to . ain a limitrophe we cannot *truly* pass or cross into. But this threat is also perl..ps the remaining promise. Perhaps it is not the fact of Greece that continues to invite us, but this very withdrawal that continues to draw us to it and into an abyss. The threat and promise of the remains, the ruins, of Greece, is the possibility that Greece will remain *allegorical*, both in Heidegger's sense—as something *other* than what can be openly and publicly declared in the *agora* in a way everyone can understand—and in Benjamin's:

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> In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting [*hat sinnlich die Geschichte in den Schauplatz sich verzogen*]. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as the occurrence of inexorable decay [*vielmehr als Vorgang unaufhaltsamen Verfalls sich aus*]. Allegory thereby declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things.[5]

The remains of Greece promise to confirm that history is an abyss, a fall or a decay, to confirm this as a fact, but the condition of possibility of this confirmation is equally the condition of its impossibility. What remains is a sign of what has been lost, but as *only* a *sign*, as *only* what remains, as something other than the thing itself, as something about which we can never be *categorically* certain. What we say about what remains threatens to be *only* allegorical, a legend or fairy tale that can never be openly and publicly and factually *judged*.[6] But this withdrawal of Greece, its essential departure *from us* makes *any* experience of "Greece," even the safest, something that *we do*, something *we make*. There is only the "Athens" we invent, only the "Greece" we facilitate.

Thirdly, whatever remains of Greece, however it withdraws, what Greece continues to invite us to accept is that it names the originary experience. Whether we call it the *polis*, the *agora*, *logos*, democracy, or philosophy, Greece continues to hold out the promise that there, there really, factually, there took place the first experience *of* experience, which means really the first experience. This means then the first *act* of experience, of making experience, of experiencing that experience is something *we do*, something *we make*, something for which we possess the facility. The Greeks *made* experience (into philosophy). Equally, then, it means the first experience that, *as* experiencing, *because* experience is something proper to us, we are the ones *capable* of *facere*, of making and doing. The Greeks were the first to cross the border *to* the experience of being-capable, to be *inventive*.

This thought of Greek experience continues to draw us to *set up* the border, to separate it from the lands that do not yet have the facility for experience, and equally from the lands that have lost this facility. Setting up such a border, positing "Greece," means telling a story, the story of Greek experience, of the Greek "miracle." The story, that is, of how the Greeks *discovered* experience, discovered themselves as actors and makers. This theme has many elements, not all of which will be present in any particular variation. An example of perhaps the most common motif is provided by Claude Mossé, who opens a chapter in a recent

[5] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (London & New York: Verso, 1977), pp. 177-8.

[6] Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 16.

encyclopaedic survey of Greek thought with the following statement: "The Greeks invented politics."[7]

The Greeks invented politics. If the Greeks invented politics, what exactly is the invention? If we listen to the Greeks, politics is *praxis*, *praxis* in the *polis*. If the Greeks invented politics, they *made* politics for the first time, *produced* politics for the first time, *found* themselves finding it, and hence *founded* politics. But if politics (for the Greeks) means *praxis*, and if politics begins by being *produced* (by the Greeks), is *praxis* thereby subordinated to *poiesis*? Does the very statement that the Greeks invented politics not thereby undermine the Greek conception of politics as *praxis* by returning it to *poiesis*? Or could it be that the thought of the "invention" of "politics" is the thought of political *praxis* itself? Could *praxis* then mean the *permanent* invention of politics? At the very least we might conclude that in the idea of the invention of politics, *praxis* and *poiesis* converge in the thought that *praxis* is produced for the very first time, that doing is made for the first time. The invention is the discovery, the experience, of the *t that* "we are political," we produce actions. It is to find out that we *already were* political, to find that we are transparently political. It is to experience that we *already were* capable of action and production, and on that basis to commence producing politics, instituting it, ordering it, founding it, *poietically*.[8]

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[7] Claude Mossé, "Inventing Politics," in Jacques Brunschwig & Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd (eds.), *Greek Thought: A Guide to Classical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press 2000), p. 147. Mossé ends the chapter by ruminating on the "limits" of Athenian democracy, the border represented by the exclusion of slaves and foreigners, destined to a limitrophic existence even if within the *polis*, but concludes with the following statement (p. 161, emphasis added): "This should not prevent us, however, from recognizing that *the Greek experience*, particularly in Athens, had a value unique in the history of human societies." Also, cf., Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Oedipus Between Two Cities: An Essay on *Oedipus at Colonnus*," in Jean-Pierre Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 330: "As is now general y agreed, the Greeks invented politics. But what exactly do we mean by that?"

[8] Cf., Jacques Derrida, "Psyche: Inventions of the Other," in Lindsay Waters & Wlad Godzich (eds.), *Reading De Man Reading* (Minne polis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 43: "What is an invention? What does it do? It *finds* something for the first time. And the ambiguity lies in the word 'find.' To find is to invent when the experience of finding takes place for the first time. An event without precedent whose novelty may be either that of the (invented) thing found (for example, a technical apparatus that did not exist before: printing, a vaccine, nuclear weapons, a musical form, an institution—good or bad—and so on), or else the act and not the object of 'finding' or 'discovering' (for example, in a now dated sense, the invention of the Cross or the invention of the body of Saint Mark of Tintoretto). But in both cases, from both points of view (object or act), invention does not create an existence or a world as a set of existents, it does not have the theological meaning of a veritable creation of existence *ex nihilo*. It discovers for the first time, it unveils what was already *found* there, or produces what, as *techne*, was not already found there but is still not created, in the strong sense of the word, is only put together, starting with a stock of existing and available elements, in a given configuration."

Jean-Pierre Vernant, in one paragraph, describes the advent of the *polis* as "a decisive event," "a departure," a "new form" of social life and human relations, the "originality" of which the Greeks were fully aware.[9] Central to this new form was speech, and specifically the transformation of speech into "open debate, discussion, argument," discussion that *is* open, discussion that takes place *in* the open. Central, then, was the "reciprocal tie, between politics and *logos*," a tying together in which each gave the other, *logos* making possible politics, and vice versa. Sophistry is the expression of this tie. Central, too, then is that place through which this transformed politics and language becomes possible, and central to this place is *its* transformation. From being the gathering of warriors, the *agora* becomes that place where decisions are made and brought *es to koinon*, to the common. Central, therefore, is the idea of the *agora as* the centre, the middle, *es to meson*, and as the common hearth, *hestia koine*.[10] Marcel Detienne, too, emphasizes this transformation of the *agora* from being a military to a "public" centre. The *agora* is not only the centre of the transformation (which for Detienne is a "secularization") of speech and politics. It first opens the possibility of the split between a *logos* of the human world (sophist_ _) and a *logos* of "reality" (philosophy).[11]

This narrative—of the originality of the Greek *polis*; of becoming-*conscious* of the "crisis of sovereignty"; of a new social *centre* and hearth, the *agora*; of a transformation of and a new importance for speech and writing; and of the consequences of this t_ _nsformation in terms of a split between *polis*-centred religion and the mystery cults, mirrored in a split between the *polis*-centred sophist and the philosopher—is recounted in almost identical terms by Pierre Vidal-

[9] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 49.

[10] *Ibid.*, chs. 3–4.

[11] Cf., Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, p. 17: "I gleaned signs of a process which set in motion the gradual secularization of speech. The most important sign was to be found in the military assembly since it conferred the equal right to speech on all members of the warrior class, those whose very position allowed them to discuss communal affairs. The hoplite reform, introduced in the city around 650 B.C., not only imposed a new type of weaponry and behavior in battle, but also encouraged the emergence of 'equal and similar' soldier-citizens. At this point, dialogue—secular speech that acts on others, that persuades and refers to the affairs of the group—began to gain ground while the efficacious speech conveying truth gradually became obsolete. Through its new function, which was fundamentally political and related to the *agora*, *logos*—speech and language—became autonomous. Two major trends now developed in thought about language. On the one hand *logos* was seen as an instrument of social relation: How did it act upon others? In this vein, rhetoric and sophistry began to develop the grammatical and stylistic analysis of techniques of persuasion. Meanwhile, the other path, explored by philosophy, led to reflections on *logos* as a means of knowing reality: Is speech all of reality?" Cf., *ibid.*, ch. 5.

Naquet.[12] But Vidal-Naquet then wonders, contra Castoriadis, to what extent and in what way the "active democracy, instituting as well as instituted," of the Greeks, was *thought*, experienced, by the Greeks at all.[13] What is more clear to Vidal-Naquet is, however, firstly the reciprocal tie (he says "fundamental bond") between democracy and imperialism and, secondly, the way in which democracy is a *technical* innovation, a changing of borders to include at least *some* peasants, *some* artisans. Despite this, the question Vidal-Naquet wishes to ask in "Democracy: A Greek Invention" is whether things are "the same, when one passes from the *polis* to the democratic city." And for Vidal-Naquet, it is clear that this passage cannot be the story of a change of degree but, on the contrary, involves "a more profound difference":

> The city invents the political sphere [*le politique*], but is democracy something completely new in relation to that? Democracy evidently is related to the political sphere. But that does not prevent it from representing, I believe, a radical innovation.[14]

From "politics" to "democracy" the invention is doubled. Thus in spite of the "structuralist" or "materialist" good intentions, the "diachronic" concern with the Greek *event* remains. As a good structuralist, the question of democracy cannot be a matter of explaining why the Greek innovation was *better than* other forms of organization: "To speak apropos of the invention of democracy, of Ancient Greece, and more particularly of Athens, does not signify that I bear any contempt whatsoever either for other Greeks cities, or for Rome, or for the 'tribal' democracies one encounters in Africa or in Indian America." Yet the ambiguity of Vidal-Naquet's political conscience in the end demands the recognition that politics itself, politics proper, finds its origin at *one* site, at *one* time, however complicated this unicity may be. What must therefore be confessed is that "if one wants to speak of Phoenician cities, it is much more difficult [...] to speak of Phoenician *politics*, of this jarring game of confrontations, rivalries, and decision-making that we call *politics* [*la politique*]."[15]

All of these narrators of Greek experience, of the event *of* Greek experience, are aware that there is nothing more difficult to explain than the event, the beginning of

[12] Pierre Vidal-Naquet, "Greek Rationality and the City," *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). See especially pp. 256–7.

[13] Vidal-Naquet, "Democracy: A Greek Invention," in Pierre Lévêque & Vidal-Naquet, *Cleisthenes the Athenian: An Essay on the Representation of Space and Time in Greek Political Thought from the End of the Sixth Century to the Death of Plato* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 110.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 102–3.

the fact, but that if we eliminate the event, there is no longer a story to tell. All of them are perhaps uneasy about the idea of the Greek "miracle," and a common theme in their narratives and explanations is the thought that in offering the conditions of possibility of this miracle, which is what all of them conscientiously and in good faith succeed in offering, the miracle will thereby be secularized. Yet they are unable to (and who is to say they should) give up on the thought that *something happened* in Greece, something begins, something is founded, and that the story of this fact remains to be told.

Living and suffering in the polis

Jacob Burckhardt's *Kulturgeschichte* of Greece at first gives the appearance of wishing to avoid telling such a story at all. The first methodological commandment he invents for himself is a ban on passing the border of the event—what must firstly be abandoned is *"die kritische Untersuchung über die Anfänge."*[16] And Burckhardt confirms the solidity of the foundations for this commandment at the beginning of his consideration of the *polis*: "The question as to where and how a *Volk* begins remains a dark one, like all questions about beginnings [*wie alle Anfänge*]."[17] These preliminary declarations that the "question about beginnings" is beyond the border of the narrative about to be told are, however, reflections of the same ambivalence found in Vernant, Vidal-Naquet, Detienne, etc. And, again, for Burckhardt too, it is clear that, precisely because it is difficult, a story remains to be told about the beginning of Greek experience, of how *poiesis* makes way for *praxis*, of how *"Landwirte"* became *"Politiker"* in the *polis*.[18] And for Burckhardt, too, the *"agora,"* the *Mittelpunkt* of the *polis*, before it means marketplace, means "to assemble, and indeed often means the assembly [*die Versammlung*] without reference to the place [*Ort*]."[19] For Burckhardt, too, what is important about the *agora* is what it means for the future of speech. And as Detienne found, this transformation of speech involves a doubling of *logos* ("human" and "world"), which Burckhardt emphasizes by noting that the *agora*, along with the symposium, are the two new settings for *Konversation*.[20] Finally, as was found in Vidal-Naquet, the Phoenician city stands as the example that proves there is a story to be told concerning the *polis*, the story of

[16] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization* (London: HarperCollins, 1988), p. 8.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 52–3.

its originality and its origin (invention, creation through a common will), and thereby the story of the *polis* itself, *its* action, capacity, *pathos*:

> So the *polis*, with its vitality much more developed than that of the Phoenician *Stadtrepublik*, was a wholly unique creation [*ein ganz Produkt*] in the history of the world. It was the expression of a common will of the highest activeness and capability [*von höchster Tätigkeit und Tatfähigkeit*]; indeed the *polis* succeeded in rising above mere village life thanks only to its deeds [*der Tat*], the power it exercised [*der Machtübung*] its passion [*der Leidenschaft*].[21]

Burckhardt ambiguously expresses the relation between *polis* and *Volk*. It is as though this "passion" and "will" of the Greeks, their being-affected and affecting, was the condition of possibility for the *polis*. Yet Burckhardt also appears to be saying that this *common* will is what the *polis* first made possible, thanks to *its* passion. The *polis* and its "people" are indissociably intertwined, the *cause* of each other. It is as though in fact the Greeks, in instituting and inhabiting the *polis*, were "more" than they actually were. And because the Greeks were "more" than they actually were, and because they were so passionately, the tightest border controls would be needed to secure *who* they actually were:

> This was why the strictest criteria were needed for the definition of a full citizen, who after all was to form a part of this power. These *poleis* underwent quite a different order of good and bad fortune from the cities of other people and other epochs, and even in the liveliest of the mediaeval republics, such an intensity of living and suffering [*an diesen Grad des Lebens und Leidens*] was only occasionally attained.
> Hence too their violence [*Hieraus erklärt sich aber auch ihre Gewaltsamkeit*].[22]

What all of these narratives of the Greek beginning share is an interest in, firstly, the facts of the world the Greeks already found themselves in, thrown into and, secondly, the fact that the Greeks project themselves into a world. Being between these two sets of posited facts, being between posited and positing in the *polis*, Burckhardt eloquently calls "their violence." According to Heidegger in 1943, this thought of Greek "violence," of the "rise and fall of man" in the *polis*—"the frightfulness [*die Furchtbarkeit*], the horribleness [*die Grauenhafte*], the atrociousness [*das Unheil*] of the Greek *polis*"—is Burckhardt's discovery. Heidegger adds:

> It is not by chance that man is spoken of in this way in Greek tragedy. For the possibility and the necessity [*die Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit*] of "tragedy" itself

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 57. And cf., p. 55: "But apart from these differences the *polis* in itself was a creation of quite another kind; it is as though, this one time in world history, there emerged, fully developed in strength and single-mindedness [*in voller Kraft und Einseitigkeit*], a will which had been waiting impatiently for its day on earth [*welche längst wie mit Ungedult scheint auf seinen Welttag gewartet zu haben*]."

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

has its single source [*einzigen Grunde*] in the conflictual essence [*streithaften Wesens*] of *aletheia*.[23]

Leben and *Leiden* within the *polis* have their necessity and possibility in essential conflict. The suffering of the *polis* then functions as a sign pointing to the fact that the condition of possibility for "conflictual essence" is the pathetic possibility for one thing to affect or suffer another.

Burckhardt is the first to grasp the violence of the *polis*, its beginning and its existence. If the invention of politics was possible due to a transformation of speech, such that it became agonistic, then this *agon* is inseparable from the violence of Greek invention as such. The uniqueness of the Greek invention is what se them on a path of extremes of fortune, what filled them with an awareness of the darkness and precariousness of fate, what made their mood uniformly pessimistic. "From out of this soil [*Boden*] it was possible for tragedy to build its structures of crime [*Frevel*], curse [*Fluch*] and misery [*Jammer*] into high art."[24] Nevertheless, for Heidegger Burckhardt's understanding of the *agon* of the *polis* will remain inadequate. Despite refuting the "image" of Greece held by humanists and idealists, Burckhardt does not escape the presuppositions of either. As the product of will, as "created" and "creating," Burckhardt sees the *polis* the way he saw the principality, in terms of the state as a work of art. or, alternatively expressed, the state as a work of power.[25]

Burckhardt remains within mythic narratives of violence. He is therefore incapable of grasping the fact of experience, a passage that can never be told in terms merely of human action, human power. human passion, can never be told in terms of the "life" of this "people." Shirking the critical interpretation of beginnings, he cannot approach the origin of violence, nor the violence of origin, the foundations of violence, nor the violence of foundation. If the Greeks bore an experience of the *agonal*, then for Heidegger the truth of this experience must, from the beginning, involve truth itself. And if the Greek invention of politics is the invention of that confrontation and decision made possible through a transformation of speech into *agonistic* speech, then what the Greeks "experienced," in the beginning, is the meaning of conflict itself.[26]

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[23] Heidegger, *Parmenides* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 90.

[24] Burckhardt, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization*, p. 87.

[25] Heidegger, *Parmenides*, p. 91.

[26] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 18: "Accordingly, we do not understand to what extent the essence of truth itself is, in itself, a conflict [*Streit*]. If, however, in the primordial thinking [*anfänglichen Denken*] of the Greeks the conflictual essence of truth was experienced [*erfahren*], then it cannot astonish us to hear in the traces [*Sprüchen*] of this primordial thinking, precisely the word 'conflict.' The interpretation of the Greek world by Jacob Burckhardt and Nietzsche has taught us to recognize the 'agonal principle' and to see in the 'competitive match' ['*Wettkampf*'] an essential 'impulse' ['*Antrieb*'] in the 'life' of this people. But we must then go

This is Heidegger in 1943. But it will be nearly twenty years before Heidegger will risk crossing the border to Greece, physically. Does Greece, constituting nothing but remains, pose a threat to his thinking? As though to succumb to Greece's invitation is to invite disappointment. And Heidegger is disappointed in 1962, on Corfu, Ithaca, Crete. But for Heidegger, too, what remains, the ruins, are, beyond "the aesthetics of beauty," still the setting that speaks of history and beginnings. The ruins continue to speak of something other than what is handed down by the tradition, what is set down as the openly, publicly, obvious. The island of Delos, desolate and abandoned [*Öde und Verlassenheit*], the "middle" of Greece, speaks rather of what is veiled, the *grossen Anfang*.[27] And if Delos speaks, what speaks firstly is what Delos is called, its name. "Delos *heißt die Insel: die Offenbare, die Scheinende*," the manifest, the appearing, which gathers everything in its "open," which *in* its appearing conceals everything in *one* present [*Gegenwart*].[28] *Die Offenbare, die Scheinende*: "Delos" speaks of this doubling, of the mixing together of what comes *into* the open, and what *in appearing* passes back across the border. Heidegger re-doubles: "Delos, *die Offenbare, die unverborgen Entbergende*," the unconcealment of what comes forth in being harbored, and immediately, again, at the same time *Verbergende* and *Bergende*, the concealing and the harboring.[29] Beyond its name, it is the island itself, its being-in-ruins, the desolation of its coasts and seas, which speaks of what shows itself in its withdrawal: *"Unverborgenheit (Entbergen) und Verborgenheit (Bergen): die Aletheia."*[30]

Something happens, something begins, in Greece, and this event, this beginning, remains, for us, today. Heidegger states this explicitly, and in a way that shows that the very *fact* of this occurrence goes to the heart of Heidegger's thought: "for in the Greek world something happened that was a beginning [*denn in Griechentum hat sich etwas Anfängliches ereignet*], and only beginnings ground history [*und Anfängliches*

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on to ask where the principle of the 'agon' has its ground and whence the essence of 'life' and of man receives its determination so that it is 'agonal.' 'Competitiveness' can only arise where the conflictual is experienced before all else as what is essential. But to maintain that the agonal essence of Greek humanity rests on a corresponding predisposition of the people would be an 'explanation' no less thoughtless than saying the essence of thinking is grounded on the capacity to think." And cf., Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 211.

[27] Heidegger, *Aufenthalte* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), pp. 18–9. Cf., John Sallis, *Stone* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 88.

[28] Heidegger, *Aufenthalte*, p. 19. Cf., Marc Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say—Heidegger's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 228.

[29] Heidegger, *Aufenthalte*, p. 19. On *bergen* and *Entbergen*, see William Lovitt's footnote in Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 11, n. 10.

[30] Heidegger, *Aufenthalte*, pp. 19–20.

allein gründet Geschichte]."[31] Heidegger, then, has (or makes, invents) his own Greek fact. This is well known, for it is one of those common judgments against Heidegger, that he categorically looks *too hard* for the Greek fact, that he *makes too much* of it, and that therefore Heidegger's Greece is condemned to remain a subjective invention, something *merely* seen by Heidegger alone. Detienne, to offer an example, offers the ambivalent judgment that Heidegger is the only inventor, "the only real innovator in Greek thought." Yet Heidegger tries too hard, pushes beyond any possibly verifiable facts. This tendency means the end of the Greek invention of politics, and it means that Heidegger forgets that *logos* means debate and argument. Heidegger tries too hard to invent the Greek fact as the moment when being manifests in its withdrawal, and he ends up trying too hard to reduce etymology to ontology, that is, to *force* his etymology, violently, into ortology. When Heidegger arbitrarily derives "*polis*" from *polein*, an ancient form of "to be," thereby making the *polis* into the site of the unveiling of being, it is the end of (the invention of) politics. "Thus, the city cannot have anything in common with 'politics' in the trivial sense of *to politikon*. So, goodbye politics."[32]

Whatever the apparent stakes of this debate between Heidegger on the one hand and Detienne, Vidal-Naquet *et al* on the other hand, there is something like a common ground about the *fact* of the Greek invention itself, whatever that is. Postponing, therefore, an interrogation of Heidegger's Greek fact, and what it means for "politics," it is preferable to inquire firstly about Heidegger's relation to the "fact" itself, to the factual. The question, that is, about Da-sein's relation to its facticity. Yet this inquiry cannot be considered as "preliminary," as an elaboration of methodological principles, if in fact the explanation of what is inquired about, in this case "facticity," is involved *from the beginning* in that to which it is to be applied, the Greek fact itself, for instance *aletheia*.

Faktum *and* Faktizität

Heidegger *knows* the original meaning of "*Faktum*," even if or because in German "*Tatsächlichkeit*" captures the double sense of factuality and actuality. This duplicity is not only present in "*Tat-sache*"—which joins the act to the fact (of the matter)—but even in "*Tat*" itself, in, for instance the distinction between "*die Tat*" (act, action), and "*in der Tat*" (actually, in fact). This duplicity is illustrated by and embodied in that group of Carl Schmitt disciples who chose to call themselves the

[31] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 56.
[32] Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, pp. 26–8.

Tat circle, and who in 1929 took control of an already existing journal entitled *Die Tat*. Siegfried Kracauer's criticism of this journal in 1931 is precisely that "act" and "fact" are mixed together in the thought of a "not yet." *Die Tat* imagine that to present a myth of what "should be" is itself an act that will make a new reality, that, therefore, "instead of penetrating the reality [*Wirklichkeit*] that it is concerned with, *Die Tat* gets lost in the pseudo-reality [*Scheinwirklichkeit*] of the images [*Bilder*] of state and of myth."[33] The act of experiencing what is "not yet" will bring that experience across the border and into actuality. But for Kracauer this "experience" cannot be an actual fact:

> For the way *Die Tat*'s contributors constantly refer to the *Volk*, state, myth, and so forth concisely proves that it is less about experienced substantialities [*erfahrene Gehalte*] than about those that they are yearning for. As is betrayed by the use to which these substantialities are put, they are not being presupposed [*nicht vorausgesetzt*] but are rather being called for [*sondern gefordert*]: they are not the point of departure but rather where it is necessary to head [*man kommt nicht von ihnen her, man möchte zu ihnen hin*]. In other words, the reality [*Wirklichkeit*] that means so much to *Die Tat* does not exist at all [*ist gar nicht Vorhanden*], except perhaps as a goal [*Ziel*]. But talk of substantive contents [*Substanzen*] is meaningful only if these can be shown to exist. To proclaim them as some sort of plan to be brought about by mere exertion of will is to make a demand that is doomed to be unfulfilled from the start. A substantiality either exists or it does not [*Ein Gehalt existiert oder existiert nicht*].[34]

The *Tat* circle do not speak of "experienced substantialities," of substantial things which have *really* affected them, which they have suffered. Rather, they fall prey to distortion and become entangled with phantasms. Yet is it really so clear, especially in the realm of the political, that "a substantiality either exists or it does not"? Is there *nothing* substantive, nothing *actual*, about an *"objective,"* an objective goal? Kracauer plays the part of Plato, suspicious of the poetico-sophistical mythologists, opposing to them the discourse of factuality. In bringing "reason" against *Die Tat*, perhaps Kracauer misses the seriousness of the sophistic intention, and thereby misses the possibility that "sophistic" poses a question about the possibility of politics as such:

> Or again, there is a moment in every encomium when language overtakes the object, when language becomes the maker of objects, when description, commonplace statements, open up. This is the moment of creation, including the creation of values: the moment of rhetorical convergence between critique of ontology and institution of politics.[35]

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[33] Siegfried Kracauer, "The Revolt of the Middle Classes," *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 126.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[35] Barbara Cassin, "Sophists," in Brunschwig & Lloyd (eds.), *Greek Thought*, p. 964.

The Heideggerian thought of *facticity* is a matter of adding to and subtracting from the fact, the fact of Da-sein itself. Because he knows the *"actuality"* of the fact, Heidegger distances "facticity" *from* the "fact." But this distancing *in itself* records the echo of this original meaning. When Heidegger first introduces "facticity" into *Sein und Zeit*, it is in relation to the *"faktum"* and to Da-sein's "actuality": "The factuality of the fact of Da-sein [*Die Tatsächlichkeit des Faktums Da-sein*], as the way in which every Da-sein actually is, we call its *Faktizität.*"[36] By taking "fact" in its "modern" sense, Heidegger *subtracts* this from "facticity," thereby leaving *to* facticity the original sense of the fact-ness of facticity.

> *Facticity is not the factuality of the* factum brutum *of objective-presence* [nicht die Tatsächlichkeit des factum brutum eines Vorhandenen], *but is rather, although initially thrust aside, taken up in the existence* [in die Existenz aufgenommener] *of the being of Da-sein. The that of facticity* [*Das Daß der Faktizität*] *is never to be found by taking a "look"* [*in einem Anschauen nie vorfindlich*].[37]

This is an account of facticity in a negative register, that finds facticity by subtracting the *factum brutum*. It is *not* a matter of objectivity, not something found by looking. Even a "positive" account of facticity tends to grasp it according to the apparent "negativity" of *passivity*. That is, for instance, in terms of "being delivered over to" ("*Überantwortung*"), as the "that it is and has to be" ("*Das es ist und zu sein hat*").[38] Facticity means simultaneously the situation in which Da-sein already finds itself, and the finitude of Da-sein as it is found in the situation. Facticity is that condition of the being of Da-sein that makes possible Da-sein's thrownness (*Geworfenheit*): its entanglement (*Verfallen*), its potentiality for distortion (*Verstelltheit*) and being-closed-off (*Verschlossenheit*).[39] Da-sein is thrown into the plunge (*Absturz*).[40]

Yet this passive characterization of facticity *is* its positivity. All of these "passive" aspects of facticity must be grasped in an active sense as what give Da-sein its *possibility*, its *potentiality*, its *actuality*. "Not only is thrownness not a 'finished fact' [*fertige Tatsache*], it is also not a self-contained fact [*ein abgeschlossenes Faktum*]."[41] Facticity does not apply to a stone, that is, does not apply to those beings that are only objectively present, that are in the world in a manner that is merely *categorial*.[42] Facticity is on the contrary that way of being in the world that

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[36] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), p. 56.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] Cf., *ibid.*, pp. 221-3; *ibid.*, pp. 175-6.

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

involves Da-sein in its *Geschick*.[43] Facticity names not only Da-sein's thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) but also its projecting (*entwerfen*). To be thrown means first of all that Da-sein is thrown *into* projecting, into the situation in which it is already *involved* and *on its way*. What does being thrown into projecting mean for Da-sein? Heidegger expresses it by saying that Da-sein is therefore "contantly 'more' than it factually is" ("*ständig 'mehr,' als es tatsächlich ist*"), *more* than the "registerable" "content of its being" ("*Seinsbestand*"), understood in terms of its *Vorhandenheit*. Yet if Da-sein is constantly *more* than it factually is, then it is nevertheless *never more* than it factically is (*nie mehr, als es faktisch ist*), because its potentiality for being (*seinkönnen*) belongs essentially *to* its facticity. But, he adds, this being always more which is never more, is not either a being less (*weniger*), because it is in the mode of a "*not yet*" ("noch nicht").[44] Da-sein is "more" than it is, because Da-sein *is* its possibilities. Facticity names Da-sein's being-more-than its factuality.

The Greeks, then, are the example *par excellence* of facticity, always more than they are, founding what was not there before, finding themselves in their possibilities. The Greeks make us see facticity; they make facticity transparently obvious. Does the "tragedy" of the Greeks, and the tragic destiny of the *polis*, not find its foundation in this being more than they actually were, this *excess* of Greek fate?[45] But tragedy, according to Heidegger, has its *single* source in *aletheia*. And this is a clue about facticity itself. What must be remembered about facticity is that, as Da-sein's being-thrown into its possibilities, facticity is also the ground of Da-sein's possibility of "understanding." "As factical, Da-sein has always already transferred its potentiality of being into a possibility of understanding."[46]

What is understanding? Heidegger has already stated that the "that" of facticity is not available through *looking*, yet he writes the following: "In this character of project, understanding constitutes existentially what we call the *sight* [Sicht] of Da-sein." And he adds: "We shall call the sight which is primarily and as a whole related to existence transparency [*Durchsichtigkeit*]."[47] The problem of facticity, of Da-sein's being more than it factually is, *is* the problem of the potentiality for a kind of sight that is not mere looking, the problem of a potentiality of Da-sein for a kind of transparency. This potentiality of Da-sein for becoming-transparent sounds like an exit from facticity, yet this is categorically not the case:

> The facticity of Da-sein is such that, *as long as* it is what it is, Da-sein remains in the throw [*im Wurf bleibt*] and is sucked into the swirl of the inauthenticity of the "they"

43 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
44 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
45 Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 135.
46 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 146.
47 *Ibid.*

[und in die Uneigentlichkeit des Man hineingewirbelt wird]. Thrownness, in which facticity can be seen phenomenally, belongs to Da-sein, which is concerned in its being about that being. Da-sein exists factically [Da-sein existiert faktisch]."[48]

As long as Da-sein is, it is factically, inauthentically. Its existence is as nothing other than factical. Da-sein's thrownness is nothing other than the possibility of its facticity being seen, the becoming visible to itself of Da-sein's facticity. Da-sein's being thrown into its possibilities for *doing*, its *making* more of itself than it factually is, its *"being-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world"* ("Sich-vorweg-im-schon-sein-in-einer-Welt"), means nothing other than that "existing is always factical" (*"Existieren ist immer faktisches"*) and that "existentiality is essentially determined through facticity" (*"Existenzialität ist wesenhaft durch Faktizität bestimmt"*).[49] The possibility of the *transparency* of Da-sein, therefore, can never be an exit from the being-in-the-*swirl* of facticity. Rather, Da-sein's potentiality of understanding is a question about the possibility of phenomenology. The possibility of *knowing* is the possibility for Da-sein to see more than it actually sees, for thrownness to be phenomenally visible. Facticity is thus essentially related to Heidegger's account of *aletheia*, and this is captured by the rather "Oedipal" description of facticity proffered by Agamben:

> What interests Heidegger here as a mark of factical experience is this dialectic of concealment and unconcealment, this double movement by which whoever wants to know everything while remaining concealed in knowledge is known by a knowledge that is concealed from him. Facticity is the condition of what remains concealed in its opening, of what is exposed by its very retreat. From the beginning, facticity is thus characterized by the same cobelonging of concealment and unconcealment that, for Heidegger, marks the experience of the truth of Being.[50]

The possibility of transparency, of being in sight of truth, is a matter of grasping what is exposed in its retreat, holding onto what is always leaving. It is a matter of Da-sein being (factically) more than it (actually) is, grasping more than it (actually) should:

> Truth (discoveredness [Entdecktheit]) must always first be wrested [abgerungen] from beings. Beings are torn [entrissen] from concealment. The actual factical discoveredness [jeweilige faktische Entdecktheit] is, as it were, always a *robbery* [ein Raub].[51]

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48 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

50 Giorgio Agamben, "The Passion of Facticity," *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 190. Agamben is not commenting here on facticity as it appears in *Sein und Zeit* but rather on its original manifestation in a 1921 lecture course by Heidegger.

51 Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 222.

That this passage refers to "phenomenology" is immediately indicated by two facts.
Firstly, from this thought of truth as a robbery from beings, Heidegger immediately
mentions the privative nature of *a-letheia*, in order to characterize the
"understanding" *of a-letheia* as an understanding *that* "being-in-untruth constitutes
an essential determination of being-in-the-world."[52] Secondly, the passage above is
no more than a repetition of a statement concerning phenomenology that can be
found in the Introduction. The Introduction makes the facticity of phenomenology
apparent with the thought that phenomenology is always more than it is
methodologically. Phenomenology is always more than method thought as a
technischen Handgriff, and yet is nothing other than a *Methodenbegriff*.[53] If
phenomenology is always both more than method and nothing other than method,
this is so firstly by the fact that higher than phenomenology's "actuality"
("*Wirklichkeit*") is its *possibility*.[54] Phenomenological method *is* the projective
wresting of truth *from* beings, the projective *securing* of its *going to* the things
themselves:

> The way of encountering being and the structures of being in the mode of
> phenomenon must first be *arrested* [abgewonnen] from the objects of
> phenomenology. Thus the *point of departure* [Ausgang] of the analysis, the *access*
> [Zugang] to the phenomenon, and *passage through* [Durchgang] the prevalent
> coverings [*herrschenden Verdeckungen*] must secure their own method [*eine eigene
> methodische Sicherung*].[55]

Facticity and truth

It is really this question of the *possibility* of phenomenology to which Heidegger
returns at the end of Division One when he considers "the essence of truth." This
question is in fact a consideration of the relation of the phenomenon to the *logos*, of
the possibility of "agreement" between the phenomenon and *logos*. But what is also
in question is the relation between truth as "robbery" and truth as the projective
securing of its own method, its own passage. What is at stake with "truth" is the
relation between Da-sein and "presupposition" ("*Voraussetzung*").

Heidegger's problem is: why is truth not "subjective," if all truth is relative to
Da-sein? How does Da-sein secure the truthfulness of truth if it has no passage to
truth other than through itself? Does Da-sein not thereby in fact have to presuppose
itself *as Da-sein* in order to be able to pose the truth? In other words, does Da-sein

[52] *Ibid*.
[53] *Ibid*., p. 27.
[54] *Ibid*., p. 38.
[55] *Ibid*., p. 36.

not really have to presuppose truth itself, since Da-sein itself is nothing other than this possibility for being-in-relation-to the truth?

> We do not presuppose truth, but *truth* makes it ontologically possible that we can *be* in such a way that we "presuppose" something. Truth first *makes possible* [ermöglicht] something like presupposition.[56]

Is this rhetoric of truth persuasive? Is the thought that truth "is there" for us *before* presupposition convincing? On the one hand, it must be, because it has never "been demonstrated that there has ever 'been' a 'real' skeptic." On the other hand, as Heidegger is fully aware, he is doing nothing other than *presupposing* truth as such. That is, he is presupposing what, according to his own account, first makes presupposition possible:

> We *must* presuppose truth, it *must be* as the disclosedness of Da-sein, just as Da-sein itself *must* always be as my own and this particular Da-sein.[57]

The name of this presupposing presupposition is Da-sein, and its method of securing truth, presupposing it, is robbery. Is Da-sein thereby "self-positing," returned inescapably to subjectivity, to Da-sein as the *a priori* "itself"? The question for phenomenology then becomes: "Is there Da-sein?" Which Heidegger asks in the following way: "Has Da-sein ever freely decided and will it ever be able to decide whether it wants to come into 'Da-sein' or not?"[58] Has Da-sein ever invented (itself)? Heidegger is so far from denying that this is the question of Da-sein's subjectivity that it is on the contrary a matter of asking about the *a priori* of Da-sein's "real" subjectivity. Truth, Da-sein's robbery, Da-sein's being more than it is, is the problem that Da-sein "*is the being* of this 'between'."[59] And what Da-sein is *between* is less "subjectivity" and "objectivity" than the "factuality" and "facticity" *of* the subject:

> Is it not a *fantastically idealized* subject [phantastisch idealisiertes *Subjekt*]? Is not precisely the *a priori* character of the merely "factual" ["*tatsächlichen*"] subject, of Da-sein, missed with the concept of such a subject? Is it not an attribute of the *a priori* character of the factical [*faktischen*] subject (that is, of the facticity of Da-sein) that it is equiprimordially [*gleichursprünglich*] in truth and untruth?[60]

[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 227–8.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 229. Cf., Derrida, "'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida," in Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, & Jean-Luc Nancy (eds.), *Who Comes After the Subject?* (New York & London: Routledge, 1991), p. 98: "*Dasein* cannot be reduced to a subjectivity, certainly, but the existential analytic still retains the formal traits of every transcendental analytic. *Dasein*, and what there is in it that answers to the question 'Who?' comes to occupy, no doubt displacing lots of other things, the place of the 'subject,' the *cogito* or the classical '*Ich denke*.' From these, it retains certain essential traits

Could Da-sein's *Schuld*, its being-guilty in the ground of its being, derive from Da-sein's *need* to presuppose the truth, from its factical *robbery* of truth? It is perhaps more intuitively obvious to suggest that this guilt derives from Da-sein's being already in *untruth*, from Da-sein's not being enough, being always less than it might be, falling prey, caught in phantasm, etc. This would be Da-sein's *gleichursprünglich* sin. Yet *Schuld* is the ground of Da-sein's potentiality for indebtedness, *Verschuldung*. Does it not make more sense that Da-sein is guilty because it is originally *owing*, because, that is, it is originally "more" than it actually is, because it has taken more than it can (if only what it *must*)? Yet how could Da-sein's potentiality for discovering truth possibly relate to its being guilty in the ground of its being, to Da-sein's "factical guilt" (*"faktischer Schuld"*)[61] Perhaps Da-sein is guilty less because it is *not up to* the situation into which it is thrown, not because it has committed a *factum brutum* in failing to live up to the situation. Perhaps Da-sein's categorical guilt derives on the contrary from its *giving* to itself its grounds, presupposing what it founds (truth), without ever actually *having* the resources for what *it gives*. Truth is only ever presupposed, that is, stolen.

Yet it remains truth. Truth makes presupposition possible. Truth is prior. Da-sein is guilty, not for giving truth to itself, then, but for the gift it has always already *received.* Da-sein's potentiality for truth, for knowledge, for *techne*, that is, its potentiality for invention, for capability as such, is given to Da-sein, not as the gift of eternal truth bestowed by the gods. Da-sein receives this gift from an *intermediary* who has *stolen* it *from* the gods of truth, who begrudgingly deny to Da-sein a way through *to* truth "itself," to absolute, "eternal" truth. It is this gift that means that Da-sein is *between* truth and untruth. Da-sein is guilty for having always already received the stolen gift of the "capacity" for *techne*, that is, for being always already thrown into projecting. "We" are given *techne*, technique, *logos*, that is, mediacy, not by or from the god, the absolute other (not even the absolute other of absolute nothingness), but by an intermediary, that is, *mediacy itself*, which can only ever offer what is not "its own," and what it can never properly appropriate. "Through this gift man had the means of *Bios*, but Prometheus, so the story says, thanks to Epimetheus, had later on to stand his trial for theft."[62]

Only heard in this way does it make sense that *if* Da-sein's ground *is* to be guilty *in* its ground, and if Da-sein *is* its own thrown ground, that *nevertheless* Da-sein has *"not* laid the ground *itself."* Only hearing in this way can we understand how

(freedom, resolute-decision, to take up in this old translation again, a relation or presence to self, the 'call' [*Ruf*] toward a moral conscience, responsibility, primordial imputability or guilt [*Schuldigsein*] etc.)."

[61] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 286.

[62] Plato, *Protagoras* 322a, in Hamilton & Cairns (eds.), *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 319.

Da-sein can be guilty even though, not having laid the ground, Da-sein can *never* gain power over that remaining ground. Thus Da-sein, never having power over the ground that remains, nevertheless must *take over* being the ground in existing.[63] Da-sein is guilty, indebted, *in its ground,* because it must take over its ground, a ground it has not laid, which it has improperly received, and onto which it is thrown. There is no way, in good conscience, to be "more" than what you are, yet Da-sein is nothing other than this "more," a more it finds itself in receipt of.

What is it to be nothing other than a "more"? It is nothing. Being nothing more than a more, Da-sein can never rest assured because, being projective, this thrown project always remains grounded in "nothing."[64] "Active," projective facticity is, equiprimordially with "passive," thrown facticity, *"thoroughly permeated with nullity"* ("ist in ihrem Wesen durch and durch von Nichtigkeit durchsetzt").[65] Da-sein's projecting, its being "more" than it is, is *not* a positive in the sense of being what it is, fully, *and then some.* Da-sein can never appropriate the ground of its being "more." *Entwerfen* is not *aufheben.* Being-ahead-of-itself can *only* mean being exposed to what withdraws, to what is *not* there. It is grounded not in appropriation but in something enigmatically *not.* Yet it is *only* this "not" that makes possible Da-sein's being more than it actually is, even if this "nothing" will *always remain* as what haunts Da-sein's project. *Nichtig is the excess of foundation that always remains to threaten the grounds of what is founded:*

> Existential nullity by no means has the character of a privation, a lack, as compared with an ideal that is set up but not attained in Da-sein; rather, the being of this being is already null *as project* before everything that it can project and usually attains. Thus this nullity does not occur occasionally in Da-sein, attached to it as a dark quality that it could get rid of if it made sufficient progress.[66]

"Facticity" is the name of the intertwining of *Geworfenheit* and *Entwurf,* and of *their* entwinement with *Nichtigkeit.* Da-sein's being open (to the project, to the fact of making or doing, to founding) has its *possibility* in a ground that is also what "closes" Da-sein. This being-closed of Da-sein is why all "progress" (*"fortgeschritten"*) remains haunted by the "not" that *is* the excess of what is founded in the project. But has this "not," which opens and closes, which adds and subtracts, which is not a dark quality attached to Da-sein, truly been brought into sight? "Still, the *ontological meaning of the notness* [Nichtheit] of this existential nullity remains dark. But that is true also of the *ontological essence of the not in general.*"[67] And at the

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[63] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit,* p. 284.

[64] *Ibid.,* p. 285. "As thrown, the project is not only determined by the nullity of being the ground but is itself *as project* essentially *nichtig.*"

[65] *Ibid.*

[66] *Ibid.*

[67] *Ibid.*

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end of this paragraph—which asks whether the *"negativum"* must always mean a fault or lack, and where he chastises the inadequacy of the dialectical thought of "negation"—Heidegger asks:

> Has anyone ever made the *ontological origin* [Ursprung] of notness a problem at all, or, *before that*, even looked for the *conditions* [Bedingungen] on the basis of which the problem of the not and its notness and the possibility of this notness could be raised? And where else should they be found *than in a thematic clarification of the meaning of being in general?*[68]

This is more than Heidegger's declaration of his own discoveries, his own originality. Heidegger marks here the origin of *Sein und Zeit*, and thereby offers a sign pointing to what opens and closes the possibility of *Sein und Zeit*—Plato's *Sophist*.

Sein und Zeit *and Plato's Stranger*

Sein und Zeit is the retrieval of that question which is made thematic in Plato's *Sophist*. That the question of being *could be* thematic in Plato indicates that the *Kampf* between the giants concerning being had already broken out. And the event of this gigantomachy was itself possible only because the *question* had already become *visible*. The question of being had already been discovered—that is, invented. This becoming-visible for the first time of the question of being is, for Heidegger, the Greek fact. It is in order to indicate this retrieval of the Greek fact that *Sein und Zeit* opens with a quotation from Plato's *Sophist* about the obscurity of this question. Heidegger suggests this in the first paragraph of the Introduction to *Sein und Zeit*, and states it explicitly in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.[69]

The first word of this citation of the Stranger in the *Sophist*—and thus the very first word of *Sein und Zeit*—is *delon*. The Stranger states that *obviously, delon,* we know what we mean when we say "being," that being is the most obviously understood word, and yet, in the course of the dialogue, we have become confused about the meaning of this word. What has become obvious about "being" is the withdrawal of its obviousness, and this closes and opens the possibility of a *logos* concerning it. And, equally, what opens the possibility for *Sein und Zeit* is that "today" this question has been forgotten, reduced to tradition and dogma, and thus that "what troubled ancient philosophizing and kept it so by virtue of its obscurity has become obvious, clear as day, such that whoever persists in asking about it is

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 286.

[69] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 2; cf., Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington & Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990, 4th edn.), p. 163.

accused of an error of method."[70] And this opening is nothing other than a reiteration of what Heidegger had already stated in his reading of Plato's *Sophist* in 1924–25. "Today" we witness a return to metaphysics and ontology, yet Plato's question remains forgotten. The concept of being is forgotten because it is so obvious, yet "it is precisely this obviousness, and nothing else, that is the theme of *Fundamentalwissenschaft*."[71]

This intertwining of the *Sophist* and *Sein und Zeit* can also be seen at the very end of the Introduction. Shortly before the Stranger remarks on the confusion which has replaced the obviousness of the meaning of being, he comments on the limitation of the former gigantomachy, the limitation of all the discussion of being which begins with Parmenides. How so? "They each and all seem to treat us as children to whom they are telling a story, a myth" (242c8). Heidegger reads this limitation in his earlier lecture course as an indication that, if the *question* of being had become visible to Parmenides and his world, the *means* to address the question, the elaboration of the ground of questioning, had not. The only way in to the question of being was analogically, passing around being itself via a story about *beings*.[72] And thus when, at the end of the Introduction to *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger addresses the *Ungefüge* and *"Unschöne"* of his own means of expression, this is justified methodologically, precisely on the grounds that the account of being, as opposed to beings, cannot be told "narratively" (*"erzählend zu berichten"*).[73] What is at stake when obviousness itself is to be made visible is the possibility for language to do something other than simply tell a story about something *as* something, to on the contrary direct us to the "as" itself, to the meaning of the "revealing" accomplished by *logos*.

Other than as its first word, *deloun* appears in *Sein und Zeit* at the moment when *logos* is thematic, as what *logos* "really means."[74] *Deloun* names the "apophantic" character of *logos* as "letting something be seen." This *delotic* structure of *logos* is what makes possible the "*syn*" of the *synthesis* of language, that is, what makes it possible "to let something be seen in its *togetherness* with something, to let something be seen *as* something." But it is this very same *delotic* structure that means that *logos* is that form of *relation* to things which has the character of being "true or false." *Deloun*, therefore, is what makes it possible that something can be seen as something that it is *not*. *Deloun* makes it possible to "discover" beings, but is equally the possibility for *pseudesthai*. And therefore it is that *Sein und Zeit*, in its

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[70] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 2.
[71] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 309.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 305.
[73] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 38–9.
[74] *Ibid.*, § 7 (b).

Introduction, reiterates the conclusion reached at the end of the earlier reading of Aristotle:

> But because "truth" has this meaning, and because *logos* is a specific mode of letting something be seen, *logos* simply may *not* be acclaimed as the primary "place" of truth. If one defines truth as what "properly" pertains to judgment, which is quite customary today, and if one invokes Aristotle in support of this thesis, such a procedure is without justification and the Greek concept of truth thoroughly misunderstood.[75]

"Truth" becomes a *problem* for the Greeks only when the fact of *pseudesthai* first becomes visible as posing a question.

Logos *and* bios

What remains from Greece, for Heidegger, is the becoming-visible of the *delotic* structure of *logos* that makes "truth" and therefore "being" *questionable*. The Greek fact is the becoming-obscure of being. From the beginning of the 1924–25 lecture course what is apparent is that philosophy, the invention of the Greeks, is the task (*Aufgabe*) set for the Greeks after the recognition of the concealment of being and truth. As a struggle (*Kampf*) against originary ignorance, on the one hand, and on the other against *Gerede*, that is, rhetoric and sophistry, philosophy is the attempt to *break through* to the things themselves.[76] Thus "Greek Da-sein," to which Heidegger refers constantly in this lecture course, is *properly* Da-sein, the being for whom being is a question.[77] The Greeks are those whose existence is determined by the dawning of the non-obviousness of being.

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[75] *Ibid.*, p. 33. Cf., Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 125 & p. 129.

[76] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 11.

[77] How is it possible to speak of Greek Da-sein? In *Sein und Zeit*, Da-sein was something like a necessary postulate or methodological device—the being for whom being was a question. To speak of Greek Da-sein seems to place Da-sein back *into* history, and seems to place our *knowledge* of Da-sein back into the disciplines—history, anthropology, paleontology, biology, etc.—from which fundamental ontology explicitly distances itself. Are we not entitled, then, to delimit a *number* of Da-seins, and for each produce a new *Sein und Zeit*? Perhaps this suggestion ought not be so surprising, given the *preliminary* nature of *Sein und Zeit*. Da-sein is precisely what will undergo destruction in the "later" volumes. Nevertheless, is not this destruction of Da-sein something other than a multiplication of Da-sein? It would not seem to follow from this destruction that it is therefore unproblematically legitimate to refer, constantly, to Greek Da-sein. Are we similarly entitled to speak of Neanderthal Da-sein, or are the Greeks the *first* to "possess" Da-sein, the *inventors* of or recipients of the invention of Da-sein? Cf., Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume III: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 187, emphasis added: "In this way humanity *in each case* [*jeweils*] accepts [*übernimmt*] the decision regarding its allotted manner [*zugewiesene Art*] of being in the midst of the truth of beings." Cf., Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 145.

Most important in Heidegger's reading of Plato's *Sophist*, then, is the way in which the sophist exposes the philosopher, and non-being exposes being. Plato responds to the problem of non-being posed initially by Parmenides, and the dialogue is thus interpreted as a debate internal to philosophy. In the end the interrogation of non-being has its goal in establishing the possibility of an *aletheic* correspondence between being and *logos*. If Heidegger's end is something *more* than a dialogue within philosophy, it is surely only to provide a kind of founding story for philosophy—in discovering the sophist, in grasping what the sophist does and says, the philosopher is self-invented in an act of auto-*poiesis*, in the philosophical act of becoming-transparent. The sophist does not mark the limits of philosophy, as Cassin argues, so much as the sacrificial victim, and the story to be told of philosophy's invention is the story of the endless *elimination* of the sophist.[78] Heidegger's Platonism lies in his wish to eliminate the plurality of *doxai*. Like Plato, Heidegger is the "philosopher" who, finding himself in the midst of the *polis*, wants nothing other than an exit from this plurality, an exit called "truth."

Admittedly Heidegger is prepared to follow along in Plato's hunt for the philosopher through the delimitation of the sophist. Yet it is another thing again to conclude that the purpose of Heidegger's reading of the *Sophist* is nothing other than a reiteration of Plato's "conclusions" concerning the philosopher's "superiority" over the sophist, or the superior "unicity" of truth compared to the "plurality" of *doxai*. Before such a conclusion could be drawn, it is necessary first to consider the "place" of the *Sophist* for Heidegger, the way in which this dialogue is *suspended* philosophically, and the way in which it suspends the *philosopher*.

1. For Heidegger the *Sophist* is a mediate point between Parmenides and Aristotle, a turning point in how the world becomes visible, where the world as it is encountered is first exposed to the world as it is spoken of. The *Sophist* is the hinge, in other words, between the moment at which *being* became visible as a *possible* question (Parmenides, sophistic), and the moment at which the *question* of being became visible *as* a question, as a *problem* to be *addressed*, that is, as a question *about* the *logos* that *can ask* the question (Aristotle; ontology).[79] It is in the *Sophist* that "being" arises not only as a question that demands a *decision* (being is this or that; non-being is or is not), but for the first time as a question that forces an examination of the way in which the question comes to be.

Heidegger goes out of his way to make the point explicit that Aristotle represents an advance over Plato in his consideration of *logos*. What is Plato's failing? Nothing other than that Plato too strongly legislates against *logos* that says

[78] Cf., Cassin, "Sophists," in Brunschwig & Lloyd (eds.), *Greek Thought*, p. 961.
[79] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 142.

"non-being." For Plato only the sight of truth is vision, and any *logos* that admits of plurality or which is directed at anything other than making visible the truth is guilty of turning away from the light. Nevertheless, Plato's dialogue demonstrates not only the possibility that non-being *is*, but the necessity of admitting the absurdity of the position that one cannot or must not *say* non-being. That is, the "task" of the dialogue is to draw *closer* to *pseudesthai*. Thus Plato's position cannot be simply a *ban* on guilty discourse on non-being. In spite of this, Plato is unwilling to grasp sophistry or rhetoric, that is, *logos* that has ends other than truth, in their *positivity*. He appears unable to address, that is, the *legitimacy* of language that is directed at anything other than *aletheia*. Aristotle's advance is the recognition that "rhetoric" has its "logic" and its "justification," and that this justification lies in the character of existence itself, in the fact that existence *includes* everyday existence and public existence, that existence includes the plurality of perspectives and the finitude of decisions that make up life in the *polis*.[80] Thus Heidegger is less interested in the relative placement of *sophia* and *phronesis*, or of *truthful logos* and rhetoric, than he is with the manner in which the "*lesser*" of the two (*phronesis*, rhetoric) comes to visibility in an affirmative way.

2. For Plato the philosopher has a particular *bios*, devoted to *Sachlichkeit*, the *bios* that has definitively *decided* in favor of substance over appearance.[81] Sophistry represents the antithesis of this decision, and its emptiness signals "*der Unechtheit und der Entwurzelung der menschlichen Existenz.*"[82] The sophist, concerned not with truth but with education, is immersed in the centre of the *polis*. If the philosopher, unlike the magus, does not find his existence *apart* from the *polis*, or on the border of the *polis*, nevertheless still in Plato this is because the philosopher looks down upon the *polis* from above, not as a zoologist, who examines life in its organicity, but as a *physician*, who truthfully perceives what comes to appearance in human existence:

> The business of the philosopher is therefore *oran*, to look upon the *bios*. Notice that the word here is not *zoe*, life in the sense of the presence of human beings in the nexus [*Zusammenhang*] of animals and plants, of everything that crawls and flies, but *bios*, life in the sense of existence, the leading of a life [*der Lebensführung*], which is characterized by a determinate *telos*, a *telos* functioning for the *bios* itself as an object of *praxis*. The theme of philosophy is thus the *bios* of man and possibly the various kinds of *bioi*. "They look down from above."[83]

On the one hand, therefore, Plato brings the philosopher back into the *polis*, back from the cave,[84] requiring that the philosopher be-there "within" life to be capable

[80] *Ibid.*, p. 151 & p. 234.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 159.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 168. Heidegger is reading *Sophist* 216c–d, thus the opening of the dialogue.
[84] Cf., Heidegger's marginal note, *ibid.*

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of perceiving existence. That the philosopher is taken for a politician, a sophist, or a madman demonstrates that the philosopher, unlike the magus, is directed toward human beings "insofar as they live in the *polis*."[85] Between the sophist and the philosopher, for Plato, may lie the difference between emptiness and substance, yet in *both* cases what is at stake is *Existenz*, about which, at the beginning of the reading of the *Sophist*, Heidegger includes the following reminder: "Keep in mind that the Greeks see existence as existence in the *polis*."[86] What Aristotle makes comprehensible that remains only suggestive in Plato, according to Heidegger, is the way in which the business of the philosopher is *praxis* in the *polis*, which is equally to say the *logos* that is proper to this *praxis*, *phronesis* in the Aristotelian sense.

Yet on the other hand, it remains apparent that the philosopher *looks down* upon the *bios* in the *polis*. Just as Plato cannot grasp the "justification" for rhetoric, neither is he able to admit the "positivity" of the sophist. Aristotle may make clear that the philosopher's concern with "substance" is what draws the philosopher *into* the *polis*, and hence point toward Plato's redemption. But Aristotle is equally the corrective of Plato, who is incapable of thematizing the ends and *praxis* proper *to* the *polis*. This corrective is ambiguous: if Aristotle is the inventor of "onto-logy," the first to address beings in their being, this is at once the cornerstone at which the "ontological" condition of politics is raised for the first time, and simultaneously the moment at which "politics" is sent toward its destiny whereby it is reduced to the "logic" of instituted political practice.

Nevertheless, Aristotle is able to make properly visible what is only a crude division in Plato. If what is finally at stake in the *Sophist* is the *zoon politikon*, the being of man in the *polis*, and the *logos* proper to this being in the *polis*, in Plato this remains a question about the *highest* existence, the philosopher, and the highest *logos*, philosophy, in opposition to the "*negativum*" represented by the sophist and sophistry.[87] For Heidegger, reading Aristotle is the mechanism that makes it possible to experience the *weight* of Plato's argument, beyond Plato's "judgment" of the sophist in relation to the philosopher. Heidegger's Plato fundamentally *recognizes* non-being without being able to draw from this recognition all the politico-ontological consequences that follow. If Plato recognizes the intertwining of

85 *Ibid.*, p. 169.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

87 *Ibid.*, p. 400: "It is therefore superfluous and a mistake to expect that Plato would have written another dialogue about the philosopher; on the contrary, he would have scoffed at that. For the fundamental question of being and non-being centers equally in the question of the pre-eminent being, the philosopher, as well as in the question of the *negativum*, the sophist. These constitute, in the Greek sense, the question of the *zoon politikon*, the being of humanity in the *polis*."

being and non-being, he nevertheless remains at a point where the ways of knowing being and non-being—*techne, phronesis, sophia*—are mixed together such that what these "ways of knowing" being and non-being themselves *say* about being and non-being cannot become properly visible. Only when in Aristotle these ways of knowing themselves are thematized in *their* intertwining and distinctness does it become possible to grasp the complexity of the *relation* between being, non-being, and *logos*.

Production and appropriation

What defines the "pre-eminence" of the philosopher is the concern with "substance." What makes the sophist significant is the possibility for language to be concerned with anything *other* than the substantial. Sophistry represents the possibility for *logos* to be brought together with something *other* than what is really there, present. At stake with sophistry is firstly this *possibility* for language to be other than simply truthful, which the sophist himself denies with his "Parmenidean" defense that it is not possible to say what is not. Secondly, if this possibility of untruthful language can be established, then the specificity of the philosopher—who eschews everything other than truthful *logos*—will come sharply into view. At stake, then, is the possibility for language to say non-being, and the possibility for language to define the philosopher, that is, the conditions for an existence directed toward *aletheia*.

Plato does not treat the forms of knowing with the specificity found in Aristotle. This does not mean that *techne, sophia, phronesis*, etc., are lacking in meaning in Plato's writing compared to Aristotle's. Heidegger's reading of this distinctness in Aristotle in the end still draws the concepts back to the way in which they mutually involve each other, as they already do in Plato. Aristotle makes explicit what remains implied in Plato. As was recalled at the beginning of this chapter, *poiesis* and *techne* must be grasped as conducting into being. In Plato, however, this understanding of *techne* as *Führen, Bringen*, must be understood in a broad sense that relates *techne* back to *praxis*, also conceived broadly.[88] And what brings *techne* toward *praxis* is the way in which *techne* is substantial, concerned with those things with which one *is* concerned, with which one has to *deal*, that is, with *pragmata*. *Techne* is concerned with that which *is there* for *praxis*.[89]

[88] *Ibid.*, pp. 185–6.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

Yet Plato too draws words apart in order then to bring them together. The search for the sophist begins with the angler, and in so doing Plato famously works by division upon division. First among these is that division of *technai* between those concerned with production and those concerned with appropriation. *Techne* "proper" brings into being, produces, is *poietic*. We have been lead philosophically, not least of all by Heidegger, to hear in the word *techne* nothing but the name for human *poiesis*.[90] But Plato immediately suggests, by reference to examples, that there is another kind of *techne—chrematistikon, agonistikon, thereutikon*, trade, fighting, hunting (219c). These are the appropriative arts, *ktetike*, concerned with appropriation, *cheirousthai*. Heidegger draws attention to the etymological relation between *chrematistikon* and *cheirousthai*, the accumulation of wealth and appropriation. They have their origin in *cheir*, hand. *Chrema* means the same as *pragma*, things, things insofar as they are at hand for use, at hand to be dealt with.[91] *Cheirousthai* then means grasping with the hand, bringing something to oneself. Those *chremata* dealt with in *cheirousthai* are brought to oneself. They are what is already there to be the object of an appropriation. As being available for bringing, they differ from those things that are the result of *poiesis*, things not already there but brought into being through *techne poietike*.

As Heidegger points out, however, Plato immediately identifies two ways in which appropriation is possible—in *logos* and in *praxis* (219c5). Where do we find appropriation through *logos*? *Cheirousthai*, when it is a matter of *logos*, means "taking" a look at things, taking from things what they offer, what they show. That is why "knowledge," *gnorisis*, is listed in relation to the forms of appropriation. The appropriation involved with *logos* discloses, and this being-disclosive, this taking from things what they give, brings appropriation back into a constellation with production. Prior to the distinction between productive and appropriative *technai* is the phenomenon of relating to things, *pragmata or chremata*, of "commerce" ("*Umgang*") with things. Since things must first be *taken* as *capable* of appropriation or of being-produced *before* they *can be* taken or produced, appropriation is prior to *techne* as know-how. But since this originary *taking* of things discloses them in their

[90] Cf., Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 15–6.

[91] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 189. Cf., Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 186–7; cf., Heidegger, *Nietzsche. Volume IV: Nihilism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 91, where the reference is to Protagoras' "man is the measure of all things [*chrematon*]." Cassin also draws attention to the connection between *chrema* and *cheir*. But she emphasizes *chrema—*"this key word of sophistic"—in its distinctness from *pragma* and *onta*. This distinctness lies in the fact that *chremata* means "things" insofar as we deal with and need them, insofar as they are *necessary* (*chre* it is necessary, it must). *Chremata* means "things" insofar as they are valued, open to evaluation insofar as they are handled, not only in terms of being true or false. Cf., Cassin, "Sophists," in Brunschwig & Lloyd (eds.), *Greek Thought*, p. 966.

being-appropriable or producible, this taking is already productive. *Techne* is possible (it "receives an interpretation") because an appropriative-productive commerce with what is there has already happened.[92] Sophistry is nothing other than the exemplary case of appropriation in *logos*, a chrematistic taking of things and people through discourse, drawing things and people to hand. Sophistry discloses by offering education, by promising to reveal and to make possible, to produce—through *paideia*—"*eigentliche Existenz*" within the *polis*.[93]

Techne, whether chrematic or pragmatic, whether appropriative or productive, is therefore referred back to a *disclosure* of what it deals with. Whether appropriative or productive, *techne* is always a matter of *logos*. What the hunt for the angler reveals is that, even where *logos* proceeds through division, this search for a "thing" always depends on the way in which "things" are already revealed through having their names in *logos*. The cutting in *logos* depends on a *deloun* and is nothing arbitrary.[94] The way things *appear* in Plato is that the *disclosure* that *logos* first makes possible is not an invention, not a fabrication, but a matter of finding again in *logos* what has already been found, such that *logos* was first *made* possible. For Plato it is a matter of finding what has been revealed, of revealing the *idea* that must already have been found. Thus *sunagoge*, the seeing of the idea, is not a construction of disclosed facts, but on the contrary re-views what was obvious but has become obscure.[95] And if the *idea* is what is highest, what is divine, then the fact that the obvious can become obscure, can *need* to be re-viewed, testifies to the limits of humanity, to a resistance in humanity or a "going awry" that is possible for humanity. But the idea testifies also to the passing of borders that define humanity. The philosopher, then, would be the one who, taking the time to deal with things

[92] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 190–2. Heidegger reiterates this point in *What is Called Thinking* when he writes that "when we handle a thing, for example, our hand must fit itself to the thing [*muß die Hand sich dem Ding anmessen*]. Use implies fitting response [*Im Brauchen liegt das sich anmessende Entsprechen*]" (pp. 186–7). And he returns to the same point in his reading of *to chreon* in "The Anaximander Fragment": "*'Brauchen'* accordingly suggests: to let something present come to presence as such [*etwas Answesendes als Anwesendes anwesen lassen*]; *frui*, to brook [*bruchen*], to use [*brauchen*], usage [*Brauch*], means: to hand something over to its own essence [*etwas seinem eigenen Wesen aushändigen*] and to keep it in hand, preserving it as something present [*und es als so Anwesendes in der wahrenden Hand behalten*]." Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," *Early Greek Thinking* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 53.

[93] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 204 & p. 208.

[94] *Ibid.*, pp. 197–8. Cf., Sallis, *Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic Dialogue* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1986, 2nd edn.), pp. 467–8: "The suggestion is that not to make this division would be contrary to the way that things are already collected and divided in logos—that, more generally, division follows, to some extent at least, the joints in *logos*, that it follows those lines of division already accomplished and handed over to us in *logos*."

[95] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 231.

properly, passes the border to the things themselves, and finds again in their *logos* what was already revealed.

Such a reading, however, denies the serious intent with which Plato appropriates the sophist. Even if Plato does not have the "positive" reading of rhetoric that can be found in Aristotle, nevertheless the sophist is entirely concerned with *logos*. If *techne*—know-how to do with our "commerce" with things—is divisible according to (1) the *objects* with which it deals, (2) the *mode* of its concern or commerce, and (3) the *end* of this commerce, then the *techne sophistike* is in all three parts a matter of *legein*. (1) The objects with which the sophist is concerned are people, those beings with the potentiality for speech; (2) the mode through which the sophist relates to these "objects" is speech, and (3) the aim of this commerce is *paideia*, education in proper speech within the *polis*.[96] That sophistic is pervaded by its concern with *logos* is what makes the sophist worthy of Plato's intense pursuit.

For Aristotle *sophia* is impossible because it is not possible for mortals to live constantly in relation to the *aei*. For Plato, however, sophistry is impossible because it aims at a *logos* which is capable of speaking about all things. In both cases the ground of this impossibility lies in the fact that mortals are not divine, that the knowledge of man is always only *underway*, never complete. What animates Plato's concern with the sophist is the observation that what is impossible nevertheless *is*. The sophist *offers* speech on any topic. Hence the aim of the dialogue is not simply to distinguish the philosopher from the sophist on the basis that the philosopher sees the ideas whereas the sophist goes astray. Despite the inability to grasp sophistry in its "positivity," according to Heidegger, Plato is still entirely concerned with the sophist as a philosophical problem, as inherently *indicating* the insufficiency of the Parmenidean proposition, which sophists will defend, that non-being simply is *not*.

Plato, then, intends to understand how it can be that it is impossible for somebody to be able to speak about everything that is, yet this impossible thing *can be found*. This existence of an impossibility seems to point toward the conclusion that what is, being, is somehow able to *mix with* what is not, non-being. The goal, then, is not to speak about "non-being" as though it were a "thing" to be investigated, for this would simply be to tell stories about "non-being," that no more grasp non-being than stories about being grasp being. Rather, the aim must be to understand the ground of possibility of this "mixing with," the *symploke* between being and non-being. Beyond the problem of non-being itself, that there can be beings that are

[96] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

"not," lies the problem that things are intertwined, and that *logos* seems as though it can somehow accomplish this intertwining. The problem is this: a *pseudes logos*, a *logos* that conceals, may *equally well* be described as a *logos* that discloses what is not. A *logos*, whether *aletheic* or *pseudos*, is itself something that is, yet a *pseudes logos* reveals, brings into appearance, what is not. Thereby *logos* mixes *itself*, a being, with non-being. It is for this reason that the Stranger, at the point where the existent-impossibility of speaking about everything has been revealed, asks about the possibility of a *techne* that can produce all things, existent or not (233d9ff.). As Heidegger indicates, Plato's goal is to explain an impossibility (to speak of all things) "on the basis of the existence of a still higher impossibility," not only to speak but actually to produce what is yet not there.[97]

Plato's sharp methodological detour makes possible a constellation of modes of disclosure: *poiein, deloun, mimesis*. The "ontological" question about non-being must be asked about through the question of the common ground of production, disclosure, and imitation (art). The end of the *Sophist* is the elaboration of this ground, which is in fact the elaboration of disclosure itself, "obviousness," *deloun*. Obviousness is the theme. And, again, obviousness is the theme because "being" is obvious to the Greeks or, at least, it *was* obvious. The problem of non-being brought the obvious into view for the first time. Parmenides invented the problem of being. Before Parmenides, being was obvious because *ousia* was understood in relation to *faktischen Da-sein*, that is, to Da-sein in its situation, *praxically* or *chrematically*. *Ousia* was thought in terms of the things that are there for Da-sein to deal with, that is, in terms of an immediate relation between facticity and presence.[98]

Plato succeeds for the first time in putting being—which is still the obvious and only given for Parmenides—into question. This question concerning being holds the possibility of modifying our grasp of being. Yet Plato remains factically Greek, and for the Greeks that which is to hand—that which is to be dealt with in order for a question to disclose what it holds—is *logos*. That is why the question concerning being which Plato asks, which will modify the meaning of being, is conducted in terms of an attempt to grasp the *symploke*, the mixing or intertwining, the relational structure, the something *as* something, which *logos* manifests. And what *mimesis*, the production of images, manifests is the possibility for presenting something as something it is not. Art *shows* that the question of being must be asked in terms of the *symploke*, because it demonstrates that a "thing," something present, such as an artwork, has the *possibility* of being *something other than* what it is, to be itself *and* something other, a "physical" thing and what it represents. What does Plato add,

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 270.
[98] *Ibid.*, p. 323.

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fundamentally? The thought that, if a "thing" is *what it is and* the intertwining of what it is in its *being available to be dealt with by another thing* (for instance Da-sein), then what being means essentially is *possibility*. Every something is a thing and the possibility of *showing* its being a thing. Thus the insight about non-being that *mimesis* reveals (that a being can also show itself as what it is *not*), leads back to the question about being, and the thought that in order to "possess" being, a thing must also have the possibility of showing itself.

Being, then, as possibility, as *dynamis*. What does it mean for a thing to have "possibility"? Firstly, to have possibility means for a thing to have a relation to something other than what it is, now, in itself. It means to be in community with something other than itself. A thing is not just what it is, standing by itself, without relation. What must be understood if being is grasped as possibility is thus firstly "community," *koinonia*, this being in a circuit, in commerce, and this *other* which is a fundamental possibility of the thing itself, since every being-in-community implies something other. Secondly, what does "being-in-community" mean other than the possibility for one thing to be *affected* by another, for one thing to *suffer* another? There is no relation if there is just one thing and then there is an other. Only if the being of one thing and another mix with each other is it possible to speak of relation, hence only then is it possible to speak of possibility. There are two possibilities for this *affecting: poiein*, where the thing itself brings something other into being; and *pathein*, where the thing is affected by, determined by, an other being. The affecting that defines "community" must be either a conducting or a being-appropriated. What the problem of non-being has shown about being is that being means *dynamis koinonias*, the *factical* possibility—and possibility and facticity are practically synonymous here—of "being with one another."[99]

Praxis-Pragma

From 254d Plato begins the "dialectical" consideration of *stasis, kinesis, tauton, eteron*, and *on*, of rest, movement, same, other, and being. What brings just these five into consideration is that they have been named in the stories told about being as five possibilities for that highest thing that every thing really is. What is demonstrated in the dialectical consideration is that as soon as there is *logos* concerning these concepts, none can be reduced to the others, and thus that each must be *different* than the rest. But this consideration then *also* demonstrates that otherness, that is, *difference*, is *always* given along with each of the other four. As each of the other four

[99] *Ibid.*, pp. 329–36.

is considered as being what it is, and *not* the others, the being-other-than of what is being looked at comes into view. What is essential in the dialectical consideration is, therefore, "the *eteron* and its possible, or not possible, *koinonia* with the others."[100]

Heidegger takes note of the apparent ambiguity of *eteron*, which means "being-other-than," "an other," and "otherness." Yet this ambiguity only reflects the fact that the method by which these concepts are appropriated lies in following *logos*. Plato's method works by noticing that as soon as one speaks in words, each word means either the same thing or something other than all the other words, and that thereby each word presents what it says in itself and in its otherness from every other word. Moreover, what each word says points toward the difference between the word itself and that to which it bears a relation, and hence otherness is inherent to *logos* itself. It is this discovery, that each word carries a relation to something that it itself is *not*, which demonstrates how it is possible for *logos* to be *poietic*, to conduct being into presence, yet also to be *poietic* in the sense of conducting *non-being* into presence. It is the *not*, the possibility of the *not*, of being-other-than, which is the condition of possibility of disclosure, the condition of possibility of *deloun*. Or, since "being" for the Greeks is what presences, what shows itself, it is the "not," the intertwining of being and non-being, which itself *gives* being *as* possibility, as *dynamis koinonias*.[101]

If what Plato discovers is that the *not* is disclosive, that all disclosure depends upon a "negative" that makes possible unconcealment, then Plato invents the ground of phenomenology. The structure that Plato reveals between being and its *symploke* with non-being points toward nothing other than the "ontological essence of the not in general," as it was put in *Sein und Zeit*. And in the lecture course on the *Sophist* Heidegger does not fail to draw out this connection, already reminding us of the *ausgezeichnete Stellung*, the eminent position, accorded to negation in phenomenological research. It is the *not* that discloses. Or: only where there is "movement" *from* concealment, only where there is the *spacing* of the *not*, is disclosure possible. And just as the *not* is the possibility of conducting non-being into presence. so too without concealment there would be no phenomenology. Without concealment, without the *not*, everything would be just *there*, as it is, immediately. This is why phenomenology is always an *antecedent seeing* of the things themselves, *vorherigen Sehen der Sachen*.

Both the "antecedent" and the "seeing" are privative here. "Antecedence" indicates *notness* in general, that what shows itself may withdraw or that what is obvious can lose its obviousness, or that what is hidden can become unhidden.

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 376.
[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 385–7.

Thus antecedence should not be heard in the sense of referring to a primordial or original access, as an insistence that what is concealed *now* must have been visible once. On the contrary, what antecedence means is that the "not" must be grasped as an essential "not yet." "Antecedence" does not refer to the *time* of disclosure understood as the difference between what was seen "then" and "now," but as the *potentiality* of disclosure. Like the "not," antecedence, then, refers less to the temporality of disclosure than it does to the *spacing* of concealment, to the fact that, if there is concealment, then something comes to stand in between the thing seen and the seeing of the thing, even if this in-between is obviousness itself.

Logos is thus the Greek name for this fact that stands between a thing and our seeing of it. But *logos* is also the name of the fact of the *possibility* of an antecedent *seeing*, of seeing again, of moving from obviousness to transparency. *Logos* is the possibility of concealment *and* unconcealment. But, as the mediate, Heidegger emphasizes that *logos* should not thereby be understood as a simple "construct" ("*Bau*"), a system or structure of concepts that build a house of meaning. If *logos* means nothing other than the mediacy of our seeing the things themselves, nevertheless it is not *simply* a structured, technical *bridge* through which our "commerce" with things *works*. The *Bau* itself of *logos*—the mediate structure of sense—is, as soon as it is, also then another thing that may be disclosed or concealed. The *Bau* is always already something we are *in* "commerce" *with*. This is not to argue that "meaning," "true meaning," consists in a movement from language as a structure to the true univocity of being, but rather that the *possibility* for meaning, for meaningful *poiesis*, emerges from the plurality of a *symploke*, the originary *symploke* with the "not" that characterizes *deloun*. In his marginal notes to the lecture course, Heidegger interposes one word for this antecedent disclosure through which negation attains its positive accomplishment. Heidegger's interposed word for the active, factical intertwining of *deloun* and the *not*—and it is necessary to retain the sense both of design and of pro-ject—is *Entwurf*.[102]

This projective aspect of *logos* shows itself in Heidegger's reading of the final section of the dialogue, in which Plato considers *logos* in its relation to *deloun* in a more specific manner. Heidegger reiterates the above conclusion—which as we have seen animates *Sein und Zeit*—that the *Bau* of *logos* does not *result* in disclosure but on the contrary is itself possible only on the basis of a *deloun*. Plato asks: if *logos* can produce not only being but also non-being, not only *aletheia* but *pseudos*, by what mechanism does *logos* come to have meaning at all? This is the beginning of the discussion of the *symploke* of being and non-being that proceeds by addressing the *symploke* of *onoma* and *rema*. Meaning derives from a mixing of *onoma* and *rema*

102 *Ibid.*, p. 388.

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and, if we do not hear these concepts in the "modern" sense of noun and verb, then we give ourselves the possibility of hearing in them the intertwining of "thing" and "action," or *pragma* and *praxis*, of what is "dealt with" and the "dealing with."[103]

What does this consideration mean for *logos* as such? The Stranger observes that every statement, that is, every proper mixture of *onoma* and *rema*, of *pragma* and *praxis*, must be *about* something, thus in a relation *to*. Being in community with things that are is one *possibility* for the mixing of *onoma* and *rema*. As *having* and *holding* this possibility, then, *logos* is a thing, a *pragma*. Yet as being *about* something, in relation to, hence as producing or appropriating, as *poietic* or *cheiric*, *logos* is a *praxis*. *Logos* is nothing other than the *name* for the mediacy of that "action" of always being in relation to, of a *pragma* "*in the mode of*" ("im Wie der") *praxis* or, more properly, "*praxis-pragma*."[104] It is this factical essence of *logos* that means that *logos* has the potentiality for being deceptive. Because *logos* is not only a thing, but always also *about* something, a way of *dealing with* things, and yet is *also* a thing, a thing that we *use*, that is publicly deployed in a situation, *logos* lends itself to the possibility of distortion and deception.

Pseudos *and* apate

The *symploke* of being and non-being, then, is more particularly a *symploke* of *deloun* and *notness*, the other. *Logos*, more than it means "language," names the mediacy of any relation, and the projectivity or facticity of all *relation*. Relation is never just one thing standing next to another, but *pragma* in the mode of *praxis*, the praxical essence of all being-in (relation to). Thus *logos* is intentionality, where intentionality is heard "actively." But does there not remain a factual "who" in this consideration of *logos*? *Logos* is what conceals and unconceals *our* vision; it remains a thing that *we* use. Where is Da-sein? "Greek Da-sein" is determined by *logos*. The *bios* of all human life is determined by a *zoe* the essence of which lies in a relation to *logos*—*zoon logon echon*, as Heidegger never tires of repeating. Speaking about *logos* means properly looking upon the *bios* of humanity.

There is a clue about this relation between humanity and *logos* in the fact that if the "common" term in the dialectical consideration of the "five kinds" is *eteron*, nevertheless the term that *guides* this consideration is *kinesis*. What does *kinesis* mean, really?[105] Movement, most generally, means being between or, more

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[103] *Ibid.*, p. 409. Cf., 263e12ff.
[104] *Ibid.*, p. 415.
[105] *Ibid.*, pp. 400-1.

properly, going between—*metazu*, the mediate or what mediates. *Kinesis* names what is the same about *logos* and *psyche*, the movement between, or the going toward, what possesses *stasis*, what has "permanence" ("*Ständigkeit*"), what remains standing, what "remains" ("*bleiben*"), as another marginal note puts it. *Kinesis* names that character of the *psyche*, of Da-sein, that it exists *in relation to* the *aei*. In Plato, as in Aristotle, the truth, and the presence of what is, is determined in relation to time. But more importantly it is this movement and mediacy of Da-sein, this being-underway, that refers *psyche* to *logos*. It is this referral that a consideration of *kinesis* accomplishes, and that intertwines the *bios* of humanity with *logos*. This is not to say that all meaning is "human" meaning, that humans are the *centre*, but that, on the contrary, the "human" is what is always mediate, in the sense of *displaced* from the centre. Humanity is not grounded in *logos*, but rather *logos* is what places humanity in relation, exposes humanity, and that exposes humanity to "itself." Hence it is this referral and exposure of *psyche* to *logos* that authorizes the investigation of the philosopher *via* a consideration of what *logos* shows. It is this referral and exposure that makes *logos* rather than "humanity" the *Kernphänomen*.

The finding that *logos* is the kernel demands that the attempt to appropriate or grasp the sophist occur through the appropriation of the *speech* of the sophist. Heidegger argues that this centrality of *logos* justifies a reversal of the usual translation of Plato. This reversal occurs at the point where the Stranger is arguing for the need to consider whether non-being mixes with *logos*. If non-being does not mix, then everything must be true, but if there is mixing then there must be the possibility of saying "what is not," which is equivalent to the possibility of falsity. Cornford translates: "And if falsity, *pseudos*, exists, deception, *apate*, is possible" (260c6). If it is possible to make false statements, it seems to say, then it becomes possible to deceive. The possibility of deceptive *logos* emerges, obviously, from out of the more *general* possibility of false *logos*. Deception, then, is not only the possibility of saying what is not, but *additionally* means the possibility, which emerges from out of such saying and which is peculiar to humanity, of being taken down the wrong path, or of *deciding* to take someone *in* by *using* language deceptively.

Yet Heidegger translates in the opposite manner: "but if deception, *pseudos*, exists, then there is also falsity, *apate*."[106] There is no way to justify this reversal, no etymological grounds from which it is possible to argue that *pseudos means* deception and *apate means* falsity. What is more, Heidegger does not attempt to provide such grounds. Yet this unjust, violent re-translation is critical to an understanding of Heidegger's translation of Plato in general. If Heidegger is

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[106] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

arguing here about the meanings of words at all, it concerns the meanings of the Greek words less than it does what we believe *we* mean when we speak of falsity and deception. It if easier to grasp what Cornford's translation expresses than it is to grasp Heidegger's, but perhaps this very ease or obviousness suggests the problem that Heidegger is attempting to make clear.

Cornford's translation, according to which falsehood makes deception possible, moves within a system of concepts, a *Bau*, that is given, and that we imagine we understand. But by presuming that falsity makes deception *possible*, falsity must then be something that is itself *not* deception, because it is, within the *Bau*, "before" deception. Falsity is thereby understood "logically" or statically, that is to say, simply as the "negative" form of true statement. And by "logically" what is meant is that the *Bau*, the system of concepts or the system of sense, is what provides the totality of sense, a sense that allows for a positive and a negative form of assertion. "True" and "false" statement are then *pragmata*, things, as opposed to deception, which *does something* to us, and is therefore *praxical* where falsity is not. But is this really what Plato means, given what is at stake in the dialogue, that is, not the meaning of negative statement, but the possibility of the *Bau* itself, and the possibility of disclosure itself, whether "positive" or "negative"? Just as Adorno's thought of "pseudo-reality" implicitly demands that we grasp the "pseudo" to account for the possibility of "pseudo-reality," so too Cornford's translation begs the question: *how*, out of what grounds of possibility, can false statement lead us into deception, unless "we" are the kind of beings who already bear within us the possibility of being in relation to what is not?

For Heidegger, then, Plato's first term, *pseudos*, cannot mean "falsity" insofar as this is understood as the negative form of a true statement. Rather, when Plato says *pseudos*, he must mean that possibility, given with *logos* itself, of being taken away from what is, of being taken into a mixture with what is not. Wherein lies this possibility given within *logos*? In the fact that *logos*, as mediacy, as what lies between, is that cleaving open that separates "us" from what is, including from "ourselves," and in this separation, this distance, gives the possibility of movement (*kinesis*) toward or away. As mediacy, *logos* is necessarily a thing, and conditions "us" as being in relation to thingness. But *logos*. and therefore *pseudos*, as what *gives* "our" possibility of moving toward or away from things, is thereby *already praxis, praxis-pragma*, a "who-what."

Thus *pseudos* does not mean trickery understood as a human connivance, yet it is deception as that movement that *logos* itself *does to us*. And only on the basis of *this* possibility—of deception as such, as what *logos* gives—does "falsity," the possibility for a speaker of "being false" or of *deciding* to *use* the possibility of saying non-being, emerge. The chrematistic "not" cannot be understood except from out of

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the possibility of the "not" as such. So long as *pseudos* is understood "logically," statically, linguistically, "pragmatically," as the possibility of placing the word "not" in the middle of a true statement, then what is forever maintained is a separation between falsity and deception. Falsity and deception are separated as *pragma* and *praxis*: falsity as proper to "language" and "logic"; deception the property of humans. But where *pseudos* is thought beyond "false statement," where it is thought as the possibility, at the heart of language, to be taken away from what is, then the *power* of *logos*, the potentiality for *making* false statements, for a *poiesis* of falsehoods, emerges from out of the thought of *pseudos* itself as *already* a *poiesis*, already *conductive*, already *praxis-pragma*.

What Heidegger expresses with this reversal is the difference between a grasping of the *Bau* of *logos* as what discloses or, on the contrary, of the disclosure as such as what makes possible the *Bau*, the system of sense, in its truth and falsity. The *deloun* includes the "not," not as its opposite but at its origin, such that the *Bau*, *logos*, what lies between, what divides and leads us to or away from what is, includes within it the possibility of being *taken up* by "us." *Logos* can be taken up as an instrument, a technics, in at least two ways: as an instrument of judgment, of the possibility of judgment according to the criterion of truth and falsity; and as an instrument with which it is possible to *make* false discourse, and hence to confuse, so that people will be lead down the path of *wrong* judgment. It is the origin of this dual possibility in the *deloun* that from the beginning includes the "not" which Heidegger attempts to think through this peculiar translation.

When Heidegger begins with Aristotle in the 1924–25 lecture course, what is of most concern is the relation between *phronesis* and *sophia*, the kinds of knowing concerned respectively with what is temporal and what is permanent. It was the intertwining of *phronesis* and *sophia* that determined humanity as that factical being which is thrown and projective. When Heidegger reads Plato, it is to consider humanity as that being the *bios* of which is determined as that kind of *zoe* that lives in relation to *logos*. What is crucial in the consideration of *logos* is that problem which remained obvious in Parmenides, but became transparent in Plato—the problem that there remains *pseudes logos*.

The *bios* of humanity is determined as *zoon logon echon*, and this is to be grasped as indicating that the factical, praxical essence of humanity is the factical, praxical essence of *logos* itself. But this relation to facticity and *praxis* is also what determines humanity as *zoon politikon*. Reading Heidegger reading Plato means understanding that Heidegger remains concerned with the fact that, as a *polis*-being, humanity is a *public* being. Humanity is constantly underway toward being together publicly, and

the fact of *pseudes logos* means that "we" are constantly separated, lead along separate paths, by the apparently "uniting" fact of *logos*. This is not so much a matter of falsity, of getting things wrong, than the fact that existing in relation to non-being means being exposed to the "pseudo" as such, and to *dis*agreement. What is explicit in Aristotle Heidegger nevertheless retrieves in Plato: that being in relation to *logos* means being the being that lives with the possibility of disclosure, but thereby also lives mediately.

It is not enough simply to lay the charge of "logocentrism" against Heidegger (he is constantly pointing out that the fact that *logos* is the ontological guide is the *Greek* fact). Rather, *logos* is the name for the disclosive mediacy and the active facticity (*praxis-pragma*) that makes humanity a *zoon politikon*. Contrary to the accusation that Heidegger conflates ontology and *logos*, and thereby extinguishes "politics," already in 1924 Heidegger is trying to think what Detienne calls the "plurality" of *doxai* in the *polis*. Heidegger takes seriously what he takes to be Plato's question also: from out of what grounds derives this "positive" possibility that when people are together, which they always are, they find themselves in disagreement? As beings the *bios* of which is intertwined with the life of the *polis*, humanity, the political being, finds itself exposed to *logos*, which means to falsity, deception, lies, as well as to "movement," invention, possibility.

In 1924 Heidegger is preparing and producing his phenomenology. *Heidegger's* phenomenology is "hermeneutics and facticity," *pragmata* in the mode of *praxis*, and as such always contains, as all thinking always does, a relation to "today," to today's situations and today's questions. If Heidegger's reading of Plato and Aristotle remains preoccupied with ontology, what most occupies Heidegger is the finitude of the relation to being, or in other words the way in which this is *also from the beginning* the question of the relation to "non-being." And within this concern lies the thought that the fact that there is a plurality of *doxai* in the *polis* is neither a simple fact nor a trivial problem. Yet there remains a suspicion, a suspicion that even if this is the problem we have inherited from Greece (the "essential" "political" problem), we are not Greek. Does being a political being, if we are still that, mean today that our *bios* lies in the *polis*? Could it be that we are no longer, if we ever were, *polis*-beings, that the *polis* remains an image, an illegitimate demand we place on "reality" without the power or possibility of *enacting* the image?

Kracauer points toward this possibility with other words in his disagreement with the *Tat* circle. Kracauer uses the words of one of the authorities of the circle, Oswald Spengler, himself citing Henrik Ibsen, to counter the "emptiness" of the reality demanded by *Die Tat*. This sophistic emptiness is an unhistoricality and an

apoliticism. Why? Because in reducing history to violence, power, force, that is, to *physis*, what is forgotten is that every form of rule, however tyrannical, works by clothing itself in the image and the *logos* of some kind of *nomos* and some kind of justice. This necessity, the necessity of this *work* done by power, which Kracauer calls the "dialectic of history," if there is such a necessity at work, is testament to a power which holds power over power. If, in order to triumph, "might and race" (*"Macht und Rasse"*) must remain in the service of "those doctrines that also embody truth and justice," then power and violence themselves somehow remain mediated. Life is never exposed to naked violence without mediation. Life is *always* within politics, within history, within meaning. This is what is missed by *Die Tat* according to Kracauer in 1931.

Die Tat, in other words, are insufficiently concerned with the *substance* of history, with the substantial, for if they were they would be drawn to reflect not only upon the violence of history, the active-facticity of history, but upon the necessary relation of violence to something else, *logos*.

> *Die Tat* thus does not counter liberalism's reality [*Wirklichkeit*] by constructing a different, more substantial [*substantiellere*] one; instead it only makes demands for a reality that cannot be demanded.[107]

Once again, that the *Tat* circle remain insubstantial means that their *logos* is not grounded in experienced fact, that is, in that by which they have been affected, that which they have actually suffered, undergone. What they do not recognize is that humanity is a *polis*-being and never just bare life. And what they thereby miss most of all is that they themselves depend upon this relation to something other than bare life. *Die Tat*, like sophistic, defends the thought that all there is is being, that non-being is not, and that the true sight of reality sees nothing but what *is there*. Yet, like the sophists, they are forced to speak against themselves because, for all their concern with the simplicity of what is, their very existence as a circle is predicated upon maintaining a relation to another thought of life. Behind the thought that history or politics is just *physis*, just the violent work of nature herself, lies a thought of life as underway and which finds its way through the urgent activity of public discourse, public disagreement—that *physis* already includes *logos*.[108] And because this discourse cannot admit its own existence, and because it tries to explain everything except itself, it remains destined, like sophistic, to insubstantiality and illusion:

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[107] Kracauer, "The Revolt of the Middle Classes," *The Mass Ornament*, p. 118.

[108] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 127: "*Ratio* is, to repeat a previously articulated point, the advocate of blind forces of nature [*blinder Naturtriebe*], and nothing would be more absurd and hopeless than to want to combat it with the help of the same bare nature [*bloßen Natur*] that manifests itself [*darstellt*] in this very *Ratio*."

If one were malicious, one could enlist one of the *Tat* Circle's idols in the fight against it: I'm thinking of Spengler. He has written somewhere that the Nordic soul [*nordische Seele*], having exhausted its inner possibilities [*inneren Möglichkeiten*] to the point that it retained only "the drive [*der Trieb*], the creative passion [*die schöpferische Leidenschaft*], a spiritual mode of existence without substance [*eine geistige Daseinsform ohne Inhalt*]," had to at least pretend that its activity [*Wirksamkeit*] had some content. "Ibsen called it the lie of life [*die Lebenslüge*]," Spengler continues, "and there is an element of that in all the spiritual activity of Western European civilization, to the extent that it orients itself toward a religious, artistic, philosophical future, an immaterial goal [*immaterielles Ziel*], a third *Reich*, though all the while in the uttermost depths there is a dull feeling that insists on being heard, a feeling that all this activity is an illusion [*diese ganze Wirksamkeit Schein*], the desperate self-deception [*die verzweifelte Selbsttäuschung*] of a historical soul."[109]

Kracauer appears to intend this diagnosis of the "lie of life" to serve as a reminder, to see once again, that humanity, essentially mediated, related to discourse in politics and history, essentially *relational*, can never be understood according to the thought of *physis before logos*. Spengler cites Bayreuth as the example of this lie of life, of the desire to *be something that really was something*, that is, to return to the substantiality before mediation. *Die Tat*, according to Kracauer, also wants something that once really was something. And they mistakenly believe that this something, because it lies *before* mediation, before insubstantiality, that is, before the reality which they desperately wish to conceal, is *possible* immediately, as "the end of an act of will [*Willensziel*]."[110] Perhaps Kracauer here correctly diagnoses in advance the "disease" Heidegger will suffer in 1933. Yet Kracauer's disagreement remains haunted by the possibility that, being grounded in the thought of "experienced substantialities" in contrast to "the end of acts of will," he may not have pursued to the bottom the ground of the possibility of presupposition as such. Perhaps this concern with the substantiality of experience in the name of a *remembrance* of *logos* in fact conceals that *logos* is what also exposes "experience" and "humanity" as such.

Whatever remains substantial in Kracauer's "critique," there lies the risk that in playing physician of what has gone awry in *Die Tat*'s discourse, he does not take seriously enough what he proposes to diagnose via Spengler's Ibsen. In remembering what remains the essential substance of humanity, in contrast to *Die Tat*'s insubstantial concern to explain everything in history according to being as bare *physis*, Kracauer plays the part of the philosopher against the sophist. Yet Spengler's lie of life does not refer only to the insubstantiality of sophistic, nor to the lie of the life of the "Nordic soul," but to the West "itself," and to the ends it sets for itself, and which include not only artistic or religious but also *philosophical* ends.

[109] *Ibid*, p. 118.
[110] *Ibid*.

Spengler's lie of life *includes* the *bios* of the "philosopher" who looks upon life in the *polis*, who, unlike the *magus*, has moved *into* the *polis* and become subject to the demands of publicity. And perhaps this includes the thought that it is not only Bayreuth but the *polis* too which expresses today's wish for something that really was something, for something that is more than just a *schopferische Leidenschaft*, a creative suffering, passion, *affectivity*, more than a *Daseinsform* without content. If there is something that *gathers* the religious, the artistic and the philosophical, then what is this but our remembrance of the *polis*? And if the West lives within a lie of life that commences with (that lies beneath the shadow of) the remembered image of the *polis*, then Greece remains allegorical. The West itself, and not only Delos, is the ruin of history, the evening of Greece in which the Greek light intermingles with our Night.

In his concern with *Ratio*, with the remembrance of the necessity of the "full deployment of reason," Kracauer threatens to found his "politics" on seeing once again the substantiality of the *polis*, and taking as obvious that the philosopher, the one who sees life, who guarantees truth, should lie at the heart of the *polis*. Kracauer risks retelling the allegory of the philosopher as that *bios* the place of which *ought to be* at the very centre, *meson*, of the *polis*, at the heart and hearth of the *agora*. He thereby risks not only retelling a "Platonic" story of politics, but not taking seriously enough the question for today which Spengler appears to raise. Before we can decide that we are *for* politics against *myth*, for mediation against immediacy, it is necessary to ask whether we know what politics means, and whether or not what we take for the *substance* of politics does not in the end simply keep alive the "image" we imagine we are leaving behind. Perhaps it will turn out that philosophy has always been the guiding line for defining what we mean when we say politics, and that this "fact" has always derived from a story told about the *bios* of the philosopher within the *polis*, a story that begins in Plato and Aristotle. If Heidegger is concerned to show the mediacy and finitude of *phronesis*, and if he is concerned to show that the Platonic concern with "non-being" complicates the story of the philosopher as a *polis*-being, nevertheless in 1924 Heidegger does not question the *polis* itself, nor ask what "politics" *is*. And these questions will not emerge for Heidegger until after his own fateful "experience" with politics, after the end of his own political *praxis*.

Chapter Four

Violence and Institution

> *"And if our most proper existence [eigenstes Dasein] itself stands before a great transformation, and if it is true what that passionate [leidenschaftlich] seeker of God and last German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, said: 'God is dead'—and if we must be serious about this forsakenness [Verlassenheit] of today's human beings in the midst of what is, then how does it stand with Wissenschaft?*
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> *"Then, the initial [anfänglich], awed perseverance of the Greeks in the face of what is transforms itself into a completely uncovered exposure to the hidden and uncertain [das Verborgene und Ungewisse]; that is, the questionworthy [d i e Fragwürdige]. Questioning is then no longer merely a preliminary step that is surmounted on the way to the answer and thus to knowing; rather, questioning itself becomes the highest form of knowing."* Martin Heidegger.[1]

What was gained in reading Heidegger's lecture course of 1924–25, and what is it that is being sought?

When in 1924 Heidegger lectures on Aristotle's ethics, what most occupies his reading is the relation between *phronesis* and *sophia*. His concern is not to reassert the Aristotelian privilege of *sophia*, nor to advocate the life of *theoria* as the highest. On the one hand, he is concerned to show the limits of Aristotelian and Greek thought, that is, to show that what distinguishes between *phronesis* and *sophia* is the difference between the temporal and the timeless. They are distinguished according

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[1] Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in Günther Neske & Emil Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), p. 8.

to time thought as presence. On the other hand, Heidegger is preoccupied, for several reasons, with *phronesis* itself. Firstly, the very temporality of *phronesis* in its Aristotelian conception means that it continues to inform fundamental ontology, to say something about the way in which Da-sein ek-sists within its world. Da-sein's potentiality for resoluteness and decision owe more to the finitude of *phronesis* than they do to the endless contemplation of the eternal that marks *sophia* (although this very *endlessness* also marks Da-sein's being-toward-the-end). Secondly, the fact that *phronesis* has its end outside itself in *praxis* means that *phronesis* continues to have something to tell us about the way in which all knowing is intentional, that is, always involved with Da-sein's already-being-thrown-into-projecting.

Sophia, on the other hand, remains the impossible possibility in Aristotle. Mortality, in the broadest sense, and the mediacy of knowing, mean that there is no path through to *sophia*, and humanity is constantly thrown back upon its phronetic limits. Death "lays claim" to Da-sein, ex-posing Da-sein to its limit, to the limit of its knowing and the knowing-toward-the-limit, that is, *phronesis*.[2] But in spite of not being able to reach higher than *phronesis*, this finitude is what also accounts for the *necessity* of *phronesis*, where "necessity" is understood affirmatively as indicating what is proper to existence. Furthermore, this is not only a question of a necessity for Da-sein in the sense of a *techne* that must be developed in order to survive without absolute certainty. *Phronesis* is Da-sein's proper possibility in the sense that the very finitude and mediacy of *phronesis give* Da-sein the possibility of being-thrown into projects, and specifically of projects with-one-another. The *necessity* of *phronesis* is the possibility of "politics."

When in 1924–25 Heidegger lectures on *Plato* it is to explore the mediacy of knowing and discourse. Being and non-being are given in *logos*, the Greek name for mediation as such, for being-in-relation(-to), for *praxis* in the mode of *pragma*. Furthermore, disclosure is not *from* being "itself," for *deloun* includes from the beginning a *sumploke* with non-being, a relation to a "not." If Heidegger follows Plato's war between philosophy and sophistic, it is not in order to reassert the superiority of the philosopher on the grounds that the philosopher is the one who simply speaks the truth from out of the ground of being. Rather, sophistic, the possibility of saying what is not, is what exposes philosophy to the problem that *gives* philosophy its proper existence. At important moments in the text Heidegger takes note that existence for the Greeks means existence in the *polis*. Sophistic, the

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[2] Cf., Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), p. 263. That mortality *lays claim*, and that this ex-poses Da-sein to its limit, means *both* that, being shown its limit, Da-sein is exposed to its individuality, to its being absolutely an individual, and secondly that, exposed to its limit, it is related to its outside *as* its outside, as what is closed off.

problem that remains for philosophy, is a question of understanding and of showing what is proper to existence in the *polis*.

What joins the reading of Plato to the reading of Aristotle is this question of the existence proper to the *polis*. Sophistic grasps that knowing proper to the *polis* as a *techne*, a *techne* that the sophist himself provides. Philosophy, however, exceeds *techne* in the direction of *phronesis*, concerned with a kind of knowing that neither only "productive" nor "appropriative." That there remains a place for philosophy in the *polis*, according to Heidegger's reading of Plato, is testament not to the "superiority" of philosophy, nor to philosophy's right to rule. Rather, the *polis*, the site of existence, of *praxis*, is the site of *theoria* and *paideia*, but where these do *not* name "institutions" of productive or appropriative knowledge, so much as the repetition, handing down, of an affirmation of questioning and a questioning affirmation. Philosophy is not the highest wisdom, but a *problem*, the problem that comes from listening to *logos*, from listening to the fact that *logos* does not only say what is. Philosophy's problem comes, that is, from listening to the sophist, to the *polis*-being *par excellence*. Philosophy's problem lies in the impossibility of an exit from *logos*, and hence of always being-in, of always existing "with" things not by simply *being* with them but in being *with* things in their communicability, that is, in their disclosiveness *and* withdrawal. Philosophy's problem is that disclosure is originarily involved with closure. But, again, philosophy's problem is also its possibility. Philosophy stands as the possibility of listening to *logos*, *in* its mediacy, at its limit. Da-sein's facticity, to the extent that it is a knowing of something other than a set of "facts," is only possible because Da-sein *is* exposed to its limit, to the "mortality" or the "nothing" that lays claim.

What is being sought is not only the answer to the question of the meaning of non-being in general. Philosophy's problem, philosophy as problem or *aporia*, comes from being the *other logos* of the *polis*. *Logos*, as we have already seen in 1924, is not the unity of meaning, the unity of the meaning of being, but on the contrary what mediates and exposes existence. The place of this mediated, exposed being is, for the Greeks, the *polis*, but what the *polis* "is" remains questionable. In 1924 what is in question is not yet the *polis* as such. Is the *polis* the site at which the "unity" of existence becomes manifest, the site that ties *logos* and human existence together? Does the "community" of the *polis* mean the possibility for "collectively" "transcending" each Da-sein's limit? Does the *polis* have the potentiality for being a whole, for making existence whole, that is denied to the individual Da-sein and Da-sein's individual *logos*? Is the thought of the *polis* as carrying the potentiality for wholeness what Heidegger was thinking in 1933? What is being sought, in other words, is the path that leads from the thought of philosophy's problem, philosophy as *aporia*, as grounded not in being but in the nothing that comes with being, *to* a

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thought of the *polis* and "politics." Thus what is being sought is the answer to the question of whether the *polis* as a whole can be brought into view, in order to ask about the possibility of a *logos* proper to the *polis*. Can "politics" be "grounded" in a *logos* of the *polis*, or does the place of non-being at the heart of *logos* undermine the possibility of a "proper," "praxical" discourse of our being with others? Do the Greeks point toward a *passage* in *logos* to a proper being with others? But this is not only a question that must be asked in its own terms, not only a question of *a priori* "knowledge," but a question about what path is open *today*, and what closed. Can philosophy, even as problem, continue to provide the *logos* which is proper to "our situation," a situation and a problem formulated in a precise manner by Jean-Luc Nancy?:

> "Philosophy" and "politics" is the exposition [*énoncé*] of this situation. But it is a disjunctive exposition, because the situation itself is disjunctive. The city is not primarily "community," any more than it is primarily "public space." The city is at least as much the bringing to light of being-in-common *as the disposition* (dispersal and disparity) of the community represented as founded in interiority or transcendence. It is "community" without common origin. That being the case, and as long as philosophy is an appeal to the origin, the city, far from being philosophy's subject or space, is its problem. Or else, it is its subject or space in the mode of being its problem, its aporia. Philosophy, for its part, can appeal to the origin only on the condition of the dis-position of *logos* (that is, of the origin as justified and set into discourse): *logos* is the spacing at the very place of the origin. Consequently, philosophy is the problem of the city; philosophy covers over the subject that is expected as "community."[3]

One reason for looking at Heidegger's 1924–25 lecture course is to establish the degree to which Heidegger is already concerned with *logos* as spacing, that is, with *logos* as the essentially ex-posing or dis-posing, and which would make of "political experience," as Agamben says, the thought of "being-into-language itself as pure mediality." What is not clear is the relation of this thought of *logos* as spacing to the thought of the "space" of the *polis*. Does the *polis* transcend the mediated spacing of Da-sein's being-in-*logos*? Or could it be that "*polis*" is the name of the problem of the spacing of being-with, and "philosophy" is the concealment of this problem in the dream of transcendent *logos*? This is the Scylla and Charybdis of any thought of the relation of *logos* and *polis*, and what is being sought is the possibility of thinking these two sides of Da-sein's being-mediate, Da-sein being-there-*in*, that navigates between the dangers of taking either of these, *logos* or *polis*, as the "solution" to the other. It is the danger that one of these, *logos* or *polis*, will become the thought of "being" "itself," rather than of *being's always being "with" non-being*. But already in 1924, where it is at least clear that the "philosophy of being" is in fact the problem of non-being, there are grounds for thinking that it would be presumptuous to "judge"

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[3] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 23.

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Heidegger as having "substantialized" *logos* or *polis* as the solution to the problem of mediation.

Heidegger's inaugural lecture, for example, continues the themes from 1924, and may as well be considered his "version" of Plato's *Sophist*. "*Was ist Metaphysik?*" is a disquisition on education and the university, a clarification of *Sein und Zeit*, an affirmation of the "nothing" at the heart of being, and the proper introduction of the thematic of *Unheimlichkeit*. What *Angst* reveals is that, "indeed, the nothing itself [*das Nichts selbst*]—as such—was there [*war da*]."[4] *Being is always being with the nothing*. And this is also what exposes "us," the questers after the nothing: "The question of the nothing puts us [*Die Frage nach dem Nichts stellt uns*]—the questioners—ourselves in question."[5] The community of the question is exposed to the question.

But what does this mean for "our situation," for the situation, today, in which "politics and philosophy" finds itself. Did Heidegger think not only philosophy's problem insofar as it is the problem of non-being and *logos*, but also the problem of the *polis* or *its* absence, *its* nothingness? What most obviously threatens any affirmation of this possibility is Heidegger's apparent embrace of a political thought grounded in some kind of totality, a "community" as a singular *polis*, whose wholeness so obviously meant a univocity that functioned by violently asserting its own transcendent origin and by violently denying the possibility of *any* plurality of *doxai*. Any attempt to seek in Heidegger's thought a thinking of the *polis* or "politics" as something other than such a univocal totality must at least address the fact of Heidegger's "deepest error."[6]

In the eighteen years from 1924 to 1942 a lot happens, and a lot happens with Heidegger, but he continues to be preoccupied with the difficulties of "education." At the mid-point of this interval Heidegger's *Geist* becomes infamously inflamed, as

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[4] Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 89. And cf., *ibid.*, p. 91: "Da-sein means: being held out into the nothing [*Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts*]." Or *ibid.*: "The nothing is the possibilizing of the manifestation of beings [*Das Nichts ist die Ermöglichung der Offenbarkeit des Seienden*] as such for human Da-sein. The nothing does not merely serve as the counterconcept [*Gegenbegriff*] of beings; rather, it belongs originally to their essence itself [*zum Wesen selbst*]. In the being of beings [*Im Sein des Seienden*] the nihilation of the nothing [*das Nichten des Nichts*] occurs."

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[6] Cf., *ibid.*: "Because the truth of metaphysics dwells in this abyssal ground [*in diesem abgründigen Grunde wohnt*] it stands in closest proximity to the constantly lurking possibility of deepest error." Thus the *proximity* of truth and great errancy was already explicitly thematized in 1929.

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Derrida will say.[7] Derrida is prepared to admit the possibility that in the rectorate address, the moment of Heidegger's most apparent enthusiasm for National Socialism, the gesture toward "spirit" by Heidegger is a strategy opposing biologism and genetic racism. As Derrida points out, however, opposition to biologism through such a strategy can *only* work by opposing biology and spirit, by reaffirming the self-assertion of the subject, the spirit, against the biological. In this *strategic* sense, the rectorate address is *guilty* of the same "metaphysical" logic as, for example, the discourse of human rights, being always based in the end on the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible. "All the pitfalls of the strategy of establishing demarcations belong to this program."[8]

If *Geist* functions within Heidegger's strategy in 1933 as that which discriminates and decides against biologism, as the tool in Heidegger's critique of biologism, nevertheless it is perhaps also what permits him to mix the genres (if they are ever separate) of the political and the philosophical, a mixing that finds its proper site in the university. *Geist* is the very name for this politico-philosophical mixing, the name that grants itself authority in naming what is *not merely* sophistics and technics. *Geist* is not mere cleverness nor the play of wit, but rather "the primordially attuned, knowing resoluteness toward the essence of being."[9] *Geist* is the name of the "mechanism" for blurring the demarcation between philosophy and politics, by which Heidegger indulges, "illegitimately," in allowing "philosophy" to *lay claim* to "politics" and its institutions.

But, we cannot legitimately assert this correct reading of the rectorate address without *also* taking the measure of those tendencies within Heidegger's strategy that *resist* being interpreted as the mixing of politics and philosophy, that resist being interpreted according to the notion that Heidegger's intention, his wish, is to be the philosophical *Führer* for the political one. It is perhaps difficult to take notice of these moments for, beyond the *content* of the text, its very existence appears to be nothing other than a dramatic staging of the mixture of politics and philosophy. It is impossible to decide whether the address belongs within Heidegger's "philosophical" *oeuvre*, or whether it can be excised from his "philosophy" as nothing more than an exercise in political sophistics (Heidegger himself will forbid this exclusion). Does Heidegger effectively forget himself in 1933, does he let himself forget his philosophy, or does he *philosophize*, forgetting his own thinking of

[7] Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 31–2.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

[9] Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in Neske & Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, p. 9: "*Geist ist ursprünglich gestimmte, wissende Entschlossenheit zum Wesen des Seins.*"

philosophy's *limit*?[10] But what such questions about the address miss is that it is precisely these divisions and departments that Heidegger wishes to put into question. The problem of the address is whether there is a difference between, on the one hand, mixing the genres of philosophy and politics and, on the other, thinking beyond their assigned borders.

The first philosopher

The address ends with an ontico-politically translated statement from Plato, that is, from the "philosopher" *par excellence*: "all that is great stands in the storm." But what is equally conspicuous is that the address is framed between the names of the "first" and "last" philosophers, Prometheus and Nietzsche. It may be objected that Heidegger says the last *German* philosopher. But what does it mean, at the moment of Heidegger's greatest apparent identification of himself with German destiny, to speak of the *last* German philosopher? What overarches any identification with "Germany," for Heidegger, is the problem of *today*, of a forsakenness that means that the last philosopher *of* Germany must also be the last passionate—that is, tragic—seeker of God. "Germany," here, whatever else we choose to hear in its invocation, names the *lost* site, the lost space of community, upon which the tragic relation between mortal and divine is staged. If Nietzsche is the last *German* philosopher, it is because what has come to its end is the *polis*, and more particularly the relation between the *polis* and philosophy. Thus, rather than simply mixing the political and the philosophical, there is a clear sense in which Heidegger is indicating that *today's problem* lies in the *withdrawal* of the *polis* in its being-tied-to philosophy, which is in fact the end of the period of philosophy itself, the opening and closing of which is marked by the names of Prometheus and Nietzsche.

What of the *first* philosopher? Heidegger cites one line from Aeschylus, without context, and apparently as though it stood in itself as a philosophical epigram. "*Techne*, however, is far weaker than necessity." *Techne* is translated as *Wissen*, but what is odd is the way in which this *weakness* of knowing immediately leads to a consideration of *theoria*, of the remembrance of the inextricable tie for the Greeks of *theoria* to *praxis*, and hence of the way in which for the Greeks *Wissenschaft* is the *innerst bestimmende Mitte*, the inmost determining middle, the *Macht* that determines the whole of *volklich* and *staatlich* Da-sein. It is perhaps possible to understand the

[10] Thus compare what Heidegger will say in 1935 on how too much is expected from philosophy, too much, that is, in relation to our situation today. See Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000, new trans. Gregory Fried & Richard Polt), pp. 10–2.

reference to *Prometheus Bound* at this place in Heidegger's strategy, in the sense that, precisely *by* translating *techne* with *Wissen*, he invites us to forget the breadth of Prometheus's gift, all the better to remind us that *techne*, prior to the mortal philosophers, already named the inextricable binding of *theoria* and *praxis*. Prometheus, bound, cannot act, but he is the one who knows, and this knowing, without doubt weaker than necessity, is his defiance of the law of necessity, resistance as such. The strength of Greek *Wissenschaft* is that it measures the strength and the weakness of this defiance. Most obviously, the rhetoric of "strength," of a questioning that unfolds its proper strength in *becoming* the highest form of knowing, prefigures the appearance of Nietzsche in the text.[11] Questioning and becoming are even the same, and the unfolding of questioning-becoming into the highest and strongest knowing not only refers to a Nietzschean philosophico-political rhetoric, but also gives it—to the extent that this "political" text concerns *Wissenschaft* and the university—its properly "speculative" logic. Nevertheless, in spite of this rhetoric and this logic of the address, the decision to cite a passage from tragedy on the *weakness* of *techne* is not thereby fully "explained."

Perhaps the decision by Heidegger to choose just this passage from Aeschylus contains an enigma that should be pursued beyond what Heidegger seems to offer. It is after all somewhat remarkable that already in 1933 Heidegger is choosing to read a tragedy which, like *Antigone*, is most often interpreted as an allegory of the battle of the rebel against the tyrant, a battle which is always more or less the battle between the "law" and that law which lies "higher" than the law. Prometheus is the son of Themis, of a law that is handed down from time and earth, rather than that law which merely exists in the time of its being-posited and which is doomed to its own time. This is not to suggest that Heidegger identifies himself (or Germany) with the rebel against the tyrant (Hitler was after all a "revolutionary" who cast himself in the role of the rebel *contra* "politics"), but there is at least a *question* hanging over *who exactly* is being called to self-assertion, and *what* it is they are being called to assert.

The mythical encounter that frames the tragedy is between the *kratos* and *bia* of Zeus and the impotence of Prometheus. This figure, Prometheus, nevertheless has the foresight, the *pro-metheia*, to anticipate that the steersmen of the new law (*oiakonomoi*, 149), *as mere* steersmen, will thus be subject to shifting winds, as though the new rulers were subject to the dangers faced by mortals, and will, therefore, have their fall just as surely as they had their rise. *Prometheus Bound*, which is virtually actionless, presents a frozen moment in which what is shown is indicated

[11] Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, "Transcendence Ends in Politics," *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 291-2.

by the final words of the tragedy. The final words are uttered, unusually (the Chorus usually has the last word in Greek tragedy), by Prometheus. He is the one who, bound as he is, nevertheless *remains*. Prometheus remains as the voice that speaks, the body that stands, in the face of the law-become-storm, proclaiming against *"ekdika paskho'* (1093), the suffering or undergoing of the injustice of temporal law. What dooms this law to its own time is nothing other than the expulsion of Prometheus, for this expulsion signals the loss of foresight and *metis* that alone can find passage. Thus at the beginning of the tragec , when Kratos and silent Bia are engaged with the smith Hephaestus, Kratos states that what makes Prometheus *deinos* is his ability to find *poros* when he is apparently without means, *amekhanon* (59).

There is without doubt a strong connection between this potentiality of Prometheus to find passage and the crime that has caused him to be bound, the crime of giving to humanity all of the *technai* which it possesses. If Prometheus is the first philosopher, then he nevertheless reflects the ambiguous relationship between philosophy and sophistic. In Aeschylus he is referred to as *sophistes* (62) and as a *sophiston* (944), and these are perhaps already ambivalent, for this wisdom of Prometheus is also perceived as an *excess* of wisdom, *perissophron* (330). And this excess means that the very Hermes who greets Prometheus as a *sophiston* will shortly say that Prometheus is *without sophronein* (983), that he is a madman and a fool, *tolmeson*, lacking *phronein* (1000), and this is echoed by the chorus which exhorts that the *sophiston* Prometheus should seek the counsel of good and wise deliberation, *sophen euboulian* (1038). It is the excessiveness of the wisdom of Prometheus that makes possible his gift of *techne* to humanity, but it is this same excessiveness that makes possible the transgression of Zeus's law for which he is punished. It is this excessiveness which means that the tragedy opens with the proclamation of Prometheus as *deinos* and as able to find passage where no means exists, and it is this same excessiveness which means that the tragedy ends with Hermes' declaration that Prometheus' want of good sense has caught him in the net of ruin out of which there is *no* escape, *no* passage, *aperaton diktuon ates* (1078).

Prometheus is the first philosopher not only because he gives to humanity the capacity for "knowing." He is the first philosopher because he is the first figure to represent the ambiguity of a humanity that finds a way through all things yet with this very capacity risks madness, ruin, and aporia. This is the *weakness* of *techne*, a weakness in the face of the steersmen (*oiakostrophos*) of necessity, the Fates and Furies (515). Prometheus expresses the inextricable tie between technics and philosophy. Metis, inventor of *technai* and *mekhane*, is the mother of Poros. Sarah Kofman argues that when Plato protects the purity of philosophy by severing it

from all technics, this is to camouflage the Promethean character of philosophy.[12] In reading *Prometheus Bound*, however, in translating *techne* with *Wissen*, Heidegger is drawing attention *to* the "philosophical" essence of Promethean technics. Prometheus gives philosophy: where there was merely sight, he gives vision; where there were merely ears, he gives the possibility of *listening* (447).

Prometheus gives philosophy as technics, but this does not make it merely technical thought. Prometheus himself states that what he gives to humanity is *phrenon epebolous* (444), which Smyth translates as "to be endowed with reason," Grene as "to be masters of their wits," and Griffith as "possessed of intelligence." *Epebolous*, however, means "to have attained" or, etymologically, to have properly placed for oneself with a throw (of a net). Grene's translation retains something of this with the suggestion that what is given is not just a "possession" but a kind of mastery in relation to "*phrenon*." Prometheus does not give intelligence, but gives the possibility of having a proper stand in relation to this thing, *phrenon*. And before translating *phrenon* with "reason," it must be remembered that what is referred to is the heart,[13] the center, the whole person in who they properly are. *Phrenon*, then, is more like *Geist*, and what Prometheus gives for the first time is the possibility of having a modified grasp of who one is that places oneself in a proper relation to one's own (*Geist*). Prometheus gives the possibility of having a stand in relation to oneself in the midst of the storm of what is. He thereby gives to humanity the possibility of giving oneself the law (hence the *possibility* of finding passage beyond the law of Zeus). In the rectorate address, Heidegger will describe this as the highest freedom.[14]

Prometheus, then, gives the possibility for humanity to give itself the law. There is, obviously enough, a paradox at work in such a formulation. The possibility of giving oneself the law is itself a gift from an other. The very fact that this possibility is *given* limits and poisons the gift, confirms and condemns its weakness. In giving to humanity this possibility of giving oneself the law, this law will always only be "human" law and thus the law that exists "*within*" time—a law that must always submit to a law beyond knowing, to the law of necessity. In order to be able *really* to give oneself the law, in order *really* to obtain this highest freedom, what needs to be excluded, forgotten, is Prometheus himself, the eternal reminder of the mortality of law. One of the mysteries of *Prometheus Bound* is that in giving all that he gives to

[12] Sarah Kofman, "Prometheus, the First Philosopher," *Substance* 50 (1986), pp. 26–7.

[13] At line 628, for instance, Prometheus does not wish to reveal to Io what his foresight reveals to him, for fear of crushing her heart or spirit, *phrenas*.

[14] Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in Neske & Kettering, *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, p. 10: "To give oneself the law is the highest freedom [*Sich selbst das Gesetz geben, ist höchste Freiheit*]."

humanity, Prometheus also takes away one thing—what mortals lose is the ability to foresee the day of their death (250). Humanity, the inheritor of Poros and *techne*, is destined to a being-toward-the-end that it can *never* master or, rather, that it can never properly place for itself or catch in the net of its knowing.

In compensation, humanity receives *elpis*, neither "fear" nor "blind hope" but rather anticipation without certainty—projectivity, or, as Stiegler puts it, a "knowledge of the end, which is also a nonknowing."[15] To be Promethean means to be philosophico-technical in the sense indicated by Heidegger when he speaks of what it means to exist after the "death of God," to be exposed to time. Rather than mastery, rather than simply "having" reason as a tool with which it is possible to escape destiny, humanity, in its *challenge* to necessity, to destiny, is exposed to what remains hidden and uncertain, to the questionable. "Necessity," for Da-sein, first of all means mortality, which Da-sein knows without knowing (without possessing the "facts" of one's own mortality). Yet what Da-sein does know, the "non-relational" essence of its mortality, is shown *to* Da-sein, which is to say, what Da-sein *knows* it knows because it *is* relational, it exists *as* being-in-relation to what lies outside itself. The Promethean "challenge" still means that humanity, in spite of its limits, is the *knower*, and this knowing comes from humanity's exposure *to* its limit, to the fact of humanity's having-been-exposed *to* the gods. "Philosophy" or *phronesis* are Greek names for Da-sein's being-exposed, being-in the situation, and being-mediate. The epoch of philosophy is the epoch in which our being-able-to-look-around at the situation and its limits *becomes* the thought of being-able-to-

[15] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 196–8. This is part of Stiegler's reading of why *elpis* contains a mixing of *prometheia* and *epimetheia*, and hence a memory of Prometheus' forgotten but crucial brother. He derives his reading largely from Vernant's reading of the *Hesiodic* version of the myth. Vernant argues that *elpis* "contains a fundamental dimension of uncertainty." Jean-Pierre Vernant, "At Man's Table: Hesiod's Foundation Myth of Sacrifice," in Marcel Detienne and Vernant, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 81. Vernant ends his reading of Prometheus here with the following paragraph (pp. 85–6): "For immortal beings such as the gods, there is no need of *Elpis*. No *Elpis*, either, for creatures like animals who are unaware they are mortal. If man, mortal like the animals, foresaw the whole future as the gods do, if he were entirely Promethean, he would not have the strength to live, lacking the ability to look his own death in the face. But since he knows himself to be mortal without knowing when or how he will die, since he knows *Elpis*—foresight but blind foresight, a necessary illusion, a good and an evil at the same time—only *Elpis* can enable him to live this ambiguous, dual existence caused by the Promethean fraud when the first sacrificial meal was instituted. Henceforth everything has its opposite: no more contact with the gods that is not also, through sacrifice, the consecration of an unbridgeable gap between mortals and Immortals; no more happiness without unhappiness; birth without death; plenty without suffering and fatigue; food without hunger, decline, old age, and mortality. There are no more men without women, no Prometheus without Epimetheus. There is no more human existence without the twofold *Elpis*, this ambiguous expectation both fearful and hopeful about an uncertain future—*Elpis* in which, as in the best of wives, 'bad throughout life comes to offset the good'."

reach-the-limit of thought, the *possibility* of decision, of technics, of sovereignty. With the *last* philosopher, hence with the closure of the philosophical, the "tragic" possibility of sovereignty closes too, and what comes to an end is the possibility of imagining politico-philosophical transcendence, or the proper mixing of law and decision.

In listening to Heidegger with Aeschylus in mind (and vice versa), what becomes audible is that Heidegger's theme is a thought concerning education. Education means, according to this reading, having the resoluteness to posit a law of knowing which finds its ground not in the certainty of a subject, but on the contrary in what puts the "subject" and its ends into question. Questioning becomes the highest form of knowing. Heidegger's account of what the university ought to be—his attacks on "academic freedom," for instance—on the one hand reproduces the most traditional gesture of education as *leading—ducere*. On the other hand, however, in leading or drawing *out* beyond all certainties—*e-ducere*—it is a far more "radical" understanding of "education" than many "progressive" discourses intended to "defend" the place of the university. Education means instituting the law of questioning, and it is only *properly* education where this very institution is what *also* must come into questioning. Hence Heidegger in the address insists that it is not merely something given that we should continue to pursue *Wissenschaft*, and that this is a question that needs to be *asked*.

Drawing attention to the centrality of questioning in the address is not a refutation of Derrida's reading of the place of "*Geist*." Derrida too wants to give Heidegger his due, to affirm that for Heidegger here *Geist* means that which puts the "certainty" of biologism, etc., into doubt. Derrida's argument is that Heidegger's *method*, the method of the self-assertion of *Geist*, necessarily returns to the "certainty" of a subject, the certainty of self-assertion itself. In following a Promethean thread in the text, we have drawn out the "uncertainty" of this *Geist*, the nonknowing, mortal essence of what is given by Prometheus, thereby taking from Heidegger, or giving to him, the thought of *Geist*-as-questioning. This is so far from being a resolution of the problems raised by Derrida that it is in fact only a restatement *of* those problems, as indicated by his subtitle: *Heidegger and the Question*.

Derrida's problem with questioning remains subtle. It will provide one of the few moments at which Derrida is prepared to revise his own thought, as will be seen in the next chapter. At stake is the question of the priority of questioning and affirmation. If thinking is grounded in questioning, then does thinking begin with questioning or with the *affirmation* of questioning? But if thinking begins with the

affirmation of questioning, then must questioning not *also* pursue this affirmation, this "yes" to questioning, this "promise" to question? Does not the affirmation of questioning, in its promise to *remember* to question, *demand* that this questioning *of* affirmation *and* questioning relentlessly and aporetically unfold? Derrida's argument is that Heidegger privileges questioning in a manner that protects questioning from what the affirmation of questioning should in the end insist upon: the questioning of questioning, *and* the questioning of affirmation. Heidegger remembers that affirmation is the promise to continue to remember to affirm the question. This is what the address says. But the affirmation of questioning ought equally to mean that this affirmation comes under question, and *must* come under question. If the affirmation of question. ests on affirmation, then affirmation threatens to become the automatic reaffirmation and repetition of questioning, to become technics in the guise of pseudo-questioning, as Derrida states: "Yet by the very necessity of such repetition, affirmation is inevitably exposed to the menace of supplementarity, parasitism, technique, in a word, contamination."[16]

In short, the *privilege* of the question, freely giving oneself the law of questioning, *always* implies the *instituting* of the privilege, the self-assertion of the *university*, the *decision* to institute. The problem with the question is then really the problem of instituting in general, of affirmation in general, and what Heidegger suppresses, according to this reading, is the risk that comes with the violence of this institution. How is it possible to think the relation between the affirmation of questioning and the affirmation of the decision, even if the decision at stake is the decision to found the institution of questioning? And if this is the risk not only of catastrophe but also of "technicity," then it is not so much a risk as an *a priori* or "quasi-transcendental" certainty. This violence of institution is a virtual Derridean trademark, but one of the richest sources for the paradigm is Benjamin's article, "Critique of Violence," which has itself been the object of several important recent readings.[17] Nevertheless, certain moments in the text are still surprising. It serves a purpose, here, firstly due to the rigor with which Benjamin formulates the problematic of law and violence, the problem of institution. But, secondly, in spite of this rigor, these surprising moments, moments that *perhaps* run against the grain of the general argument, offer a way into what is going on with Heidegger in 1933.

[16] Derrida, "On Reading Heidegger: An Outline of Remarks to the Essex Colloquium," *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1989), p. 172.

[17] Cf., esp. Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'," *Acts of Religion* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002); Werner Hamacher, "Afformative, Strike: Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence'," in Andrew Benjamin & Peter Osborne (eds.), *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience* (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000, 2nd edn.); Alexander García Düttmann, "The Violence of Destruction," in David S. Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); & Tom McCall, "Momentary Violence," in Ferris, *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions.*

Critique of non-violence

Benjamin published his article in 1921 in the highly respectable, institutionally recognized *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. The title of this paper, "*Zur Kritik der Gewalt*," is usually translated into English as "Critique of Violence" but, as has frequently been noted, the semantic range of *Gewalt* includes not only "violence" but "force," "power," "sovereignty"—that is, violence, "legitimate" or "illegitimate."[18] The generality of this notion of *Gewalt* makes possible a consideration of "law" with equal generality. Law is the institution of violence, and violence is the "being-instituted" of (what will be, possibly or impossibly) "legitimate" law. This entwinement of law and violence—the violence that institutes law and the violence that instituted law *is*—is indicated by the twin concepts of violence that Benjamin will pose and then undo: law-positing and law-preserving violence:

> All violence as a means [*Alle Gewalt ist als Mittel*] is either law-positing or law-preserving [*rechtsetzend oder rechterhaltend*]. If it lays claim to neither of these predicates, it forfeits all validity. It follows, however, that all violence as a means, even in the most favorable case, is implicated in the problematic nature of law itself.[19]

In speaking of "violence as a means," Benjamin suggests that violence, insofar as it is a means to an end, is a technique, something technical. What will be remarkable in the course of the article is the ambiguity of Benjamin's understanding of *Technik*, which will leave the question of whether what he offers is a response to the anti-Promethean suppression of technics or whether, on the contrary, Benjamin is guilty of a strange reinscription of metaphysical distinctions.

Given the violence at the heart of law, Benjamin wonders whether there are any other than violent means for the resolution or regulation of conflict. For no legal contractual agreement—that is, the point of conjunction of law, economy, and discourse (but does not each of these three spheres implicate the others?)—is able to exclude violence from its origin or its end. Violence is lodged in the *outcome* of the legal contractual agreement in the form of the legal guarantee of enforceability, should either side fail to conform. The *origin* of any contract points toward

[18] Cf., Derrida, "Force of Law," *Acts of Religion*, p. 234; Hamacher, "Afformative, Strike," in Benjamin & Osborne (eds.), *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy*, pp. 124–5, n. 2; McCall, "Momentary Violence," p. 188; Étienne Balibar, "Violence, Ideality, and Cruelty," *New Formations* 35 (1998), pp. 10–1.

[19] Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 243.

violence—even if rather than being directly presented it is only represented—insofar as the power which *provides* this legal guarantee is itself the product of law-positing violence. The violence of the contract is essentially to be found in its being-instituted, in the enduring possibility of confirming its terms.[20]

Thus far, Benjamin's analysis, while challenging to the premises of virtually if not in fact *all legal* discourse, is not necessarily philosophically novel. It would be possible to cite Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and what it has to say concerning the origin of memory and contracts, for an example of a clear predecessor and a strong affinity. But if this paragraph has a position within a certain tradition or counter-tradition, the next paragraph confounds expectation. The paragraph returns to the question that has already been raised: "Is any non-violent settlement [*Beilegung*] of conflict possible?" "Without doubt." Benjamin then speaks of the profoundest example of such non-violent agreement: *die Unterredung*.[21] In a consideration of law and violence at the most general and abstract level, what can be made of this claim that the "conference" is the most profound example of a *non-violent* means of conflict-resolution?

Firstly, it should be noted that while Benjamin could have used "*die Konferenz*," the use of "*die Unterredung*," which might also be translated as "discussion," opposes it to the more active, more sophistic, "*die Überredung*," "persuasion." In this choice can be heard a quiet countering of the technics of sophistry with maieutic *logos*. Secondly, what is remarkable is that, having just confirmed the irreducible violence of the law, Benjamin immediately claims that this non-violent agreement is not to be found in an extra-legal realm, but on the contrary that its manifestation is *determined by a law*. This is admittedly a politico-philosophical law, the "law" that pure means are never direct but always indirect solutions. Resolution by pure, non-violent means is not possible in a situation of direct conflict between people. Pure, non-violent solution is possible only in an indirect situation, that is, in matters concerning objects, in conflicts relating to goods, that is, where there is something mediating the conflict as its object. There cannot be direct non-violent resolution between a "who" and a "who" without a "what" falling in between. It is not difficult to hear in this formulation a relation of non-violence to the possibility of two realms—firstly the realm of *exchange*, of economy of goods, a *technical* world of management, of business, businesses and firms; and secondly the realm of *objectivity*, of matter as the other in common, as the possibility of a universal idiom—and, again, Benjamin would not be the first to see a link between the technics of economics and the genealogy or very idea of objectivity. Thus while

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[20] Cf., Friedrich Nietzsche, "Second essay: 'Guilt,' 'bad conscience' and related matters," *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 38–71.

[21] Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings, Vol. 1*, p. 244.

Benjamin names courtesy, sympathy, peaceableness and trust as the *subjective preconditions* of such non-violent means, these are so named in order that they be distinguished from their *objective manifestation*. The non-violence of the conference is *not* due to it being a space of peace, courtesy, etc., even if these are necessary preconditions. Rather, what guarantees or makes possible this non-violence is something *objective*, something in the structure of the space of the conference itself. Thus Benjamin sees *Technik* as the most particular area of this indirect non-violent resolution, and the conference its profoundest example, *as a* Technik *of civil agreement*. What is the basis for this exemplarity, where non-violent agreement has an apparent relation to both law and exchange, and where the violence of the *contractual* agreement has already been established? Benjamin's answer, all the more perverse considering there is also this relation to objectivity, is that the exclusion of violence is demonstrable by the following factor—that *there is no punishment for lying*.

How are we to establish a meaning for this claim, that the locus of possibility for a type of agreement, an institution of understanding, with no relation to violence as a means, is that lying or deception be excused from punishment? Could there be such a situation or institution? There is a sense in which what Benjamin is offering, contrary to Heidegger, is an absolute defense of academic *freedom*. Were this position taken at its word, it would appear not only possible but necessary to draw the following consequence, which is in reality nothing more than a restatement: if there is no punishment for lying, then there can be no reward for telling the truth, for otherwise the withholding of such a reward in the case of a lie would itself constitute a punishment. Benjamin is stating or laying down a commandment—truth must not be extorted. For a conference body to *confirm* a truth posited on its site, for it to confer the status of truth upon such a position, must therefore be precisely what is forbidden in order for it to qualify as a non-violent means. A conference distinguishes itself from legal contractual agreement, not by transcending the technics of legality or economy, but by never *enforcing* a law of truth, by suspending judgment. Discourse without violence tends, if we follow Benjamin's thread, *not* toward consensus, for example, but rather toward indifference, or at least a refusal in principle to finally *decide* the truth. The conference, therefore, is nothing like a Habermasian "ideal speech situation," a space contoured entirely toward decision, a decision that would constitute the only possible (declarable, public) truth. The non-violence of the conference is the suspension of confirmation, a resolute holding on to the thought of non-being that haunts every *logos* of being.

In other words, the conference is something other than a space of the confirmation of decision. Decision, resolution, resolute decision, is *not only* a matter

of thought reaching a limit in the *Schluß*. Decision, in order to *be* "truly" a decision, in order to be resolute, must also *stand* as a decision, which is to say, be able to be confirmed. From the beginning what is decided must be confirmed.[22] Decision must last, be on-going. But this confirmation is itself both another decision and a suspension of decision. Confirmation suspends decision in the sense of being the suspension of a "counter-decision." Confirmation means the decision is still *in force*, that it has not yet been effectively challenged. Decision itself means opening up a space and time free from decision, such that the decision is permitted to stand.

Furthermore, confirmation means opening a space in the sense of taking some *distance* from a decision in order for the decision to be *visible* "objectively." But *in* confirming, another decision is taken, a decision that *there was* a decision, and that this decision continues to be. Confirmation repeats the initial decision in the mode of observing that this initial decision still is. Repeating the initial decisive act by opening up a space for "merely" observing the decision, for "merely" noticing that the decision continues to be in force, is the mechanism by which the initial decision, in its going-on, continues its initial violence—decision becoming technics. Thus

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[22] Cf., Derrida, "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida," in John D. Caputo (ed.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), pp. 27–8: "When I say 'yes' to the other, in the form of a promise or an agreement or an oath, the 'yes' must be absolutely inaugural. Inauguration is the theme today. Inauguration is a 'yes.' I say 'yes' as a starting point. Nothing precedes the 'yes.' The 'yes' is the moment of institution, of the origin; it is absolutely originary. But when you say 'yes,' you imply that in the next moment you will have to confirm the 'yes' by a second 'yes.' When I say 'yes,' I immediately say 'yes, yes.' I commit myself to confirm my commitment in the next second, and then tomorrow, and then the day after tomorrow. That means that a 'yes' immediately duplicates itself, doubles itself. You cannot say 'yes' without saying 'yes, yes.' That implies memory in the promise. I promise to keep the memory of the first 'yes.' In a wedding, for instance, or in a promise, when you say 'yes, I agree,' 'I will,' you imply 'I will say "I will" tomorrow,' and 'I will confirm my promise'; otherwise there is no promise. That means that the 'yes' keeps in advance the memory of its own beginning, and that is the way traditions work. If, tomorrow, you do not confirm that today you have founded your program, there will not have been any inauguration. Tomorrow, perhaps next year, perhaps twenty years from now, you will know whether today there has been an inauguration. We do not know that yet. We pretend that today we are inaugurating something. But who knows? We will see. So 'yes' has to be repeated and repeated immediately. That is what I call iterability. It implies repetition of itself, which is also threatening, because the second 'yes' may be simply a parody, a record, or a mechanical repetition. You may say 'yes, yes' like a parrot. The technical reproduction of the originary 'yes' is from the beginning a threat to the living origin of the 'yes.' So the 'yes' is haunted by its own ghost, its own mechanical ghost, from the beginning. The second 'yes' will have to reinaugurate, to reinvent, the first one. If tomorrow you do not reinvent today's inauguration, you will be dead. So the inauguration has to be reinvented everyday." Also, cf., Derrida, "A Number of Yes," *Qui Parle* 2 (1988), p. 126: "The 'first' is already, always, a confirmation: *yes, yes, a yes* which goes from *yes to yes* or which comes from *yes to yes*." And he immediately adds a reminder of the necessary violence of this movement from the *yes* of decision to the *yes* that acquiesces to confirm the decision, a violence against the initial decision itself: "Something of this acquiescence speaks also a certain cruel tranquility, a 'cruel rest' (*immanem quietem*)."

Derrida describes "a silence [that] is walled up in the violent structure of the founding act."[23] This violence is both the initial violence *of* decision, which is always silencing of some other possible decision, and the violence of the concealment of this silence in the ongoing confirmation that, in fact, this decision *was*, and continues to be. Decision is *violent* insofar as it is *physis*, that is, insofar as it must "keep what it institutes."[24] Decision, as coming to a limit, *is* the decision to wall up a silence, and its confirmation is the sealing of these walls.

This structure, the "law" of decision, is indicated by the somewhat archaic English word, "obsignation." Obsignation describes an action, a procedure, or a performance, but it gathers together what appears at first glance to be two divergent actions. Firstly, obsignation means the "formal ratification or confirmation of something," that is, the process by which a decision, having been taken, is confirmed to have been taken. Obsignation is the instrumental act, utilizing the instruments of institutionality, that marks the occurrence and confers the validity of the fact of decision. But obsignation is also "the action of sealing up." Obsignation conceals by enclosing within a space, or by making a space inaccessible. What brings these two meanings together is the double meaning of *signare*—both "mark" and "seal"—or, rather, the double meaning of "seal" itself. That obsignation is both an act of confirmation, thus the opening of a space where decision is (publicly) visible, *and* an act that makes invisible by enclosure, reflects the double "force" of a "seal": to both guarantee "legitimacy" or "authenticity"; and to enclose (a letter), to guarantee that something (the decision to send *this* message with *this* content) has *not been seen* or *cannot be seen*, until the *breaking* of the seal.[25] The structure of

[23] Derrida, "Force of Law," *Acts of Religion*, p. 242.

[24] Cf., Derrida, "Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (*Geschlecht IV*)," in John Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 212: "Conflict (*Kampf*) is *physis* inasmuch as it institute but also inasmuch as it keeps what it institutes. It is institution itself, in the double sense of this word, instituting and instituted."

[25] To sign and to seal a letter would seem to indicate two very different, distinct actions, even if both are decisions, and would seem to make it simply fortuitous for this account that they leave their mark in the word "obsignation." But they raise the question of when a letter is a letter. Is a letter actually a letter, a communication, an authentic presentation, when it is written but not yet signed? When it is signed but not yet sealed? When it is sealed but not yet sent? When it is sent but not yet delivered? When it is delivered but not yet opened? When it is opened but not yet read? Or when it is read but not yet understood? To answer such a question we would need to know whether it was intended as a legal, a philosophical, a hermeneutic, or a postal question. That is to say, a question of which institutional instruments are to bear on the question, a question of the division of (say, academic) labor. Can we even ask what a letter is as such, in its purity, regardless of the institutional mode of the question? In any case, wherever it is a question of institution, it is a matter of legality, a point which would be even more clear were we to talk of signing and sealing a contract rather than a letter. To sign, to seal, are guarantees, marks of sovereignty, of mastery over one's ability to decide, marks of the admission of responsibility (before the law), acceptance of (one's own, the fact of, the possibility of) decision, that is, confirmation of one's decision,

decision is inherently related to this structure of obsignation, of the "sealed letter," requiring both the marks of visibility and the space of concealment, a technics of visibility and invisibility, that guarantees and protects the "truth" of decision.

The *conference*, then, as the place of "language," is nothing other than the space in which what is "said," and what is "settled," is held back from this technics of confirmation. And yet does not the conference itself *require* a confirmed decision, the decision to hold the conference, to hold to the "rules" of the conference to which Benjamin is pointing, the decision to institute the space of the conference? Would not the conference itself, then, as the decision to abide by the law of the conference, require its own enforceability, its own statutes and its own policing, in order to be held back *from* confirmation?

Perhaps Benjamin would argue that what the conference names—that is, the possibility of discourse conducting agreement and disagreement without violence, as "being-into-language" as such—lays claim upon us prior to any instituting decision we could make. Perhaps this is how we should understand the conclusion that Benjamin *does* draw from the argument that non-violent agreement is conditional upon the failure to punish lying. Benjamin's conclusion is that there *is* a sphere of agreement that is non-violent to the extent that it is wholly inaccessible to violence—what he calls the proper sphere of "understanding," that is, language.[26] Language as such is the non-violent as such. Is such an argument un-Heideggerian, since for Heidegger language *breaks in* to actuality and *tears away* into non-being? Perhaps, but if by non-violent language, non-violent understanding, Benjamin intends language or understanding as something other than a *means*, then this thought may be reconcilable with Heidegger's thought of language beyond instrumentality.

And what would suggest that this *is* what Benjamin intends is his very criterion for non-violence, the non-sanction against lying. For this lack of sanction is what makes very difficult any thought that by a "technique of civil agreement" Benjamin means a *technics of political decision*, at least insofar as such "decision" implies some kind of "force" directed towards truthfulness. The conference is not the space that makes decisions and gives itself the space to confirm them—it is not the place that *legislates*. Such a thought would then mean grasping "agreement" as something other than collectively resolving on some matter. It is as though Benjamin were listening to the Platonic version of the Prometheus myth, according to which

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sealing up of decision, promising the continuing confirmation of decision, promising that confirmation will remain (unbroken).

[26] Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings, Vol. 1*, p. 245.

Prometheus gives to humanity—and to each their share—the *techne* of politics. But such a relation can only be posited so long as it is taken that Benjamin has grasped *Technik* non-instrumentally, as a capacity or possibility without *telos* or, rather, with its end in itself. What Prometheus gives, according to *Protagoras*, is not the technics of life within the *polis*, but the first possibility for humans to live together *as* a *polis*, the inauguration of humanity as *polis*-beings (322). Giving "ourselves" the law, according to this reading of Benjamin, does not mean giving "ourselves" the power to legislate, but on the contrary means giving the law that is given to us as linguistic beings, the law of the conference as the suspension of confirmation. Settlement within the space of the suspension of confirmation. What remains ambiguous in such a reading is whether, apparently relying upon a distinction between *techne* and technics, between a law of means and a law beyond instrumentality, Benjamin is thinking language *in* its mediality, its *essential* technicity, or whether he is protecting "language as such" *from* technicity. It is to read Benjamin's discourse on non-violence, therefore, as maintaining the same ambiguous relation to technics that Derrida and Stiegler read into Heidegger.

First philosophy

The thought that language or understanding *is* non-violence leads Benjamin from the discussion of contract and agreement into an argument or critique that is "concretely" both political and historical. In the first paragraph in which Benjamin raises the possibility of non-violence, the discussion of the legal contract leads directly onto a discussion of modern parliamentary governance. According to Benjamin, parliamentary rule lives *weakly*, by forgetting the law-positing violence out of which it was necessarily born. It thereby limits itself to its only effective action, legislation. We live in an age of degenerated governance rather than an age of self-assertion, for when "the consciousness of the latent presence of violence in a legal institution disappears, the institution falls into decay [*so verfällt es*]."[27]

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 244. The structure of this argument is reproduced by Nancy, although without the thematic of "consciousness." Law-positing violence is, of course, another name for sovereignty, in its "classical" or, in Benjamin's terminology, "mythological," determination. Just as for Benjamin mythological, law-positing violence, is what must be overcome with *another* thought of violence, divine violence, so too for Nancy what stands exposed today is sovereignty's absence of ground, and the problem becomes how to think beyond sovereignty without simply ending in the "weak," technical, endless thought of "law" without sovereignty, wholly without justification (without justice). Cf., Nancy, "War, Right, Sovereignty—Techne," in *Being Singular Plural*, p. 133: "How to think without end, without finishing, without sovereignty—and, in this, without resigning oneself to a weak, instrumental, and slavishly humanist thinking of a law (and/or 'communication,' 'justice,'

If this is the weakness of parliament, that it forgets its law-positing violence, what would constitute "strength"? Presumably only the act of remembering this originary violence. But such an act of remembrance always remains exposed to the risk that this act will itself become automatic, ritualized. The structure of confirmation, by which the violence of institution is preserved, is both the remembrance and the forgetting of this originary violence. Parliament, parliamentary democracy, can never leave its origin, yet, insofar as it must preserve the origin, and the "legitimacy" of the origin, it must insist on not remembering its violence. And this insistence on forgetting the violence of its origin is what gives "parliamentary democracy," *today*, both its weakness and its violence—the violence that works secretly, without being able to assert itself openly. We live in an age of *apparent* democracy but, where these institutions have forgotten their own violence and power, where they disdain the *show* of violence, they resort instead to impotent compromise and a spectral police force. The institution remains haunted by the ghost of originary violence that can only turn into the ongoing technical business of institutional violence. The "strength" of parliamentary democracy is that it must presuppose, self-assert, its own sovereignty. But this strength becomes weakness where this presupposing becomes instead a matter of "knowledge," a matter of the supposed validity of secularized theological concepts. When, in the name of "legitimacy," this sovereignty is to be accounted for, reduced to technics, to a set of "true," "legitimate," "facts," it is condemned to forget that sovereignty could only find its origin in a law beyond knowing, a law of "necessity."

In the next paragraph, however, Benjamin's position is more ambiguous, seemingly reinforcing the argument concerning the technics of democracy, yet remaining open to the possibility of being read as a demand for the remembrance of originary *technicity*. Here, once again, where Benjamin comes to speak about the true possibility of non-violent agreement, the analysis leads to an account of decay or decline. The modern impotence of democratic institutions is manifested in the fear that *language*, far from being essentially non-violent, is on the contrary a violent threat to the law itself. While lying (saying non-being) is itself strictly speaking not violent, the fear remains that the possible *effects* of lying will nevertheless lead to threatening violence. This in turn leads to the peculiar process of institutional decay that comes to place a punishment on fraud.[28] Such a prohibition, Benjamin argues,

the 'individual,' the 'community'—all of which are concepts that are debilitated insofar as there has been no response to this question)?"

[28] Perhaps another example, not open to Benjamin (as its conceptual origins lie in a response to National Socialism), is the politico-legal trend toward legislating against the crime of "vilification." Here, once again, what is strictly speaking "non-violent" speech is subject to the violence and enforceability of the law, on the grounds, essentially, that the violence which may be "unleashed" by vilifying speech may be such that, were the law to

restricts the use of wholly non-violent means. Modern institutions of governance forget their origins in violence and subsequently *fear* a violence falsely imagined to exist outside these institutions. This forgetting and irresoluteness conceals the possibility of a true discourse of understanding, a language and a *techne* that resolutely and non-violently resolves human conflict. The possibility of such a true, resolute discourse points toward a more primordial or more profound resolution than a deciding that is nothing more than power, an act of mere choice, of separation of true statements from false. Truth and falsity belong to the realm of knowing, not to the realm of resolute decision, that is, of *proper* sovereignty, which is to say, necessity. Discourse as a non-violent means would have the power of resolution only through a suspension of confirmed-decision, only if it manifested a power of gathering or unifying which first opens the space in which position and separation, the fixing of boundaries and the institution of law, become possible. If such discourse remains a technique, this cannot be in the sense of an instrument or tool used by a party to achieve a violent triumph, but rather in the sense of an originary linguistic technicity that first opens the possibility for legality, institution, critique, and confirmation—a pure mediality.

What remains difficult to decide, then, in Benjamin's argument about non-violence is whether, no longer constituting a means, it continues to be a technics at all. In terms of the Platonic myth of Prometheus, the question which lingers in Benjamin is whether the gift to humanity of a *techne* which first *opens* politics should be understood as a law-positing violence, or on the contrary as a non-violent possibility of being-with-one-another without end. In the terms with which Benjamin continues his "critique," it becomes a matter of whether the non-violence of language as such can be grasped beyond "mythical violence," or of whether instead non-violence should be understood in relation to "divine violence" or "pure" (that is, "non-mediate") violence. Derrida for one considers that there is some kind of affinity between this non-violence and pure violence.[29] Yet the reading conducted here attempts, if anything, to translate "non-violence" into a pure *mediality*, rather than "non-mediate" "pure violence." All of the hesitation and disquiet which this text might itself cause boils down to the question of whether "true" politics consists in the pure mediality of non-violence or non-mediate pure

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step in only at the point of "actual" violence," then the law will always come too late, and even more that the law may be too weak to control the effects of such forms of "saying non-being." Note, then, that with such forms of law, there is a clear sense of the law (or "democracy") "protecting itself" from the people, taken as "the mob," and protecting itself from what will *happen* to the law if the mob were ever allowed to gain control of the law. Yet another example is the German prohibition on denying the extermination, which is not a matter of fraud so much as simply supposedly dangerous lying.

[29] Derrida, "Force of Law," *Acts of Religion*, pp. 284–5.

violence. The strange ambiguity of the text is exposed in the very last sentence of the text. Benjamin has just condemned all mythological violence, which is to say, all law-positing violence and the law-preserving violence which is both its memory and its forgetting. In the last sentence, in contrast, where it is a matter of divine violence—which, he says, may be called sovereign—everything hangs on a distinction, a decision to distinguish, between obsignation and mediation:

> Divine violence [*Die göttliche Gewalt*], which is the *sign and seal* [*Insignium und Siegel*] but never the means [*Mittel*] of sacred enforcement [*heiliger Vollstreckung*], may be called sovereign [*waltende*].[30]

What is obsignation—the sign and seal—if not the mediate incarnate? Is not obsignation the very structure of decision and its confirmation and, as such, the very structure of mythological violence, that is, law-positing violence and *its* confirmation? Yet, for Benjamin, the very meaning of divine violence, which is to say, of sovereignty, is to be found in the difference between obsignation and mediacy. Non-violence then appears as the opposite of pure violence. Non-violence, in the reading given above, named the essential mediacy of being-into-language as such, and the decision to suspend confirmation, that is, the logic of obsignation. Divine violence, however, is the obsignation of sacred enforcement that, as *sacred*, is no longer mediate. Divine violence, therefore, in the end sounds like the transcendence of mediacy. This reading *returns* divine violence to mythological violence. But if this is the danger of Benjamin's text, nevertheless it must not be forgotten that he *intends* to distinguish these two violences, and that he does so by instituting the law that divine violence be removed from the realm of the "human," that is, from any decision "we" make. Divine violence is not able to be recognized because the expiatory power of violence is not visible to humanity. As the obsignation of *sacred* enforcement, divine violence, if we take Benjamin at his word, walls up a silence that is not "ours," and signs and seals something which is not necessarily delivered, or which is not necessarily received, or which, upon receipt, is not necessarily *known* because it remains invisible, even if it also remains necessary.

Perhaps then, after all, divine violence, pure violence, is returned, in its invisibility, its un-obviousness, not to mythological violence but to non-violence. If there is a relation between the "non-violence" of the *Technik* of civil agreement, and the gift from Prometheus of the *techne* that inaugurates politics, then this can only be so if the inauguration of politics is something other than the instituting of an institution. In other words, there can only be such a relation if the *myth* of Prometheus in its

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[30] Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings, Vol. 1*, p. 252, emphasis added.

Platonic version is something other than merely "identical with all legal violence," something other than the *founding myth of politics*.[31] And when in fact Benjamin reads the myth of Prometheus, he does so in a way that seems to represent it as occupying some kind of intermediate position between mythical and divine violence. It is as though the myth of Prometheus is, *within* mythical violence, that myth which points toward something other than merely mythical violence. It is as though the myth of Prometheus—which, as myth, can only be "mediate" violence—is that myth which exposes itself by representing a violence that is no longer mediate. The paragraph that refers to Prometheus begins with the statement that "mythic violence in its prototypical form [*urbildlichen Form*] is a mere manifestation of the gods."[32] Myth is that mediate violence which establishes the law of the gods, the sovereignty of Zeus, which institutes and continues to preserve the violence of institution. Yet the *form* of this mythical violence of the Greeks, according to Benjamin, shows that this is something other than the law-preserving violence of punishment.

What is represented by the frozen moment of *Prometheus Bound*, by Prometheus's suspension in the state of being bound, precisely, to "*ekdika paskho*"? For Benjamin what is crucial is that the myth of Prometheus *is* the enactment that *gives* to humanity *elpis*. Resolutely challenging fate with a *techne* that is necessarily weaker, we are nevertheless left with the hope of "bringing a new law to humanity." But everything depends on whether this *possibility* for a new law necessarily means the possibility of *binding* humanity to a new law. This is less a question of a myth of political foundation than it is the endless possibility of undoing all law-preserving violence. This is why Prometheus is admired in the same way as the great criminal. Prometheus stands, not as the possibility of being *given* a new law, but as that being open to undoing the law, *to exposing the non-being of the law*, which is what first made possible the positing of the law at all. Prometheus the criminal, who exposes the law, thereby offers the highest defiance.

Prometheus' gift, language—that is, equally, the possibility of understanding and the possibility of lying—is what makes possible the bonds between people and what *also* ceaselessly stands as the *possibility* of unbinding them. What is signed and sealed in the myth of Prometheus is not the law that is given to humanity, but the endless possibility of *questioning* the law, of receiving *another* communication, yet to be unsealed, opened. That is, there is no law given that is not already—in the possibility of *being given in the first place*—the presupposition and the enclosure (and therefore the preservation and confirmation) of the freedom and the possibility of

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 249.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 248.

questioning.[33] That Prometheus gives the possibility of understanding means that he gives the possibility of justice, and this *techne* consists not in the ability to make true statements, but in the possibility of saying something *new*. This is why the non-punishment of lying is the condition of non-violence, and it is what gives the possibility for a thought of "politics" that is something other than mythic law-positing, something other than power.[34] It is not that "true" politics is founded in lies, nor that it is founded in truth. "Politics" is "founded" in violence and its confirmation, which is to say, on the positing *as* right and true, *as* legitimate, of an act that is essentially, in principle, according to a necessary law, unconfirmable.

Political foundation is an act, a necessary act, which, *subsequently* (that is, mythologically), must be confirmed as fact, as knowledge. The thought of a space without sanction for lying is the thought of a space of communication that consists in endless question-worthiness. The challenge of Prometheus, his self-assertion, is in the name of a "divine endmaking," a questioning justice, which can never cease to haunt the technics of institutionality and its myths. If Prometheus is the first philosopher, then he is so not as that philosopher who indulges in politics, in "political philosophy," but as the one who remains *suspsended*, exposing the *Abgrund* of foundation. Thus Prometheus is the name of the possibility and the *impossibility* of political foundation. Insofar as the myth of Prometheus is the *urbildlichen Form* of giving oneself the law, it remains mythological violence, the law-preserving *image* of originary violence. But in order to maintain this representation of the myth of Prometheus, according to which what is told is the origin of the freedom to *give oneself* the law, it is Prometheus himself who must be excluded and forgot [35] As an *Ur-bild*, Prometheus withdraws from visibility, from occupying the form of a *Bild*. As the one who *gave* the possibility of the self-assertion of the law, he stands as the *im*possibility of giving oneself the law, the

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[33] Cf., Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference* (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 80: "There is no stated law, no commandment, that is not addressed to a freedom of speech. There is therefore neither law nor commandment which does not confirm and *enclose*—that is, does not dissimulate by presupposing it—the possibility of the question."

[34] This is to bring Benjamin very much within the terms of Jacques Rancière, for whom politics is based on the equality of all speakers, for whom politics is that which "acts upon" the police, that is, the law, and for whom "politics is not made up of power relationships; it is made up of relationships between worlds." Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics an' Philosophy* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 42, and cf., esp. ch. 2. It remains to be determined how significant a difference is to be found between Rancière and Benjamin in the fact that the latter refers to a technique of civil *agreement* whereas the former refers to the rationality of *disagreement*.

[35] Cf., Derrida, "Istrice 2: Ick bünn all hier," in *Points...: Interviews, 1974–1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 306: "The founder is excluded from the founded, by the founded itself, which cannot tolerate the abyssal void and thus the violence on which the foundations stand or rather are suspended."

impossibility of any concept of politics that imagines itself as giving oneself, absolutely, totally, the law. In giving the possibility of foundation, this ground remains, *necessarily*, exposed.

The ambiguity of a *myth* of divine violence lies in whether it is myth exposing itself or whether on the contrary it is pure violence ruining itself in technicity and mediacy. Heidegger has been accused of mixing politics and philosophy in 1933, of putting together what ought to be kept apart, kept to their proper spheres.[36] But it is the very ambiguity of the relation between politics and philosophy that is expressed in the rectorate address. The philosophical manouevre in relation to politics may *always* have been the declaration that (political) *techne* is weaker than necessity, and hence to assert that there remains the need for a knowing which lies beyond technics, that speaks of or listens to necessity (the divine) itself. Thus the philosophical gesture in relation to politics would be the demand that politics sacrifice itself to philosophy.

Mythological violence is, in Benjamin's formulation, what makes this demand for sacrifice, a sacrifice for the sake of *bios*, for life, not as *zoe*, bare life, but for institutional life, the good life. "Political philosophy" is the name of the *logos* that, today, demands this sacrifice. Benjamin differentiates divine violence from mythological violence on the ground that it *accepts* rather than demands sacrifice, yet what is at stake in this differentiation *within* an economy of sacrifice? We may see this again in the light of his remarks about the "invisibility" to humanity of divine violence. Accepting sacrifice, then, would mean submitting to the law of necessity, confirming the weakness of knowing. Yet, again, this is the strange ambiguity that haunts Benjamin's 1921 text. The "philosophical" or "critical" call to accept sacrifice, in the name of a defiance higher than all law, cannot but be heard, to the extent that it remains *praxical* in any way, as itself a demand, a demand for politics to submit in the face of what is wholly other than human "knowing." Is this not Heidegger's strategy too in 1933, and is it not both the strength of his address and its weakness?[37]

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[36] Cf., Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1993), ch. 10. Sluga offers an important perspective on philosophy in Germany during the National Socialist period, indicating the degree to which virtually *all* "philosophies" were caught up in a struggle to be *the* National Socialist philosophy. For all his infamy, and for all of his own admitted enthusiasm, Heidegger is within this context one of the least prepared to sacrifice philosophy to politics, so to speak. Sluga's position is something like the thought that politics and philosophy necessarily belong to separate spheres, but spheres that may communicate, that *ought to* talk to each other, without thereby denying their differences. To regulate this talking with appropriate measure Sluga needs to introduce "good sense," which brings his position essentially into line with pragmatism. Cf., *ibid.*, p. 256.

[37] Cf., Nancy, "The Unsacrificeable," *Yale French Studies* 79 (1991), pp. 36–7: "The existent arrives, takes place, and this is nothing but a being-thrown into the world. In this

But the response to this philosophical gesture cannot simply be the self-assertion of the political against the philosophical, for this is always in a way to keep political thought to its proper, unquestionable, limits. Too often the defiance of "politics" against the tyranny of the philosophers amounts to a "pragmatism" that is really "power," living weakly. Rather than re-asserting the propriety of the political, politics must be thought again, in a way that means thinking philosophy again from the beginning. If it cannot be a matter of deciding between "philosophy" and "politics," and if we cannot simply mix the genres, then another thought altogether is required. Jean-Luc Nancy will call this "first philosophy." He does not thereby decide for philosophy against politics. If he is still calling for an ontology, then this is in the sense that it remains a thought of origins, of beginnings, and, if this is still a thought of being, then it is a thought of being as, from the beginning, being-with:

> In this respect, then, the urgent demand named above is not another political abstraction. Instead, it is a reconsideration of the very meaning of "politics"—and, therefore, of "philosophy"—in light of the originary situation: the bare exposition of singular origins. This is the necessary "first philosophy" (in the canonical sense of the expression). It is an ontology. Philosophy needs to recommence, to restart itself from itself against itself, against political philosophy and philosophical politics. In order to do this, philosophy needs to think in principle about how we are "us" among us, how the consistency of our Being is in being-in-common, and how this consists precisely in the "in" or in the "between" of its spacing.[38]

Nancy concedes or contends that it is Heidegger who has given us "the last 'first philosophy',", in the form of fundamental ontology. Yet, as the *last* first philosophy, this is obviously precisely what must be overcome, or recommenced. According to Nancy, for Heidegger "being" is still always the beginning, and what "being" is *with* is always secondary.[39] Non-being, then, in Nancy's view of the ontological

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being-thrown, it is offered. But it is offered by no one, to no one. Nor is it self-sacrificed, if nothing—no being, no subject—precedes its being-thrown. In truth, *it is not even offered or sacrificed to a Nothing, to a Nothingness or an Other in whose abyss it would come to enjoy its own impossibility of being impossibly.* It is exactly at this point that both Bataille and Heidegger [and, presumably, Benjamin] must be relentlessly corrected. Corrected, that is: withdrawn from the slightest tendency towards sacrifice. For this tendency towards sacrifice, or through sacrifice, is always linked to a fascination with an ecstasy turned towards an Other or towards an absolute Outside, into which the subject is diverted/spilled the better to be restored. Western sacrifice is haunted by an Outside of finitude, as obscure and bottomless as this 'outside' may be."

[38] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, pp. 25–6. Cf., Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 44.

[39] Cf., Nancy, "Of Being-in-Common," in Miami Theory Collective (eds.), *Community at Loose Ends* (Minneapolis & Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 1: "What could be more common than to be, than being? We are. Being, or existence, is that we share. When it comes to sharing nonexistence, we are not here. Nonexistence is not for sharing. But being is not a thing that we could possess in common. Being is in no way different from existence, which is singular each time. We shall say then that being is not common in the sense of a common property, but that it is in common. Being is in common. What could be simpler to establish? And yet, is there anything of which ontology has been more unaware up to now?"

tradition (including Heidegger), is only the "correlate" of being, and, if anything, can only be an obstacle to the thought of being *as* being-with, as co-essentiality.[40]

Yet, in reading Heidegger in 1924–25, and in considering the light thrown upon fundamental ontology by this lecture course, non-being comes to appear as more than merely the "correlate" of being, its "negative." *Logos* appears there as the very name of the spacing of being and non-being, as being's always being-with. And non-being or the nothing is not just an *Abgrund* at the heart of being, but rather being comes to appear as the play of spacing, of being and non-being, that allows for saying what is and what is not. And this "what is not" includes "what is not yet." Hence it is not only a matter of the "truth" of being. Philosophy, for Heidegger too, is the possibility for hearing into the space of *logos*, in its emptiness, but from which *communicability*, not communication, emerges. Might not Heidegger's "nothing,"—the "nothing" that is already being thought before *Sein und Zeit*—also lead to a thought of the political that does something *other than* conform to an economics of sacrifice, that does something other, that is, than demand submission to what is eternally outside, to a "wholly other" that will subsequently *determine* the "true" form of law-positing violence?[41] However much the discourse of 1933 may conform to the logic of mythological violence, to the gesture that demands politics submit to philosophy (or vice versa), that demands the one true origin for philosophico-political discourse, however much Heidegger was able to

[40] Cf., Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, pp. 76–7.

[41] Cf., Nancy, "The Unsacrificeable," *Yale French Studies*, p. 37: "But there is no 'outside.' The event of existence, the 'there is,' means that there is *nothing else*. There is no 'obscure God.' There is no obscurity that would be God. In this sense, and since there is no longer any clear divine epiphany, I might say that what technique presents us with could simply be: clarity without God. The clarity, however, of an open space in which an open eye can no longer be fascinated. Fascination is already proof that something has been accorded to obscurity and its bloody heart. But there is nothing to accord, nothing but 'nothing.' 'Nothing' is not an abyss open to the outside. 'Nothing' affirms finitude, and this 'nothing' at once returns existence to itself and to nothing else. It de-subjectivizes it, removing all possibility of trans-appropriating itself through anything but its own event, advent. Existence, in this sense, its proper sense, is unsacrificeable."

"compromise himself, in an unpardonable way, with his involvement in a philosophical politics that became criminal,"[42] nevertheless Heidegger's thought continues its defiance, and resists being caught in the net of its own catastrophe. Before it is possible to agree with Nancy that the last "first philosophy" is the point from which we must depart, it must be asked whether, in the light of his own criminal responsibility, Heidegger does not himself go at least some way toward such a "first philosophy."

[42] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 26.

PART TWO. THE POETICO-POLITICAL, 1942: SOPHOCLES AND HÖLDERLIN

Chapter Five

The *Polis* and the Political

> "*That philosophy died yesterday, since Hegel or Marx, Nietzsche, or Heidegger—and philosophy should still wander toward the meaning of its death—or that it has always lived knowing itself to be dying (as is silently confessed in the shadow of the very discourse which* declared philosophia perennis); that philosophy died *one day, within* history, *or that it has always fed on its own agony, on the violent way it opens history by opposing itself to nonphilosophy, which is its past and its concern, its death and wellspring; that beyond the death, or dying nature, of philosophy, perhaps even because of it, thought still has a future, or even, as is said today, is still entirely to come because of what philosophy has held in store; or, more strangely still, that the future itself has a future—all these are unanswerable questions."* Jacques Derrida.[1]

> "*Every philosophical colloquium necessarily has a political significance. And not only due to that which has always linked the essence of the philosophical to the essence of the political."* Jacques Derrida.[2]

In spite of the massive obviousness of its facticity, what occurred in the period of National Socialism remains enigmatic. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe can see no other logic at work in the "extermination" than a "spiritual" (and therefore "historial")

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[1] Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," *Writing and Difference* (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 79.

[2] Derrida, "The Ends of Man," *Margins of Philosophy* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), p. 111.

one, and it is for this reason that the inflammation of Heidegger's spirit in 1933 remains worthy of questioning.[3] But perhaps, contra Lacoue-Labarthe, Heidegger's failure is less his refusal in the aftermath to speak *directly* on the theme of his own political engagement than it is the failure of this engagement itself. The failure of the rectorate address, and of the rectorate "itself," is not just the failure of a thought and a *praxis* in which the genres of philosophy and politics are mixed, in which philosophy and politics mutually inform (and form, or are made to conform with) one another. The address is not just an example or the final example of philosophy *dictating* to politics, even if it demonstrates as well a speculative logic in which philosophy will once again guide the university; nor is it the final example of philosophy *submitting* to politics, even if Heidegger is being "pragmatic."

The "Prometheanism" of the address demonstrates two things. What is at stake for Heidegger in 1933 is not what philosophy has to say to politics but the common origin out of which the existence but also the *separation* between philosophy and politics first emerges. Prometheus is the name for the origin of the *proliferation* of *technai*, for the division and departmentalization of knowing, for the present situation of the university that constitutes Heidegger's explicit theme. Secondly, what is at stake is the *end* of the age of this separation between politics and philosophy, which means the end of the period of politics and philosophy as such. The "university," in its *possibility*, is for Heidegger the name for the possibility of giving to this end the order and the assertive thrust that will bring it to "actuality." Heidegger's failure was to imagine that, having thought the origin and end of the age of politics and philosophy, this thought could be translated through an act of "assertion" into a *praxis* that would bring into actuality the epoch that would follow this end. This is not only Heidegger's "personal" failure, and it does not only make apparent the impossibility anymore of taking seriously an "ontico-politics." "Politics" and "philosophy" are everywhere today still talking to one another, still "using" one another, still informing one another, stamping themselves upon each other, still conducting themselves ontico-politically, but without the consciousness (and hence in a perverse way without the responsibility) with which Heidegger conducted his own ontico-political engagement.

[3] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 35 & p. 48.

Silence, engagement, warning

The reason that Heidegger's lasting failure was not his "silence" but rather his engagement is that this apparent "silence" has functioned overwhelmingly, "within philosophy" and beyond it, as a *call* to respond, to speak where Heidegger did not. Heidegger's silence has left "philosophy" in debt. What has resulted is a *logorrhoea* that tries to be responsible where Heidegger was not, to produce a *logos* that *thinks* "Heidegger's silence." In this way, *perhaps*, thinking has been done a service by Heidegger's supposed silence. Without being able to "affirm" "Heidegger's silence," the debt (*Schuld*) in which he has placed philosophy corresponds to a duty (*Schuld*) to discharge it, a duty that is *felt*, experienced. The duty to speak responsibly about Heidegger's "politics and philosophy" does not *only* derive from the "fact" of his silence, but nevertheless it compounds the interest. Jacques Derrida is one of the few prepared to risk such a "hazardous hypothesis."[4]

And yet this logorrhoea also stands *exposed to* "Heidegger's silence," such that this silence also continues to speak and to pose the question of whether these *responses* really are responsible enough. Even the *most* responsible of these responses, which thematize the "scandalous inadequacy" with which Heidegger addresses the events perpetrated by the Nazis, risk appearing *no more* responsible than this supposed "silence" itself.[5] Descrying the inadequacy of Heidegger's response only makes apparent the inadequacy of *any* merely *adequate* response. This judgment does not merely derive from a pedantic attendance to the ambivalence of "adequacy," but on the contrary derives from the strictest thought of what "response" could be *equal to* what Heidegger's embrace of Nazism seems to demand. The duty to respond remains, as it *should* remain, haunted by the

[4] Jacques Derrida, "Heidegger's Silence," in Günther Neske & Emil Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), p. 147: "If he had been tempted to make a statement, let us say a statement made as an immediate moral reaction or a manifestation of his horror or his nonforgiving and thus a statement that would not stem from his work of thinking, at the peak of all that he had already thought, I believe we would then be more likely to feel dismissed from the duty of doing the work we must do today. For we do have this work to do, I mean this legacy, Heidegger's horrible, perhaps inexcusable silence. There are very few statements we can make today about Heidegger's relation to National Socialism; this lack of statements leaves us with a legacy. It leaves us the commandment to think what he himself did not think."

[5] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, pp. 33–4. Lacoue-Labarthe is certainly the example of this "most responsible" attempt to think through Heidegger's "politics," and it is perhaps unfair to single him out in this way. But it is because of Lacoue-Labarthe's responsibility, his passion for thinking Heidegger's "politics," that he *is* the best example. And note that he was already asking about this "silence" in 1980. Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, "In the Name of...," in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 63.

possibility that the debt can never be discharged where one "merely does one's duty."[6]

The *debate* about Heidegger's "silence," most often conducted in the name of "ethics," and is itself an engagement that presents its own "ethical" or "political" risk.[7] This risk is perhaps more than exemplary of the risk of all discourse grounded in the "ethical" today, that is, after the "extermination." What is most often meant by "ethics," when it does not simply refer to the application of prescribed moral "rules," is the thought of the responsibility due to the "other" that cannot be reduced to the same. And on what else could ethics be grounded? Yet, in the ethical discourse on Heidegger's silence, what is exposed is the *other* "other" of ethics, the other *as* National Socialism or its deeds, the other as the wholly incomprehensible and incommensurable, the incomprehensible because the wholly *un*-ethical.

This "other," insofar as it is maintained *as* other, holds two risks. Firstly, that National Socialism, or the "extermination," remains eternally enigmatic, because it is the essentially unquestionable.[8] Secondly, that this other, the horror of National Socialism, in the end *dictates to* ethics its very terms by constituting its transcendent "opposite," giving to ethics the possibility of its ground and its legislation (not to mention the *confidence* to legislate—in the *assertion* that we at least *know* for certain that *we* are not *that*). Thus in a way this "other" retains its sovereignty, as the ethical *exception* as such. What the "ethical" condemnation of "Heidegger's silence" risks, then, is the *assertion*, stated or unstated, of the non-ethical as such. As the essentially unknowable, this "other" then institutes a limit or boundary, an alterity and transcendence, in the mode of a "negative theology."[9] This "other," in putting

[6] On the economy of debt and duty, cf., Derrida, "Passions: An Oblique Offering," *On the Name* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 9, & pp. 132–7, n. 3.

[7] Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, "In the name of…," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, pp. 62–3.

[8] Cf., on the contrary, Derrida, "Heidegger's Silence," in Neske & Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, p. 148: "It is up to us to say more than 'Auschwitz is the absolute horror, one of the absolute horrors in the history of humanity.' If we are able to say more, then we should say more. This commandment is, I believe, inscribed in the most horrible and yet perhaps most valuable chance in Heidegger's legacy."

[9] By "negative theology" is intended more or less what Rosenzweig describes. When all "knowledge" is stripped away, when, that is, National Socialism, in the magnitude of its horror, exposes all our knowledge to an abyss that renders "knowing" absolutely impotent, absolutely weak, what we are left with, in the end, is "non-knowing," an ignorance that constitutes the "negative" ground of "ethics." Such an "ethics" makes of National Socialism the God that causes mysticism and atheism to shake hands. Cf., Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1970), p. 23: "Of God we know nothing. But this non-knowing [*Nichtwissen*] is non-knowing of God. As such it is the beginning of our knowledge of him. The beginning; not the end. Non-knowing as the end and result of our knowledge was the grounding thought of 'negative theology,' which decomposed and abolished the existing assertions [*die vorgefundenen Behauptungen*] about God's 'attributes' [*Eigenschaften*], until the nihilation of all these attributes remained behind as God's essence [*bis das Nicht aller dieser Eigenschaften als Gottes Wesen übrig blieb*], God then

"ethics" out of bounds of theory, thereby *gives* to "ethics" its *arche* and its proper place. Thus, while very possibly imagining that it thereby precedes philosophy, "ethics"—with its unquestionable *arche* safely in its possession—always risks being returned, departmentally, *to* "philosophy" (that is, the system and distribution of the *archai*) as one of its "branches."[10]

Heidegger's *engagement* with National Socialism, on the other hand, has, in the gravity of Heidegger's risk and the magnitude of his catastrophic failure, continued to stand as a *warning* to which it has been far less easy to respond. As such a "warning," this "effect" of Heidegger's engagement maintains a relation to the ethical, certainly to a discourse of responsibility. Heidegger's *political decision* functions (to use the terminology of Kant) as a trigger to philosophy's "consciousness of an internal court," to philosophy's "conscience," that is, as what *warns us before we make a decision*.[11] Such is the case so long as those who are warned *inhabit* philosophy. But those who remain *most* warned by the rectorate are *not* those who continue allowing "politics," "ethics," and "philosophy" to talk with one another as though they knew for certain what these words name. Those who remain most responsibly warned by the rectorate, those who *experience* the warning, are those who agree, with Heidegger, that we are living today in a kind of *end* of politics and philosophy that seems to demand holding back from "political action" and "political decision," or "ethical action" and "ethical decision." This heeding of a warning *before we make* a political decision is not necessarily incompatible with a sense of the *urgency* of political action and decision, but continues to think that *included in* what is urgently required is thought *about* "ontico-politics."

What determines the inadequacy of the merely "adequate" response is not just Heidegger's own actions, but rather something about the enigmatic facticity of National Socialism and its deeds, and the way in which this may or may not involve "the West," and that means, "philosophy" and "politics" as what is sent from Greece. To this extent National Socialism remains "our" distress, and the demand for a response remains "our" necessity. But this does not mean that those most

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becoming determinable only in his complete indeterminability [*in seiner völligen Unbestimmbarkeit*]. This way leads from an existing something to nothing [*von einem vorgefundenen Etwas zum Nichts führt*] and at this end atheism and mysticism can shake hands". This is the path that Rosenzweig wishes to differentiate from his own.

[10] On this risk, cf., Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 41: "Indeed, the risk here, analogous to the one Derrida locates in Levinas, would be to claim an absolute autonomy for ethics in relation to the theoretical, to put it out of reach of theoretical closure. Such autonomy could only confer upon it, precisely, an absolutely closing function, an archeo-teleo-logical and, *finally*, philo-sophical one."

[11] Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 233: "Consciousness of an internal court [*Das Bewußtsein eines inneren Gerichtshofes*] in man ('before which his thoughts accuse or excuse one another') is *conscience*." And cf., *ibid.*, pp. 233–5.

warned by the rectorate are "Heideggerians," for the very point at which they remain in contact with Heidegger is in not seeing his writing *as* philosophy, nor as a school of philosophy.[12] It is no longer a question of a scene in which what is represented is *philosophy's* internal court, *philosophy's* conscience. On the contrary, what warns these thinkers is the judgment that, in 1933, Heidegger "indulges" *in* philosophy.[13] This possibility—that Heidegger's rectorate address may be judged, today, as an *indulgence* in philosophy—is surely evidence that 27 May, 1933, was one of the yesterdays on which philosophy died. It is the judgment that Heidegger's debt to philosophy is unpayable, has left philosophy bankrupt, without any longer being capable of doing its duty, or justifying its very idea of its own duty or necessity. The philosopher's duty remains haunted by the possibility that the sense of this duty, today, *comes from* this absolutely unpayable debt, and this thought places in doubt whether *philosophy* could survive the discovery that it's *duty derives*

[12] Cf., Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 93: "The existential analytic of *Being and Time* is the project from which all subsequent thinking follows, whether this is Heidegger's own latter thinking or our various ways of thinking against or beyond Heidegger himself. This affirmation is in no way an admission of 'Heideggerianism'; it completely escapes the impoverished proclamations of 'schools.' It does not signify that this analytic is definitive, only that it is responsible for registering the seismic tremor of a more decisive rupture in the constitution or consideration of meaning (analogous, for example, to those of the 'cogito' or 'Critique'). This is why the existential analytic is not complete, and why we continue to feel its shock waves." And cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, pp. 9–11; cf., Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 137.

[13] Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p. 12. For Lacoue-Labarthe this was the *first* moment when Heidegger indulged in philosophy, and hence in philosophico-politics. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, it was followed by a second moment, Heidegger's "'Hölderlinian' preaching," and which he judges to be "the continuation and prolongation of the philosophico-political discourse of 1933" (*ibid.*). But note also that it is precisely in this judgment that Heidegger indulges in philosophy where Lacoue-Labarthe himself runs the risk of not being responsible enough. Lacoue-Labarthe finds the grounds for this judgment in the discovery in Heidegger's text, from 1933 until the end, of elements which are philosophical in style, elements which constitute a "new mythology"(*ibid.*, pp. 13–4), and among the elements of which he includes Heidegger's thematization of the "lack of sacred names." When it comes to the question of whether Heidegger can be accused of "doing wrong," however, when in other words it becomes a matter of ethical judgment, Lacoue-Labarthe, responsibly, hesitates. What causes this hesitation is his doubt that, today, an ethics is possible, doubt about the possibility of locating grounds for judgment.

> It is no doubt still possible to answer the question "How are we to judge"? It is certainly no longer possible to answer the questions, "From what position can we judge?" "In the name of what or of whom?" For what are lacking, now and for the foreseeable future, are names, and most immediately "sacred names," which in their various ways governed, and alone governed, the space (public or other) in which ethical life unfolded.

(*Ibid.*, p. 31). Thus the very thing that causes Lacoue-Labarthe to hesitate in condemning Heidegger is this "lack of sacred names" which constituted Heidegger's own "philosophizing." Does not Lacoue-Labarthe thereby participate, in *stalling* his prosecution of Heidegger, in one of those philosophical motifs of which Heidegger is accused? If Heidegger is not thereby acquitted, which of course he is not, is he nonetheless not entitled to invoke the commandment that he who is without philosophy should cast the first stone, that is, let he who is without philosophy break his silence?

from its debt.[14] The judgment that Heidegger s rectorate address was one of the occasions of philosophy's death remains, *even in spite of* the fact that in 1933 he is still and already himself ruminating on an *end* of philosophy. And the warning which is received, and which Heidegger himself received too late, is precisely that the *translation* of the *thought* of this end into *praxis* is constantly exposed to the risk that today everything ends in *technics*.

Technics is thus both the originary possibility and the end of philosophy. The rectorate address stands as one of the clearest (and yet most ambiguous) examples of the fact that philosophy has lived from out of the blind hope of surpassing technics (that is, nonphilosophy) or, equally, of joining justly, spiritually, *with* technics to become *proper* "politics." The address is then one of the many deaths (it is not possible to speak of the "final" death) of philosophy that, like Prometheus's liver, continues to live from out of this endless mortality.[15] Philosophy, in its relation both to technics and to politics, is always *metic*, that is, *always* an indulgence, a defiant risk to *claim* passage in the face of mortality. That there is the possibility of *being warned* by (one of) philosophy's deaths is itself a mark of a technical and economic appropriation of philosophy's mortality. This possibility of being warned, *if it comes from "within philosophy,"* indicates the impossible possibility that philosophy will, ceaselessly, *interpret* its own mortality, will

[14] Cf., Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man," in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 37, where he speaks of the possibility, *shown since Heidegger*, "that, in reality, philosophy *cannot* philosophically prove its own necessity any longer." And he adds: "It is therefore possible that in the 'opening of an unheard-of question' there comes to be lodged a singular and un-reasonable necessity without reason, a demonstration without proof, an *'Il faut,'* an 'It is necessary,' which *it is not necessary* to legitimate in discourse; a *duty*, consequently, whose status is perfectly ambiguous or indecisive, theoretical or moral, but just as easily neither theoretical nor moral. This would be a duty which, whilst still remaining a duty, would *decidedly* (there would be nothing undecidable here) turn aside from the philosophical duty that philosophy has always deduced or wanted to deduce for theoretical reasons—and, even better, a duty which, while remaining a duty, would decidedly turn aside *from* philosophical duty, that is to say, from this obligation and from this end that philosophy always gives itself on the basis of the Aristotelian model: namely, *sophia* as supreme *praxis* of *theoria*, or *theoria* as the very *praxis* of *sophia*."

[15] Cf., Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 203: "Just as the future is as inevitable as it is implacably undetermined, so Prometheus's liver, consumed by day and restored by night, is the Titan's *clock*—become feast of the sacrifice, as much as his torment. It is the ceaseless process of différance in which time is constituted with that one coup of technicity that is the mark of mortality. 'Why the liver?' It is an organic *mirror* in which divinatory hermeneutics is practiced, in which, during the sacrifice, divine messages are interpreted. And it is Hermes who, in Aeschylus, announces to Prometheus his punishment. Organ of all *humors*, of feelings of all situations, because it is the seat of the 'feeling of situation,' the liver is also, as a mirror of ceaseless mortality—which never *occurs*—of the body and the heart, the mirage of the spirit (*Gemüt*). A clock, its vesicle conceals those stones [*calculs*] that secrete black bile, *melas kholie*."

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hermeneutically divine consequences from its deaths (*pro-* and *epi-metically*, forgetting its "death" in the very act of remembering it), in order to rescue itself in the face of its own mortal danger.

Once again, therefore, those for whom this warning is most audible—who most carefully listen to and are most affected by this warning—are *not* those who imagine themselves as occupying a place that can simply continue to be called "philosophy," or "political philosophy." Rather, those who remain most troubled by this warning are those descendants of Heidegger for whom a crucial question remains the relation between "politics" and what is called "deconstruction." This is not to say that for these thinkers the lesson that is learned is the necessity of excluding all technics from politics, nor that of excluding all politics itself, and especially not the necessity of resisting engagement (for, for these thinkers, what Heidegger *teaches* is that being *means* engagement, in the double sense of "to engage (with)" and "to be engaged (by)," the throw and the project).[16] On the contrary, what Heidegger's *failure* teaches most urgently is the impossibility of avoiding "contamination" by technics, and hence the necessity of re-thinking "political" *praxis with* technics. And yet, for these thinkers, if evidence exists that after the failure of his engagement Heidegger did more than maintain his silence, this evidence consists in the centrality of the place of technics in the remainder of Heidegger's thought. Thus what is the most urgent question for these thinkers is the fate of the "political," today, after technics.[17]

[16] Cf., Nancy, "*La Comparution*/The Compearance: from the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence'," *Political Theory* 20 (1992), p. 378, where, at the moment of the historical "end" of communism, he asks what communism continues to say to us today, in terms that encourage an "ontological" understanding of communism in its positivity, while equally putting the "ontological" into question: "Communism is an ontological proposition, not a political option (but what *is* an ontological proposition? that is the question—to which one can no longer answer outside of the being-'*in*'-common). Communism is a political option to the degree that 'being' *itself* (the being of existence) is to be engaged, to be chosen, to be decided: that is, to the degree that it is incommensurable with that which is, in fact, given, if ever there is something in fact given, if ever there is purely and simply a 'fact'." Nancy goes on to immediately acknowledge that this is what one reads not in Marx but in Heidegger, and that it is not even a question of a new interpretation of Marx, but of what Marx (with what we read in Heidegger in mind) "must now make us write."

[17] This is most visible in the thought of Nancy, even if he prefers to replace "technics" with the neologism "ecotechnics." Ecotechnics is the name Nancy gives for the conjunction of "planetary technology" and "world economy." Ecotechnics thus names the double "fate" of humanity in its submission to an economic and technological *poiesis* that in fact becomes the only *praxis* left, a *poiesis* that becomes its own end in itself. Doubtless there is a distinction between technics in its Heideggerian formulation and ecotechnics. Doubtless too it is more than a question of a difference of "attitude" toward Marx, and that in retaining a thought of the "logic of capital" Nancy avoids the risk of himself incurring the accusation that Heidegger has on occasion received, that of "technological determinism. The

The community of the question

There are manifold "sources" for the consideration by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy of "the political," that is, of the essence of politics, and for what they call the "retreat" of the political. But the most obvious reference point was a colloquium in 1980 on the relation of the work of Derrida to politics, and it is not too reductive to state that their project concerning the political emerged from a consideration of the opening paragraphs of two early papers by Derrida: "Violence and Metaphysics" (1964), and "The Ends of Man" (1968). The *title* of the latter provided the title for the 1980 conference, a colloquium that in their introduction Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy state cannot be described as simply "philosophical" (hence begging the question of its political significance). The *opening paragraph* of Derrida's paper of the same title not only opens the question of the relation of the "ends" of "man" to the philosophico-political tie. It also authorizes a consideration of the tie between philosophy and politics *at the level of "essence."* This formulation by Derrida will lead Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy to make a distinction between *"la politique"* and *"le politique,"* politics and the political, where the latter names the "essence" of the former. And this essence of the political exists as an essential co-belonging to the essence of the philosophical, itself differentiated from philosophy (and from "metaphysics"). What is thereby authorized is a way into the investigation of a constellation not of concepts but of essences.

In this thought of essences there is an echo and a repetition of Heidegger's distinction between technology and the essence of technology. At the same time, when it is a matter of determining the *essence* of politics *today*, the name for this essence, more or less, is *technology*.[18] Today, where the philosophical holds sway

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accusation, in short, is that "technology" in Heidegger is the disavowal of political economy. Nancy's notion of "ecotechnics," however, of economics and technics as a kind of *praxis-pragma* without sovereignty, shares with Heidegger precisely the thought that what it signifies, in its global character, is the end of politics: "From now on, then, ecotechnics is the name for 'political economy,' because according to our thinking, if there is no sovereignty, then there can be no politics. There is no longer any *polis* since the *oikos* is everywhere: the housekeeping of the world as a single household, with 'humanity' for a mother, 'law' for a father." Nancy, "War, Right, Sovereignty—Techne," in *Being Singular Plural*, p. 135. This "political" meaning of the term "ecotechnics" is further emphasized when it is grasped as the fate of the (political and technical, that is, Aristotelian) "Cause," in the diagnosis of the present: 'Truth without figure or sense, truth of the absence of sense: law in its absence of foundation, ecotechnics in the guise of Cause..." Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 90.

[18] Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, "'Political' Seminar," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 96: "In the political, it is the *philosophical* which today holds sway—which is equally to say: *technology*, in the sense in which Heidegger intended." And cf., Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating*

over the political, the result is what Rancière calls "political philosophy," the technics of philosophy-as-politics, *sophia* as guide to *praxis*.

But this triumph of philosophy signals the possibility of its death of philosophy. If such mortal possibilities are taken seriously, however, as Derrida states in "Violence and Metaphysics," then they are no longer questions *within* philosophy, which philosophy can resolve. Not philosophy's questions, and yet, he immediately adds, "these should be the only questions today capable of founding the community, within the world, of those who are still called philosophers."[19] What is most important in this thought is not a defense of the existence of those who are still called philosophers. What is important is that, from the possibility of the end of philosophy, what is immediately at stake is the possibility or impossibility of a *community* and its *foundation.* "Political philosophy," that is, technology, thinks (philosophical) *logos* as the ground of the *polis*, as the ground of the possibility of proper being-together, at the same time as thinking the origin of this *logos* as itself the community of the *polis*. Politics and philosophy constitute each other's mutual ground.[20] At philosophy's end, these questions must be approached otherwise. And thus Derrida speaks about "a community of the question about the possibility of the question," a community of decision, of inauguration, yet without security in relation to its ground. The *maintenance of the question*, of the *freedom of the question*, is the possibility of this community, this ground. But the injunction to maintain the question refers not to politics, nor to an ethics (of questioning), but to what "ultimately authorizes every ethical law in general."[21] In naming such an injunction, Derrida thereby approaches, in his own fashion, something like what Heidegger has called "originary ethics."

What *provokes* the question is not ethics, because what is in question is the possibility of ethical or political *law* as such. Yet what signifies, symptomatically, the *need* for the question of the question is the appeal *to* ethics. Thus, in his contribution to the colloquium on "The Ends of Man," Nancy begins by noting one example of this appeal: "What indicates the distress of our world is the reiterated appeal

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the *Political*, p. 125: "[I]s not the political as it appears and dominates today—and, if we were simply Heideggerians, we would say: technology, but, for reasons impossible to unravel now, we prefer not to—is not the political, then, as it appears and dominates today, the effect of a certain retreat of the philosophical, and that is equally to say of a certain completion of the philosophical (in the sense in which Heidegger speaks of a completion or completion of metaphysics)?"

[19] Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 79.

[20] Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "Opening Address to the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 117: "The *polis* presupposes the relation—the *logikos* relation or *logos* as relation—which it nonetheless inaugurates—and this is what makes of it *the* philosophical ground."

[21] Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, p. 80.

[*l'appel*] to an ethics which might come to exorcise it."[22] Just as Robert Bernasconi opened his consideration of technology and ethics with a declaration of the absence of any grasp of "our present situation,"[23] and hence that we are without any way forward in relation to the need for an ethics, so too Nancy begins with the impossibility of any step toward answering such an appeal to ethics. "Ethics," insofar as it has been known, has belonged within philosophy, within metaphysics. If, today, we dwell within the closure of the end of philosophy, then "to appeal to an ethics is to remain within the closure of this end":

> It is, therefore, not even to wonder where something like ethics comes from, and whether there might not be a case for questioning, indeed whether one might not *have to* question (and I shall come to this question of obligation, to the *one has to* [on doit], which is inseparable, precisely, from the very idea of an ethics) the status of what, prior to the "realm of ethics," might, on the basis of a non-ethical reserve, withdrawal [*recul*] or drawing back, "subsequently authorize all ethical law in general."[24]

The problem to which Nancy is pointing is that of *justifying* the injunction that would found the community of those who are still called philosophers, of justifying the maintenance of the question. That the need for an ethics emerges, that ethics becomes visible in its absence, means that this is what has become questionable. But where philosophy, the discourse of questioning, is itself in question, then the injunction to maintain the question cannot come from within philosophy, that is to say, cannot be grounded on "the Aristotelian model: namely, *sophia* as supreme *praxis* of *theoria*, or *theoria* as the very *praxis* of *sophia*."[25]

According to Nancy, this model is also still Heidegger's, and consequently what is at stake is the difference between Heidegger's "infinite questioning" and, more *modestly*, Derrida's "maintenance of the question." Infinite questioning—that is, essentially, *theoria*—is the presupposition of its own ethicality, the inability to question the ethics of questioning, because in the end this infinitude is guaranteed by and dependent upon "the mystery of a transphilosophical *Unheimlichkeit*." If questioning is the highest, then the *justification* for the thought that questioning is the highest is what must always elude questioning. The duty to maintain the question, on the other hand, does not work in the same way to *protect* philosophy: "Philosophy must maintain itself in losing itself." In maintaining the question, that

[22] Henri Birault, *Heidegger et l'expérience de la pensée*, cited in Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 32; cf., Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Political Incompetence of Philosophy," *Diogenes* 182 (1998), p. 9.

[23] Robert Bernasconi, "Technology and the Ethics of Praxis," *Acta Institutionis Philosophiae et Aestheticae* (Tokyo), vol. 5 (1987), p. 93.

[24] Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 33.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

is, in maintaining the possibility of the end of philosophy, the *finitude* of philosophical questioning, the "result" is not an ethics of finitude, an ethics that takes the measure of this finitude. "Rather it indicates, in a still enigmatic pronouncement, finitude as ethical, as the opening of ethics." The difference between Heidegger and Derrida is therefore here figured as the difference between "infinite questioning"—which is the presupposition of itself as the ethical as such—and the *maintenance* of the question—which, in maintaining the finitude of philosophy, opens the possibility of ethics in general.[26]

This trajectory indicates the insufficiency of the critique offered by Simon Critchley of the thought of the political in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. Critchley notes that the distinction between politics and the essence of politics in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is "assimilable" to the distinction between technology and the essence of technology in Heidegger.[27] From this basis Critchley conceives the distinction between politics and the political as a "reduction" which, more than phenomenological, remains "Heideggerian" in the sense of being an attempt to *protect* the essence of politics from contamination. The "reduction" from politics to the political is thereby understood as an *exclusion* of "politics itself" from the political.[28] By "politics itself" Critchley intends very much what Detienne ironically intends with the phrase "politics in the trivial sense," as what Heidegger excludes from the "ontological" *polis*. In both cases, this exclusion is meant to indicate a disavowal of politics. Thus, in Critchley, "politics itself" means "an empirical and contingent field of antagonism, conflict and struggle, the space of *doxa*" or, in another passage, "a field of antagonism, struggle, dissension, contestation, critique and questioning."[29] And, against this exclusion, just as Derrida asks whether the distinction between technology and its essence can be maintained, so in this case Critchley asks whether the reduction is possible. Thus, when it is again a question of elaborating a politics, of what politics *should be*, Nancy, in Critchley's account, is forced to turn to another ground—justice, or absolute injustice, as the ultimate origin or end.[30] Therefore, he concludes, this reinvention of politics is ultimately

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 40–1.

[27] Simon Critchley, "Re-tracing the Political: Politics and Community in the Work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy," in David Campbell & Michael Dillon (eds.), *The Political Subject of Violence* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 76.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 84 & p. 86.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 90: "Thus, we are finally in a position to see that the reinvention of politics must be based upon the unconditional recognition of absolute injustice and the existential obligation incumbent upon all members of the community is to see injustice rectified." He

grounded, or *should* be grounded, in ethics or, more specifically, upon "an ethical recognition of injustice," that is, finally, as the struggle for or on behalf of alterity (citing Levinas).

Three points at least need to be made in relation to Critchley's reading:

1. Even if the distinction made by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is "assimilable" to the distinction made by Heidegger, in any case it remains entirely debatable whether either distinction can properly be described as a "reduction." Given the very relation to Heidegger which Critchley points out, that is, to the thematic of technology, might it not be the case that with the thought of the political what is actually at stake is a *remembrance* of antagonism, the space of *doxa*, questioning, etc., in the face of its technological forgetting or disavowal?

2. Thus, in trying to hold onto "politics itself" in the face of its "exclusion" by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, perhaps Critchley is himself guilty of taking "politics itself" as something obvious, something about which it is not necessary to question. But is not this obviousness of politics itself the very essence of the technological (hence philosophical) gesture that claims to *know* what politics *itself* is, that commits to gestures such as the declaration that "everything is political"? Derrida makes this point in another colloquium, when a similar objection is made to the "essence" of politics. Derrida: "Do we actually know what 'politics' means, plain and simple? Heidegger, one imagines, would have said: politics is *technology*."[31]

3. Rather than moving from "politics" to its proper ground in "ethics," understood as the infinite relation to the other, Nancy's gesture is more like a movement in the opposite direction. Beginning with ethical distress, with the appeal to ethics, the move *toward* politics in Nancy might be described as nothing other than the move away from ethics. As noted above, already in "The Free Voice of Man," where Nancy's problematic is still the injunction to maintain the question, this injunction cannot be an "ethical" one. He further indicates that any attempt to claim autonomy for "ethics" in relation to theory would be an act of closure, and would mean

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immediately adds: "*And yet*, the question now becomes: how might the recognition of injustice become effective in our communal lives. [...] I would argue that access to a conception of politics dedicated to the goal of social justice can only be mediated *ethically* and that in order for Nancy's politics of the community to become effective, in order for the reinvention of politics to be dedicated to the eradication of injustice, there needs to be an ethical basis for politics." Critchley's question addressed to Nancy in a sense repeats Bernstein's question to Heidegger: "But what are we to *do*?"

[31] Derrida, cited in "Discussion," following Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 140.

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remaining within philosophy. If it is a matter of producing an other politics at all, it is a matter of leaving this philosophical determination of the problem behind.[32]

This theme continues when Nancy comes to write *Being Singular Plural* (published, admittedly, after Critchley's text). "To assume that politics is entirely a question of 'human rights' is also to assume surreptitiously that 'man' is entirely a question of the Other. This is what is most often at work in any call to 'ethics': a transcendental unpresentability of that most concrete presence."[33] Nancy will differentiate two "measures of the incommensurable" in the tradition: one "calibrated" according to the Other; the other calibrated according to the "with." Perhaps it is not going too far to state that for Nancy only the second of these measures holds any possibility for another thought of *politics*, assuming the possibility of such a thing. The incommensurable thought of the infinite "Other" always means, in the end, that "society" is thought as the same, as already being-there *as* the same. The "Other" always means the other *of* the same, society, which thereby remains unquestioned. In other words, where what is incommensurable is the relation between "same" and "other," this incommensurability is always able to be translated into "I" and "you," "us" and "them," "friend" and "enemy," where the former term excludes the latter, excludes its own "otherness." The "ethical" thought of otherness is perhaps always open to a translation into the language of friend and enemy.

There is, then, a relation between the conception of politics grounded in the ethics of otherness, and the conception of politics grounded in militarism, as a relation between "external" sovereigns, as diplomacy and war.[34] Both of *these*

[32] Cf., Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 25, in which by this time the very notion of producing, determining, or inventing an other politics is now itself in question: "Once this horizon is deconstructed, however, the necessity of the plural singular of the origin comes into play—and this is already under way. But I do not plan to propose an 'other politics' under this heading. I am no longer sure that this term (or the term 'political philosophy') can continue to have any consistency beyond this opening up of the horizon which comes to us both at the end of the long history of our Western situation *and* as the reopening of this situation."

[33] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

[34] Cf., Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (New Brunswick & New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1976), p. 26: "The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy." And note that for Schmitt this determination of the political emerges precisely from the thought that what constitutes the essence of the political is "antagonism" (p. 29): "The political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping." Slavoj Zizek makes the point that it is the concentration on this "extremity" of antagonism that actually means that the Schmittian determination of the political is the exclusion of politics (in Rancière's sense of "politics," which Zizek is explicitly deploying here). Where the political is defined as the extreme point of the relation between "us" and "them," as "warfare," with no "common ground," there is in fact no longer any possibility of politics. Cf., Zizek, "Carl Schmitt in the Age of Post-Politics," in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *The Challenge*

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conceptions of politics are the exclusion of politics itself, of antagonism, of the space of *doxa*, of agreement and disagreement. For Nancy, it is only the thought of being-with, the singular plurality of origins, which gives the possibility of thinking an other that never comes back to the same. Only with the "with," where the otherness is included from the beginning *within* being, can one approach the political *without* the exclusion of "antagonism." Only the thought of being-with, in contrast to the ethics of otherness, permits a thought of the just-ness of justice, of justice as the *measure* from one origin to another.[35] The other, if it means something for politics, must mean the question of the other *within* the same, within "us," and, at the same time, the question of the other as the question of the possible impossibility of relation. When Nancy refers to justice, therefore, it is not in order to ground politics in ethics, but to think again the ground of justice, so that it refers not to infinite otherness as such, but to the measure of the with, or even to "existence unjustifiable as such."[36] And Nancy would further claim that this is the precise point where it is necessary to go beyond Heidegger, for whom the otherness of *Mitsein* is always thought in relation to Da-sein as the same. Heidegger's thought remains too ethical.

Nevertheless, the problematic insofar as it is formulated in "The Free Voice of Man" as the injunction to maintain the question, remains insufficient. What could have lead Critchley to *his* critique of Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is the appearance of a strange compromise between injunction and questioning—a compromise signed and sealed with the word "maintain." When, at the end of "The Free Voice of Man," Derrida responds, he does so by suggesting that he would no longer formulate things in quite the same way as he does in "Violence and Metaphysics." This is one of very few instances where Derrida is prepared to revise his thought and, as such, is immediately significant. And it is the very thought of the injunction to maintain the question that Derrida will no longer prescribe:

of Carl Schmitt (London & New York: Verso, 1999), p. 29. This can be seen, for instance, in the sentence from Schmitt that follows the one just cited: "In its entirety the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy" (Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, pp. 29–30). The state is the subject of decision, but as one single subject, as one voice. Critchley may well agree with Zizek's point regarding Schmitt, but what remains questionable is whether the distinction between "same" and "other" is itself a sufficient ground for thinking political "antagonism."

[35] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 81.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 48: "So it is not so much a question of denying law itself, it is more a question of 'doing right' by the singular plural of the origin. As a result, it is a matter of questioning law about what we might call its 'originary anarchy' or the very origin of the law in what is 'by all rights without any right': existence unjustifiable as such. To be sure, the derivation or deduction of law from the unjustifiability of existence is not immediate or obvious. In essence, it may escape the process of a 'deduction' altogether. But this remains to be thought..."

> Why wouldn't I write like I had in 1964? Basically it is the word *question* which I
> would have changed there. I would displace the accent of the question towards
> something which would be a call. Rather than it being necessary to maintain a
> question, it is necessary to have understood a call (or an order, desire or demand).[37]

Is this shift a matter of moving toward or away from Heidegger? The problem here
is to understand the difference between the call that it is necessary to understand,
and the injunction to maintain the question. The injunction to maintain the question
is explicitly something other than an infinite questioning, and is therefore *intended*
to be inassimilable to Heidegger's "questioning as the highest form of knowing."
Yet might not Derrida's (and Nancy's) injunction to maintain the freedom of the
question remain an example of *"giving oneself* the law as the highest freedom"? The
distance which in 1980 Derrida places between his current thought and his previous
injunction to maintain the question would then be a movement away from the
Heidegger who would assert and maintain this law of the highest, of the freedom of
questioning. The difference between Derrida's earlier and later positions would
then be a matter of the *source* of the injunction, of whether it is always a voice from
outside to which we must listen, or whether it is what we, the community that
founds, give ourselves. A *call* necessarily implies that it comes from "outside," but
perhaps there is reason to question whether this is *necessarily* so for an *injunction*.
Thus when Nancy objects to Derrida's objection by pointing out that he, Nancy, at
the end of his paper himself replaced Derrida's "question" with the thought of the
"order," Derrida offers an ambivalent reply: "Yes, *you gave* questions and
responses."[38]

But perhaps what is ultimately at stake in Derrida's revision is the recognition
that the thematic of an injunction to "maintain" the question does not escape the
problem of foundation any more than would an "infinite questioning" that
presupposes its own ground. The injunction to maintain the question, *as opposed to*
infinite questioning, an opposition that Nancy describes in terms of the *modesty* of
the appeal, appears to conform to the difference between the initial *positing* of the
law, which depends upon its own infinite presupposition, and the conservative
"modesty" that merely maintains the law. Derrida's renunciation then appears like
a recollection that law-preserving is not only still a matter of violence but that, more
importantly, in the end it always refers to law-positing violence. Maintaining the
gap between the violent positing of law and its mere maintenance is the gesture of
law itself, the gesture by which law maintains its "legitimacy." That the law being
posited or preserved is a law of *questioning* would not essentially alter its

[37] "Debate" following Nancy, "The Free Voice of Man," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy,
Retreating the Political, p. 54.

[38] *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

"violence." The "injunction" to maintain the question would still be a law that is "known," even that *must be* known and, as "what is known" it continues, in its modesty, to be differentiated from what must be decided, from positing, from assertion. *Maintaining* the question means keeping the question in hand, continuing to hold onto and to handle the question, keeping the question at hand in the present. Insisting that it is *merely* a matter of maintaining the question suggests a law that, precisely because of its modesty, becomes a law that cannot ask about its ground or its justification. To the extent that maintaining the question would forget its origins *as* an injunction, *as* positing, as the response to a call from outside, to that extent it itself becomes technics, and weaker than necessity. If so, then Derrida's return to the necessity of the call is more like a movement *back* to a Heideggerian thought of the impossibility of exiting the impossible question of foundation. And this is what will lead Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy back to the political, which is to say, back to the ontico-political question of the relation between community and communicability or, as they will call it, the "question of relation."

The retreat of the political

When, in "The Free Voice of Man," and in following Derrida, Nancy spoke of "what would authorize all ethical law in general," it was in terms of something that would show itself in the withdrawal of "ethics." In Lacoue-Labarthe's contribution to the same colloquium, "In the Name of...," he will offer a similar gesture in relation to the political, a gesture which he finds in Heidegger. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger speaks of the *polis*, not as a city-state, but as the *Da* of Da-sein, the place in which, out of which, and for which history happens. Lacoue-Labarthe reads this as a statement concerning the essence of politics and, furthermore, as what indicates the *retreat* of the political today, which is to say, the retreat of the political, in its essence, *from* the philosophical:

> The essence of the political, in other words, is by itself nothing political. No philosophical investigation can take the measure of its "retreat." Which enjoins me to add that if one has to maintain this word "political"—which I believe one must, out of a concern for clarity—then this can only be on the condition ⸱ 'Heidegger invites, of completely re-elaborating the concept.[39]

[39] Lacoue-Labarthe, "In the Name of...," in Lacoue-Labarthe 丷 Nancy, Retreat of the Political, p. 71. Yet, in *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, in the chapter ⸱ ⸱⸱⸱ "The Political," Lacoue-Labarthe will cite exactly the same lines from *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, but will read these lines, not according to Heidegger's invitation to re-elaborate the thought of the political, but on the contrary as reproducing the "historial" logic of 1933: When he says in 1935 that to translate *polis* by State or City 'does not capture the full meaning' because 'The *polis* is the historical place, the there *in* which, *out* of which, and *for* which history happens,'

Thus Lacoue-Labarthe is prepared to speak about "an active deconstruction of the political" in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, a deconstruction that he already detects in the rectorate address.[40] The ground for this reading, paraphrasing Lacoue-Labarthe, lies in the *"ethos"* that is the opening for *das Unheimliche*, which Lacoue-Labarthe refers to the incommensurable. If no philosophy can take the measure of the retreat of the political, this is firstly because *Unheimlichkeit* signifies "our" relation to being, *understood as the relation to the nothing*. "Our" relation to the nothing reveals (without revelation) the non-being of "man." The essence of "man" is in fact the *in*human, *techne*. The essence of Da-sein is the *Da*, the *thesis* of being, its law, its positing. But this positing, as *techne*, means *Dichtung*—refers to "art"—*before* it refers to "philosophical" *logos*. The relation between the essence of the political and the retreat of the political can thereby be expressed in the following way:

> [I]t all comes down to the same thing: the matter of thinking the *Da* neither as a position, nor as a moment, nor as a sublation of (the) being (of the nothing), but as the presentation (without presentation) of being in retreat.[41]

If this is the initial presentation of the problematic of the retreat of the political, it is also what for Lacoue-Labarthe remains a problem (and the problem he addresses to Derrida). If it is necessary to think the essence of politics in terms of being in retreat, that is, in a sense, "tragically," *in the name of what* can one speak of such a *necessity* (and where "ethics," clearly, once again, will not suffice)? This is, once again, a question of ground or foundation for, if it is still necessary to speak of necessity—that is, of an injunction or a law: *we must*—but without being able to refer to being other than in terms of the nothing, "will a sort of erratic installation in beings suffice?":

> And if so—and its name is "writing"—*in the name of what*? In the name of what is it *"necessary to"* [le faut-il] if this is not, as Heidegger will have (almost) always maintained, obedient to this call without call [appel sans appel], to this voiceless

then instead of speaking confusedly of 'ontological disavowal' (which hardly makes any sense), we would do better to see this attempt to define the essence of the political as what best illuminates *a posteriori* the style and argument of 1933." And for Lacoue-Labarthe in 1990, what ties Heidegger's thought of the essence of the political in 1935 to the politics of 1933 is the referral of this essence to the *foundation* of politics or the *polis*. If the essence of politics is the foundational act, according to Lacoue-Labarthe here (and he will cite "The Origin of the Work of Art" and what it has to say concerning the founding of a state), then it is necessarily inscribed in the mytho-logic of law-positing violence: "It is clear that, for Heidegger, 'political,' in the sense in which he became politically committed, means 'historial' and that the act of 1933, having regard to the University, but also, beyond it, to Germany and to Europe, is an act of foundation or re-foundation." Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, pp. 17–8.

[40] Lacoue-Labarthe, "In the Name of...," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 70.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

injunction to whose excessiveness no response can correspond, and yet against which *it is necessary* to measure our impossible "responsibility"?[42]

In short, in the way in which in 1980 both Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy are drawn to the political, to politics in its essence, a problem emerges. If, today, no philosophical, and therefore no ethical, discourse is capable of dictating the political, then in the name of what is it still possible to speak politically at all? What call, law, appeal, injunction, can authorize any political claim whatsoever?

It is the seriousness with which Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy take this problem that leads them into their own institutional adventure, the foundation of the "Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political" in Paris. The address, jointly delivered, with which Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy open this Centre, is dated 8 December 1980 (and the letter by them which will "suspend" its activities is dated 16 November 1984). Its work is placed under the following injunction or "regulative statement":

> Taken as a philosophical question, and from the point of view of what we have for the time being called *the essence of the political*, the question of the political evokes the necessity of dwelling on what makes the social relation possible as such; and that is also to say on what does not constitute it as a simple relation (which is never given), but which implies a "disconnection" or a "dissociation" at the origin of the political event itself.[43]

In their "opening address" to the Centre, and in their 1982 address, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy elaborate this problematic by further investigating what is intended by "the essence of the political," and what is intended by "the retreat of the political." Rather than following these dense papers with the scrutiny that they deserve, critical points will for reasons of economy simply be enumerated.

1. If this Centre's name, and its regulative statement, suggest that what is intended is "philosophical research," then nevertheless this is wholly within the understanding that if the political is in question, then it is equally a matter of questioning the philosophical *about* the political.[44]

2. Therefore, if the "political" is in question, this is not to be understood as a "concept" of the political (for example, in a Schmittian sense). Any such determination of the political in terms of a concept would immediately relate it to

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

[43] Cited in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," in *ibid.*, p. 180, n. 1.

[44] Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "Opening Address to the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political," in *ibid.*, p. 108.

"philosophy," such that the referral of the political to the philosophical is already presupposed and predetermined. If what is to be accounted for is the essential co-belonging of these together, then the account must not presuppose that one exists in relation to the other as a "concept" within its field.[45]

3. This essential co-belonging of the political and the philosophical is not to be understood as simply the historical "fact" that both emerge from the Greek *polis*. The "fact" of this beginning does not determine this essential co-belonging as "our present situation," even if this situation, that is, "the installation of the philosophical *as* the political," remains the effect of a Greek "sending."[46]

4. The "retreat" of the political refers first of all to an *obviousness*, or a blinding obviousness, of the political. This obviousness corresponds on the one hand to a predomination of the political, and an expansion of the political such that it encompasses all spheres, that is, that "everything is political."[47] But this *blinding* obviousness testifies equally to a "becoming unapparent" of the political proportionate to its omnipotence.[48] It testifies, therefore, to the loss of the political, and to a *closure* of the political. This closure means that the political is dispersed into "law" and "power," whereas "the city" withdraws. It is the retreat of a "transcendent" thought of the *polis*.[49]

5. This retreat refers, secondly, to the emergence, from *out of* the blinding obviousness of the political, of the political *as* a question or as an injunction or exigency *to* question. The closure of the political is the opening of the question of the political. And this question emerges as the question of "onto what" the closure of the political takes place, if it is not simply the "apolitical" or the "non-political." The retreat of the political entails, then, a re-tracing of the political, an "engagement," covering again, from the beginning, the ground of the political, such that the political itself moves from obviousness to the possibility of transparency.[50]

6. In conducting this retreat or re-tracing of the political, two overarching questions emerge. The first is: if the political is not simply a concept within the philosophical, or the onto-theological, what becomes of *sovereignty*? If the *polis* can no longer be

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 112–3. And cf., *ibid.*, pp. 113–4; Lacoue-Labarthe, "'Political' Seminar," in *ibid.*, p. 99.

[48] Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," in *ibid.*, p. 126.

[49] *Ibid.*, pp. 129–30. Cf., Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, pp. 47–8.

[50] Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "Opening Address to the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, pp. 112–3; Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat" of the Political," in *ibid.*, pp. 131–2.

grounded in the name of a transcendent *arche*, leaving only a groundless originary an-archy of the *arche*, does this not correspond to an exigency to leave behind any thought of a ground of the political? Yet without any figure of ground or sovereignty, does politics remain possible at all or make any sense? Hence the question of sovereignty is essentially tied to the problem of foundation or ground.[51]

7. The second question emerging from the retreat of the political is what is called by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy the "question a relation." This means the problem of "identification" or the "social bond," but where this must immediately, and from the beginning, already be a matter of dissociation. Without any figure of sovereignty, what thought of "relation" remains possible on which to base any thought of the essence of politics? Nancy had already begun the investigation of this problem in psychoanalytic terms in the paper, "*La panique politique*." It will continue to occupy him in a lengthy series of texts, where it is problematized (among other things) as "*la communauté désoeuvrée*," as "*la comparution*," as "being-in-common," as an ontology and politics of the "tying of the knot," a politics "not of the tie that binds, but of the tie that reties," and in terms of a new "first philosophy"—which is not the same as an "other politics"—of "being-with" or "being singular plural."[52] Between these two questions—sovereignty and relation—lies the entire problem of the political.

[51] Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "Opening Address to the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political," in *ibid.*, pp. 115–6 & p. 119; Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," in *ibid.*, pp. 130–3. Cf., Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, pp. 90–1: "This question forms the contour, if not of the aporia, at least of the paradox of political sense today: without figuration or configuration, is there still any sense? [...] Sovereignty has no doubt lost the sense it had, reducing itself to a kind of 'black hole' of the political. But this does not mean that the sense of being-in-common, inasmuch as sense itself is in common, does not have to make itself sovereign in a new way." And cf., Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 47: "The retreat of the political and the religious, or of the theologico-political, means the retreat of every space, form, or screen into which or onto which a figure of community could be projected. At the right time, then, the question has to be posed as to whether being-together can do without a figure and, as a result, without an identification, if the whole of its 'substance' consists only in its spacing." Also on figuration in its relation to the absence of ground, cf., Nancy, "*La Comparution*/The Compearance: from the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence'," *Political Theory* 20 (1992), p. 393.

[52] Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "Opening Address to the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, p. 118; Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "The 'Retreat' of the Political," p. 133. Cf., Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis & Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Nancy, "*La Comparution*/The Compearance: from the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence'," *Political Theory* 20 (1992), pp. 371–98; Nancy, "Of Being-in-Common," in Miami Theory Collective (eds.), *Community at Loose Ends* (Minneapolis & Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, pp. 111–7; Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, pp. 25–6.

Freiburg, 1942

Heidegger delivers his lecture course on Hölderlin's hymn, "Der Ister," at the University of Freiburg in the summer of 1942. It is delivered, in other words, at a time and in a place where no *praxis* or politics is possible that would not take the form of the logic of war. Where, that is, everything is political, and the political is utterly in retreat. If we wish to place the course most immediately within that form of "historio-spiritual" war and external politics with which Germany was currently engaged against the Jews, then the date of the beginning of the course, 21 April, was three months after the Wannsee conference and three days before Jews were banned from using public transport. The final lecture was delivered on 14 July and, therefore, although the mass gassings at Auschwitz had been underway for a month, it would still be two and a half months before Hitler would declare publicly that the war would end in the destruction of European Jewry.

Considered from within the contours of Heidegger's thought, it is easy to locate the course within a trajectory that began with the failure of the rectorate, and in which, leaving the rigorous project of fundamental ontology to one side, another series of problems occupies centre stage, problems to do with the essence of art and history, and problems for which the most important reference points bore the names of Nietzsche and Hölderlin. Yet if it remains incontrovertible that such a trajectory is visible, and equally clear that this trajectory has everything to do with the trajectory of Germany itself as well as the course of Heidegger's own personal and politico-institutional life, this does not rule out the possibility of other paths that may be equally significant. The problems with which Heidegger was already dealing in 1924–25, for example, were problems that were not *merely* "ontological," as though it were even possible to speak of a region that was only or merely the place of ontology. Heidegger's concern there is not only being, but being *and* the nothing, being *and* logos, and the path that pursues this concern is *also* a path that needs to ask about "Greece" itself, about what is Greek, about the philosopher *and* the sophist, about existence *in* the *polis*, etc. And, however much Heidegger appears to depart from "pure" fundamental ontology in the thirties, all the routes that he does follow remain thoroughly "ontological."

On the other hand, however, each of the lecture courses that Heidegger gives, however much they may indubitably belong to such trajectories, are equally entire works in themselves, and works which respond to whatever exigencies drew Heidegger to deliver them, whether these be philosophical, institutional, political, ethical, or otherwise. As such, it remains the responsibility of the reader to consider each course as a "work," as the outcome of a *poiesis*, as a thing that, bursting forth, comes to occupy its place and its limit. This responsibility is impossible, however,

firstly in principle, but then also due to the way in which the lectures are handed down to us, often in note form or according to the transcriptions of students, and due also to the fact that the written text is always something other than the delivered lecture. This difficulty is evident in the case of the 1942 course, for instance, in the fact that of the three distinct "parts" that make up the course, in the nearly four months it took to deliver, only the first two parts were actually presented (just as, also, the "complete" course of 1924–25 was never presented). There is no sense in which it is possible to speak of this course as a closed, hermetic corpse, a crypt, signed, sealed and delivered to the reader, and upon which a divinatory hermeneutics may be practiced that will restore its "living meaning" as a ghostly voice from 1942.

The polis

Heidegger himself refers to the "political" context, or rather to the *retreat* of the political which forms the context, at the very centre of his lecture course. This "middle" part of the course (or the final part of the actually delivered course) returns to the choral ode from Sophocles' *Antigone* that occupied Heidegger in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. In the course from 1935, in the interpretation of the phrase *hupsipolis apolis*, the *polis* is, as already stated, referred to as the *Da* of Da-sein and the site of history. Heidegger returns to the *polis* when considering exactly the same phrase from the ode in 1942. When he first does so, it is immediately placed into a context, within a passage of history, of the political become blindingly obvious:

> The *polis*. Today—if one still reads such books at all—one can scarcely read a treatise or book on the Greeks without everywhere being assured that here, with the Greeks, "everything" is "politically" determined |"*Alles*" "*politisch*" *bestimmt sei*]. In the majority of "research results," the Greeks appear as the pure National Socialists. This overenthusiasm on the part of academics seems not even to notice that with such "results" it does National Socialism and its historical uniqueness no service at all, not that it needs this anyhow. These enthusiasts are now suddenly discovering the "political" [*das "Politische"*] everywhere, and scholars of the previous century, who first accomplished the careful work of creating texts and editions, are made to appear, in the face of these "most recent discoveries," like blind idiots |*blinde Dummköpfe*].[53]

Yet again, here is a discourse thematizing the exigency of responding to what is happening "today." Inevitably, *today, after* 1942, what strikes the reader is first and foremost the praise that is offered by Heidegger to National Socialism. Just as in

[53] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 79–80.

1935, Heidegger is placing himself in a position *for* National Socialism "itself" and *against* those "enthusiasts" who peddle their works as the "philosophy" of National Socialism.[54] Heidegger's quarrel with "academic" National Socialism remains similar to 1935: whereas then it was the centrality and omnipresence of "values" and "totalities" on the terrain of philosophy, now it is the predomination of the "political." What draws Heidegger to the remark he makes here is *both* something to do with the way in which the "political" is seen today, the way in which it is taken as universally apparent, *and* something to do with the way in which, today, Greece, and the relation to Greece, is grasped. What links these two things together is that "politics" is taken, today, to be "our" essence, an essence taken to be sent from the (theoretical and practical) inventors of politics.[55] In contrast to this philosophico-political Greek *model*, Heidegger states explicitly that the German relationship to the Greek world *cannot* be one of identification or "making the same" (*Angleichung*), nor one of assimilation (*Anmessung*), nor one of equalization, reconciliation, settlement

[54] Cf., Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000, new trans. Gregory Fried & Richard Polt), p. 213. And note that whereas in 1935 Heidegger speaks of the "inner truth and greatness" of National Socialism, and thereby leaves room for the interpretation that he is not speaking of "actually existing" National Socialism, but on the contrary of some "inner" or "true" National Socialism which exists only in distorted form, in 1942, on the contrary, it is simply National Socialism itself, and its historical uniqueness [*geschichtlichen Einzigartigkeit*] that is defended. And, once again, how is it possible to speak of the inadequacy of Heidegger's response *after* the war? Surely the "inadequacy" of Heidegger's relation to National Socialism is already so well established that any *post*-war response inevitably comes too late, can no longer even *approach* "adequacy," and therefore cannot, in all honesty and responsibility, be *expected*. Nevertheless, Heidegger's tone here is equivocal. In his distaste for these enthusiasts and philosophers, Heidegger is drawn to defend the philologists, whose work he is so often accused of arrogantly and flagrantly ignoring. The phrase, "not that it needs this anyhow," remains a somewhat ambivalent defense of National Socialism itself: on the one hand, as standing alone, without the need of the services of its enthusiastic and perhaps self-serving "philosophers"; on the other hand, it sounds like a somewhat casual phrase, thrown in, without elaboration, almost as though Heidegger were engaged in a self-protecting act of lip service. In attacking the *friends* of National Socialism, after all, even in the name of National Socialism itself, one risks, according to the logic of war, appearing as its enemy. As Derrida points out, it may be within such "nonformalizable" ambivalences and equivocations that Heidegger's "political strategies" are played out. Cf., Derrida, "Heidegger's Ear: Philopolemology (*Geschlecht IV*)," in John Sallis (ed.), *Reading Heidegger: Commemmorations* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 201–2.

[55] Cf., Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 202–3. Sluga discusses the work of the National Socialist philosopher Hans Heyse, and in particular his work of 1935, *Idee und Existenz*, according to which the Greeks were the model and the image, providing "a paradigm of the basic forms and values of our own German existence which are primordially related to the Greek ones." For Heyse, Plato's *Republic* taught the unity of knowing and doing, of spirit and power, of philosophy and politics, of idea and existence. A new destiny is prepared in the grasping of these Platonic unities. "[T]he will and the passion to renew the state out of the idea of the *logos*, to grasp and shape the given historical existence through the idea, is the driving motive of the Platonic development." See also the discussion of the work of Hermann Schwarz in *ibid.*, p. 112.

(*Ausgleich*), nor a measure (*Maßstab*) or a model (*Vorbild*) for the perfection or fulfillment of humanity (*der Vollendung des Menschentums*).[56]

The *polis*, then, is no *Vorbild* for "politics," and offers no measure for the ends of man. Heidegger does not "elevate" nor "project" the *polis* as the "exemplary figure" and "historical archetype of the political."[57] The *polis* is explicitly not a form, image, or configuration on the basis of which it would be possible to cut a new figure for the political. When the *polis* is grasped in this way, when for instance the funeral oration of Pericles is interpreted as the fundamental political pronouncement, the "story" of the *polis* becomes the law and the lore from which the *proper type* of politics can be derived. This is inevitably a question of, in Benjamin's terms, mythological violence, that is to say, the retrospective "political" determination of the origin of politics. The *polis* is then, in the name of the most proper "origin" of politics, determined politically. Any "concept" of "politics" (*"politischen" Begriff*) means, in the end, the attempt to grasp at an *image* or *model* of the *polis*, thus to *determine* the *polis* as the place where "politics" is to be found, where "politics" is graspable (in its pure or original *form*). Such a "political" determination of the *polis* proceeds according to the logical error that explains "that which conditions in terms of the conditioned [*das Bedingende aus dem Bedingten*], the ground in terms of the consequence [*den Grund aus der Folge*]."[58]

What is at stake with the political determination of the *polis*, however, is more than just a question of the logical relation between concepts. To formulate "the political" as a concept—as the conceptual stamp that is received from the *Vorbild* that the *polis* continues today to operate as—is to make the *question* of the political into a matter of the adequateness of a representation and the certainty of an impression. This need for certainty means that the concept must be calculable and able to be planned. Whether it is explicitly the Greek *polis* that is taken as the model for the concept of the political, therefore, in any case the grounding form for the concept of the political has become a figure of order.

> The modern *Grundform* in which the specifically modern, self-framing [*selbst stellende*] self-consciousness of human beings orders all beings is the state [*der Staat*].[59]

This sentence demands to be read carefully. What is first most obvious is that this is a statement about the fate of the political in the age of technics. The political is

[56] Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 54 & p. 124.

[57] Véronique M. Fóti, "Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy," in James Risser (ed.), *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 175–6.

[58] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 80.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

grasped as essentially an ordering, a picture of order. The state emerges from out of a thought *of* the state as design-*able*. The state is the plan for steering human beings self-consciously, the figure and the instrument of planned governance. Today, the concept of the political presupposes the state.

The political grasped as a *concept* is therefore essentially instrumentalized, technicized. Such a reading of Heidegger's text makes it essentially congruent with an "Aristotelianism" that wishes to rescue the political in its specific moment from its neutralizing and depoliticizing technical conceptualization, from the logic, that is, that more properly belongs to the *oikos*. What remains unthought in such a reading, however, is the relation of modern "self-consciousness" to the *selbst stellende* that conditions it. This phrase brings this thought within the horizon of the series of terms based on *Stellen* that Heidegger will later deploy in trying to grasp the essence of technology. Here, Heidegger is answering the question: what is the state? His answer is that the state is that form that grounds human beings *as* those beings that order all beings. And the form of human beings that the state grounds are *selbst stellende* self-conscious human beings. But what does it mean to be self-framing *as* self-consciousness. and what does it mean that the state is the *Grundform* of human beings as *self*-framed self-conscious beings? To frame oneself *as* self-conscious cannot be an *act of* self-consciousness, but on the contrary, as the act that originates self-consciousness immediately puts into doubt the "self" and the "consciousness" that *carries out* the act of self-framing. Secondly, how is the "state" to be understood here, if it is the essential *form of* human beings *as* self-framing? Is "the state" the name for *our* modern *act* of self-framing as self-consciousness, or is it the name for what, without any action by "us," *forms us as* self-framing, self-conscious, ordering beings?

What must be thought, in other words, is the relation between "*Grundform*" and "*selbst stellende*." Perhaps a clue lies in what Heidegger had already said about *Gestell* in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Having found that truth establishes itself in the work, having found that one way truth occurs is in the act that founds a state, that another way is in essential sacrifice, having found that truth essentially occurs as the strife between concealment and unconcealment, Heidegger finds that "strife" ("*Streit*") is "*Riß*." *Riß* does not signify a rift that tears apart, as much as it does that from out of which what is opposed belong to each other. The *Riß* is the r.... of the common ground. Naming something—strife, *agon*, antagonism—*as Riß*, therefore, can never be simply a matter of giving a word to a concept, cut out of reality, for *Riß* is the trace of what gives rise to separation and therefore to the possibility of naming.[60] The *Riß* "is the drawing together, into a unity, of sketch and basic design

[60] Cf., Derrida, "The Retrait of Metaphor," *Enclitic* 2, 2 (1978), pp. 27–8.

[*Aufriß und Grundriß*], breach and outline [*Durch- und Umriß*]." The strife that is fixed in place in the work has the form of figure, *Gestalt*. *Gestalt* "is the structure [*das Gefüge*] in whose shape the *Riß* composes itself [*der Riß sich fügt*]." Figure is the way in which *Riß* and work occur together. But, even if it means sketch and design, figure does not mean *Vorbild*, but on the contrary *Ge-stell*: "What is here called figure [*Gestalt*] is always to be thought in terms of the *particular* placing [*Stellen*] and enframing [*Ge-stell*] as which the *work* occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth [*insofern es sich auf- und herstellt*]."[61] *Ge-stell* is nothing other than the name for the following problem: how is the notion of *establishing* truth (in the work) to be understood *with* the notion of "letting truth happen" from out of the *Riß*?

Conditioning *Selbstbewußtsein* with the phrase *selbst stellende* means withdrawing self-consciousness from subjectivity. The relation between the state as *Grundform* and human beings as self-conscious lies in the relation between *form* and *stellen*, between stamping and placing. If the state is that form that grounds and frames human beings as self-conscious, then this thing the state, in its essence, cannot itself be simply an object for self-consciousness. The state does not communicate itself to us, and in the "concept" of the state we do not communicate with what the state is. As a *Grundform*, the state is the name for what frames us as those self-framing beings that order all beings. The state, as *Gestalt* and *Ge-stell*, figures and frames us *as* framed, as *self*-framing. The *concept* of the state is not a piece of information, not a technique of communication, but that essential *informare*, stamping, impressing of form, by which "we" are framed as the self-framers. Withdrawn from consciousness, as the origin of our self-framing as self-conscious, as what steers us toward being those beings that calculatingly and coercively plan and govern, the concept of the state is essentially *cybernetic*.[62] Precisely because it is

[61] Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993, revised & expanded edn.), pp. 188–9.

[62] Cf., Heidegger & Eugen Fink, *Heraclitus Seminar* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1979), pp. 12–4. Note that in this late text, Heidegger is concerned with the thought that what cybernetics describes is information without consciousness, for instance, the transmission of genetic information as it stamps itself into the living thing that it becomes. And note that, in this connection, what specifically occupies Heidegger is the inadequacy of any "conception" of steering itself that necessarily makes of it a violent or "coercive" phenomenon. The gene steers or governs the coming-into-being of the living thing without being coercive, just as modern technology is a kind of governance, with its own history and its own destiny, that it may not be possible to describe as violent. It must be said, however, that in 1942, it is less clear that technology is so wholly withdrawn from "subjectivity" or from "consciousness," and that Heidegger does insist on speaking as though technology has its own violent *awareness*. Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 44: "What is distinctive about modern technology is that it is no longer a mere 'means' [*'Mittel'*] at all, and no longer merely stands in the 'service' of something else, but that it itself is unfolding a kind of domination of its own. Technology itself demands of itself and for itself, and indeed intrinsically develops, its own kind of discipline and its own kind of awareness of conquest [*eine eigene Art von Bewußtsein des Sieges*]."

the *Grundform*, today, for human beings as self-framing, self-consciousness, the concept of the state cannot itself be reduced to an object of consciousness.

According to this reading, therefore, the distinction between *polis* and state is not reducible to a distinction between a non-subjective and a subjective, that is, technical, determination of the political, of political *form*. The state, too, withdraws from subjectivity, by being that thing that conditions and frames us as "self-consciously" political planners and governors. This is what makes it necessary to describe the state not as a concept, but as a *Grundform* that *determines* a concept of the political. The state is the fate of the *polis*.

Nevertheless this determination of the political in terms of the state is, as has already been stated, *also* a *technical* determination. "The political is determined in terms of history grasped [*begriffenen*] according to consciousness, that is, experienced in a 'technical' manner."[63] As determined in relation to "consciousness," the political is a matter of calculation and planning. As therefore *technical*, the political is determined as a *theoria* that *serves* historical action, grasped as "accomplishment": "The 'political' is the accomplishing [*Vollzug*] of history."[64] The *concept* of the political, then, always means that, as calculable, politics *serves* the doing or making—the *production*—of history, just as *techne* means the form of knowing that serves production, that serves in bringing something—a thing, an artifact—into the limit of its existence. Determining the political as a concept, as technical, therefore, is equally to determine a concept of history. No longer *Geschichte*, a question of destining and sending, history is merely grasped as "*historisch*," as the *Art und Weise* of how it is set down and framed, *steht*. History, in such a configuration, is grasped as a thing, something done, made and known consciously by "us," as something factually graspable.

That the political is determined conceptually, that is, as what is consciously certain, as what makes history calculable, able to be planned—*technical*—joins this lecture with the rectorate address. In both cases, what "we" have forgotten, what has forsaken "us," is the *possibility* handed down by the Greeks, the possibility of a thought that responds to *what is worthy of questioning*.

> Because the political is thus the technico-historical [*technisch-historische*]
> fundamental certainty of all action [*Handelns*], the "political" is marked by an
> unconditional questionlessness [*Fraglosigkeit*]. The questionlessness of the "political"
> belongs together with its totality.[65]

[63] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 94.
[64] *Ibid.*
[65] *Ibid.*

That is to say, insofar as the political is grasped technically, in terms of the conscious certainty of action that plans and calculates its relation to history, the political remains a *theoria* that guides or determines a *praxis* or *poiesis*. Far from eliminating the philosophical, therefore, such a questionless *technisch-historische* "concept" of the political is precisely what ensures its "theoretical" involvement *with* the philosophical. Already for the Greeks, the *thought* of the *polis* is essentially philosophico-technical: "This priority of *techne* begins where sophistic finds its completion [*vollendet*] in philosophy: in the thought of Plato."[66] It is in Plato, as the completion and accomplishment of sophism, that the *polis* is first determined "politically," that is, according to a technical conception. Plato imagines that he, the philosopher, stands as nothing other than the antithesis of the sophists. In fact, however, the (political) exaltation of philosophy corresponds, for the first time, to the transformation of *techne* into technics.[67] It is beginning with Plato that *poiesis* divides itself between art and technics, just as it is beginning with Plato that, within this division, politics will be aligned—philosophically—with technics, against art. The exclusion or subordination of the poets is the first symptom of this transformation.[68]

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[67] In short, Heidegger is already making the case concerning the relation between technics and the Greek philosophers that he will make in the first paragraph of the "Letter on 'Humanism'," *Pathmarks*, p. 240: "In order to learn how to experience the aforementioned essence of thinking purely, and that means at the same time to carry it through [*zu vollziehen*], we must free ourselves from the technical interpretation of thinking. The beginnings of that interpretation reach back to Plato and Aristotle. They take thinking itself as a *techne*, a process of deliberation in service to doing and making. But here deliberation is already seen from the perspective of *praxis* and *poiesis*. For this reason thinking, when taken for itself, is not 'practical.' The characterization of thinking as *theoria* and the determination of knowing as 'theoretical' comportment occur already within the 'technical' interpretation of thinking. Such characterization is a reactive attempt to rescue thinking and preserve its autonomy [*Eigenständigkeit*] over against acting and doing. Since then 'philosophy' has been in the constant predicament of having to justify its existence before the 'sciences.' It believes it can do that most effectively by elevating itself to the rank of a science. But such an effort is the abandonment of the essence of thinking."

[68] And here, perhaps, lies a difference between 1942 and the rectorate address. Although both speak of what is worthy of question in its contrast to modern forsakenness, in 1933 the *Republic* seems to be cited as the conjunction of what *questions* with what *stands*, precisely as, that is, the configuration of the philosophico-technical, grasped *positively*. Whereas, in 1942, the exclusion of the poets seems to indicate Plato's *weakness*: the political is grasped technically, as the self-positing, self-framing, but in order to deny the sophistical, technical essence of this concept of the political, Plato tries to bind it to the philosophical. The philosophical is the name of the *proper* ground of the political. And the *means* by which the philosophical is able to function as the proper ground of the political is the exclusion of the *poietic*, that is, by forgetting the law-positing violence of political *poiesis*, of philosophico-technical (which is still "mythological") political foundation. Just as Benjamin argues, it is not any power of poetic language that demands that fraud (that is, poetry) be prohibited, but fear of the violence which is falsely imagined to exist outside the philosopher's *polis*.

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The questionlessness of the technical, conceptual determination of the political should not be taken, therefore, as equivalent to a forgetting of philosophy, nor of the spirit of philosophy. That the concept of the state is "cybernetic" means precisely that it has its own kind of governance, even if, as instituting the history of law-positing and law-preserving governance, this is a governance that withdraws from governance. For what is technical is also nevertheless equally *of spirit*:

> It is a fundamental error to believe that because machines themselves are made out of metal and material, the machine era is "materialistic." Modern machine technology is "spirit" ["*Geist*"], and as such is a decision concerning the actuality of everything actual [*die Wirklichkeit alles Wirklichen*]. And because such a decision is essentially historical, machine technology as spirit will also decide this: that nothing of the historical world hitherto will return.[69]

The blinding obviousness of the "instrumental" understanding of technology, the grasping of it as "merely" a means, ought not to blind us to the fact that technology means essentially a decision. Being-technological does not mean a decision about the world, about how to see or to take the world, but a decision that opens up a world *as* technological, as cybernetic. Thus it is a mistake to see the history of the "state" as a history of the effects of tyrants and revolutionaries, but on the contrary tyrants and revolutionaries are themselves only symptoms within our enframing by the emergent history *of* the state. Insofar as the concept of the state is the *Grundform* for the determination of the political, insofar as the state is what is presupposed by the political, the political is determined according to the logic of positing and position. What differentiates the state from the *polis* is not the difference between the emptiness of technology and the proper decisiveness of *praxis*. Both are grounding forms that open a world, but the *polis* cannot be reduced to the state because the *polis* cannot be defined as the place where our relation to the world is given and posited as "self-framed."

If the *polis* is not a political concept, then ultimately it means that it can never be grasped and secured by any *definition* at all. Yet surely the word "*polis*" is capable of definition. Did the Greeks not have a definition for this word? Heidegger's answer is twofold. Firstly, Heidegger suggests that just because the Greeks may have

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Philosophy, far from being the name given to the theory and *praxis* of questioning, itself names the necessity, within the "concept" of the political, for a forgetting and a concealment of all foundational questions. Philosophy names the certainty that there is a determinable groundplan for the *polis*. But such a reading of Plato by Heidegger itself remains ambivalent and equivocal, for he *also* does not fail to find the ontological essence of the *polis* in the relation Plato draws between the political and the philosophical. Thus Heidegger also wishes to rescue Plato from the technicization and politicization of his interpreters. Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," pp. 85–6.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

possessed a definition of the *polis* is no reason to presuppose that they in fact understood what this word names, is no reason to suppose that they may not in fact have been capable of *misunderstanding* what the *polis* is. Perhaps the fact that the Greeks did not really begin to theorize about the *polis* until toward the end of the Greek era *of* the *polis* suggests that it was only late in its life that the *polis* became "unapparent," in want of understanding, in need of questioning. And perhaps this is no guarantee that the *polis* "itself" will emerge for the Greeks and find adequate means for becoming visible in a *logos*. The sophistic, Platonic, or Aristotelian *polis* may all, more or less, rely on the *anthropos logikos* as the guarantee for their conception, yet might it not be the case that, even if the political is thereby tied reciprocally to the philosophical, what is most essential about the political is nevertheless missed or evaded?[70] That *the* Greek fact was the becoming-obscure of being, and that for the Greeks existence means existence in the *polis*, already suggests why it is that the *polis*, specifically, withdraws from determination by the Greeks. More centrally, "nothing passed down can bestow without mediation what is essential, nor does the latter appear without signs from the tradition."[71] Or, in other words, the problem of the political, which in Greek bears the name *polis*, cannot be immediately or mimetically grasped from the facts or philosophies of Greece simply because that is its origin. Yet, on the other hand, the *polis* remains as what is sent to us from Greece *as a problem*, hence as requiring our mediation, and we therefore cannot begin to approach this problem while simply ignoring the signs of this sending as though they were mute.

Secondly, however "correct" a definition may be, this cannot guarantee that what is essential to the thing that is named with this word does not elude this definition. And this may even be because "whatever is essential wishes, in itself and of its own accord, to remain within the realm of that which is worthy of question."[72] In other words, the essence of the thing may be that which withdraws, that which does not remain within the limits of its definition, that which does not allow itself to be apprehended conceptually. *Perhaps* the *polis* itself, beyond its definition, in its

[70] Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, "Opening Address to the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political," in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *Retreating the Political*, pp. 109–10: "This reciprocal involvement of the philosophical and of the political (the political is no more outside or prior to the philosophical than the philosophical, in general, is independent of the political), does not for us simply refer, even on the level of 'historicality,' to the Greek origin—it is not a shortcut to the Sophistic *polis* and its guarantor, the *anthropos logikos*. It is, in reality, our situation or our state: by which we mean, in the mimetic or memorial after-effect or *après-coup* of the Greek 'sending' which defines the modern age, the actualization or installation of the philosophical *as* the political, the generalization (the globalization) of the philosophical *as* the political—and, by the same token, the absolute reign or 'total domination' of the political."

[71] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," p. 81.

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

essence, is what withdraws from all determination, from all theoretical account. "Perhaps the name *polis* is precisely the word for that realm that constantly became questionable anew, remained worthy of question, made necessary and indeed needed certain decisions whose truth on each occasion *deposited* [*versetzte*] the Greeks into the realm of the groundless and inaccessible."[73]

The pole, the swirl

Perhaps, in other words, the *polis* is the position that de-posits, the place that displaces or, as Nancy expresses it, the "disjunctive exposition," the "disposition."[74] Thinking the *polis* would then be a matter of thinking the *Da*, not as a position, but as the presentation without presentation of its own withdrawal. Rather than constituting a concept or a *praxis* that conforms or configures to any *arche*, the *polis* would be the name for the originary an-archy as such of any law, that from out of which the possibility of any *arche* emerges.[75] In the rectorate address, what is critical is not the fact that questioning is named as the "highest"—rather, it is the fact that questioning is determined as the highest form of *knowing*. In 1933 it appears that the Greeks were, first and foremost, those most properly attuned to what is worthy of questioning. In 1942, however, the Greeks are not presented as those who *know* to question what remains most worthy of being questioned. Dwelling within the *polis*, the Greeks are even those for whom the possibility for such questioning does not arise. It is the *polis* "itself," and not the Greek "knowledge" of it, which preserves the fact of its questionworthiness.[76] It is not Greek *theoria* concerning the *polis* that

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 80–1, emphasis added. Thus the state, as *Grundform*, is not only what "we" posit but more particularly what posits "us," placing and framing us as self-conscious, self-framing, whereas the *polis* is what deposits the Greeks in a placeless place without frame.

[74] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 23. Cf., Marc Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say—Heidegger's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 123: "Thus, Heidegger would have come back to the *polis* as to that place [*lieu*] which *makes a place for* [*donne lieu*] any politics and which, as such, 'is absolutely not a "political" concept.' This strange retraction governs Heidegger's 'position,' a position that in a certain way is no longer one at all, but rather a de-position."

[75] Miguel de Beistegui reads Heidegger's account of the *polis* in this way. Cf., de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political: Dystopias* (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 128–9: "This, I believe, is the specificity of the analysis from 1942 to 1943, one that matches perhaps an evolution in Heidegger's thought with respect to the Greek beginning, at least as it was envisaged in 1935, itself different from the way it was approached in 1927, that is, as an evolution whereby the task of thinking is no longer subordinated to the repetition of a question, or of a comportment, but to the step back beyond the beginning into the domain of an *arche*-beginning. This, as we suggested earlier, is perhaps the point at which thinking becomes an-archic."

[76] Cf., Marc Froment-Meurice, who recognizes that the *polis* does not constitute an authentic political "model" for Heidegger, yet appears to argue that still in 1942 the Greeks

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exposes it to what remains hidden and uncertain, to the groundless and the inaccessible. Rather, the *polis* is what exposes the Greeks themselves, in its retreat into unappearance, and their unknowing. As what constantly becomes questionable anew, as what de-posits the Greeks into the realm of the groundless and inaccessible, the *polis* is what remains philosophy's *problem*—the *polis* is philosophy's "subject or space in the mode of being its problem, its aporia."[77]

Heidegger writes the following concerning the *polis*: "The *polis* is *polos*, that is, the pole, the swirl [*Wirbel*] in which and around which everything turns."[78] Whereas, until this point, all statements concerning the *polis* were placed under the sign of a "perhaps," here there is something like a thesis. If Heidegger has something *positive* to say concerning the *polis*, it begins with this proposition, and with the relation of these two words: *der Pol, der Wirbel*. Heidegger himself immediately relates this doublesided aspect of the *polis* to *pelein*, and thus to the etymology that Detienne thinks is not only unfounded, but also the end of politics. Relating *polis* to *pelein*, to "being," means removing it from the triviality of merely human politics.[79] That the *polis* is the pole means nothing other than it is what anchors humans to the truth of being, that it names the possibility for standing constantly in the truth of being. Heidegger, after all, says: "The essentially 'polar' character of the *polis* concerns beings as a whole."[80] Yet Heidegger here says "beings," not being. *Der Pol* and *der Wirbel* are related to what is constant *and* change. And if what is at stake with the polar aspect of the *polis* is a kind of standing—to which humans relate and which relates humans to all beings—nevertheless Heidegger does not give to this polarity the function of a kind of *guarantee* of the unconcealment of being, nor a guarantee that humans will dwell with and according to the truth of being. It is not permissible to leap from the thought that the *polis* relates to a kind of "standing"—a *stand* of humanity in its

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are those for whom the *polis* is in question. Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say—Heidegger's Poetics*, p. 126: "Against the modern model of the State, it would be necessary to erect the more 'authentic' model of the Greek *polis*. We could interpret Heidegger's gesture in this way and, once again, would follow the wrong path, not only because he nowhere proposes to return to the Greeks, but also because the *polis* is anything but a model (which it never was, except from the modern point of view, from Rousseau to Hegel). It is not a model because it is highly questionable, and that for the Greeks themselves: the 'worthy-of-question' par excellence, in contrast to modern politics, which shelters itself from every question in its principle of unconditional self-certainty."

[77] Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p. 23.

[78] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," p. 81.

[79] Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), pp. 27–8. Cf., Heidegger, *Parmenides* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 90. And cf., p. 96, where the Greeks are characterized as "utterly unpolitical." Also, cf., Dominique Janicaud, *The Shadow of That Thought: Heidegger and the Question of Politics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 102.

[80] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," p. 81.

instances and its *circumstances* (*einem Stand mit seinen Zuständen und Umständen*)—*to* the idea that what stands in the *polis* is being in the simplicity of its truth.[81] That all *relation* turns around the *polis* does not mean that the *polis* names the *substance* of relation, for the *polis* itself is what withdraws from relation.

In short, the polarity of the *polis* cannot be grasped aside from its also being *der Wirbel*. This term is found in § 38 of *Sein und Zeit*, on *Verfallen*. For Taminiaux, *Verfallen* is one of those concepts that prove that Heidegger is unconcerned with actual being-with-others, that the only true authenticity lies in radical solitude, and that for Heidegger, who submerges *phronesis* into *sophia*, all being-related-to-others, and hence all politics, is merely inauthentic.[82] Only by "detaching oneself" from inauthentic fallenness are anticipatory resoluteness or primordial temporality graspable.[83] Thus Taminiaux, like Detienne, reads Heidegger's thought concerning the *polis* and the "ground" of the political realm as "speculative."[84] The *polis* is the transcendent ground for non-political proper dwelling, design-able only by those who, in their solitude, have left behind the inauthentic plurality of the politics of the fallen.

Such a "reading" of *Verfallen* and of its relation to the account of the *polis* by Heidegger in the 1940s, however, depends upon not reading what Heidegger actually says about *Verfallen* in § 38. Regardless of how frequently it is written by Heidegger's critics, it does not become more certain that to speak of "everdayness" and "publicness" as entangled with non-being can only mean the exclusion by the solitary philosopher of "human plurality." With the very introduction of the term Heidegger indicates that *Verfallen* does not imply anything "negative." *Verfallen* is examined as a way of more carefully understanding *die Uneigentlichkeit des Da-sein*, but Heidegger immediately adds that "inauthenticity" does not mean a kind of being lost, "but rather it constitutes precisely a distinctive kind of being-in-the-world," "a *positive* possibility of beings which are absorbed in a world, essentially taking care of that world."[85] *Verfallen* does not mean a "fall." Before it is possible to

[81] *Ibid*. Cf., de Beistegui, *Heidegger and the Political*, p. 136. Note that de Beistegui sees this relation of the *Pol* to the *Wirbel* as indicating that the *polis* attracts and organizes beings "in a specific configuration, a constellation or a *cosmos*." Perhaps there is something at stake in the difference between configuration, constellation, and cosmos. Putting that to one side, however, de Beistegui seems to be reading Heidegger as accounting for the possibility of politics in its being and non-being, and doing so by relating the *polis* to an *originary configurability* of beings.

[82] Jacques Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 131–2.

[83] *Ibid*., p. 91.

[84] *Ibid*., pp. 134–5.

[85] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), pp. 175–6.

interpret Heidegger's account of *Verfallen*, if one wants to claim to be interpreting *Heidegger's* account, it is first necessary to take notice of the explicit boundaries erected by Heidegger with which he attempts himself to forestall any misreading. Only with this "positivity" of *Verfallen* and *Uneigentlichkeit* in mind, is it possible to approach what Heidegger means—when speaking of *Verfallen*—by the *"non-being"* that "must be conceived as the kind of being nearest to Da-sein."[86] Only with this "positivity" in mind is it possible to approach what Heidegger means when he states that the movement of plunging into *uneigentlichen Sein* tears (*reißt*) understanding away from projecting *eigentlicher Möglichkeiten.*[87]

What, then, is added by the remembrance of this "positivity," if it is still a matter of being torn away from "authenticity"? Nothing other than the impossibility of conceiving "inauthenticity" as leaving behind or falling away from "authenticity." The relation of authenticity to Da-sein is given as *reißen*. If we choose to hear this *reißen* that grants the relation between Da-sein and its authenticity through the problematic of *Riß*, then the account of *Verfallen* is the precise point in *Sein und Zeit* where being-with or being-in is figured in its possible-impossibility. The *Riß* is the opening of being-in-the-world, and inauthenticity is the necessary consequence of this being-open. That is why Heidegger can then write the following:

> However, if we hold on to the being of Da-sein in the constitution indicated of *being-in-the-world*, it becomes evident that falling prey *as the kind of being of this being-in* rather represents the most elemental proof *for* the existentiality of Da-sein. In falling prey, nothing other than our potentiality for being-in-the-world is the issue, even if in the mode of inauthenticity.[88]

"Falling prey" is not some way of relating that *opposes* another kind of being-with, but rather *both* are modes of the same potentiality for being-in as such. That the world opens for Da-sein means that Da-sein can figure the world, can trace back over the beings of the world that are then "figured" for it. Thus in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger states:

> [T]he knower forges into the midst of *Fug* [that is, *dike*], tears/draws [*reißt*] being into beings [and Heidegger adds, in parentheses, in the 1953 edition: *im Riß*], and yet is never able to prevail over the overwhelming.[89]

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[86] *Ibid.*, p. 176.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[89] Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (new trans.), pp. 171–2. For commentary on this passage, cf., William McNeill, "Porosity: Violence and the Question of Politics in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14, 2–15, 1 (1991), pp. 205–6: "If, however, the *polis* is not merely the happening of human existence, but the place of happening of being itself, and if this very happening is itself withdrawal, then the human being's ultimate inability to prevail must be nothing other than the withdrawal

The "knower," Da-sein, is the one who figures being into beings, tears into being without ever being able simply to dwell within being. Inauthenticity names the fact that what distinguishes Da-sein is that beings leave their trace, and that, *communicating* with beings, with others, Da-sein can never present *things* without also presenting things in their tracing. Inauthenticity is the trace of the common ground with others, the necessity for "figure" in being-with-others. *Reißen* does not indicate a movement that "tears Da-sein away" from its originary authenticity. If *Verfallen* can be described as a movement, a "constant *reißen*," it is not a matter of being torn away from one place toward another, but on the contrary a movement that lies between two of Da-sein's (impossible) possibilities, never leaving one for the other. *Verfallen* means a movement toward what Da-sein always already is, and what it remains. The term with which Heidegger describes this movement that does not get anywhere is *Wirbel*.

> The facticity of Da-sein is such that, *as long as* it is what it is, Da-sein remains in the throw, and is drawn into the swirling of the inauthenticity of the "they" [*in die Uneigentlichkeit des Man hineingewirbelt wird*].[90]

Da-sein is drawn into the swirl of inauthenticity. What, then, is the "pole" in this situation? Less "pure" being, perhaps, than non-being, or being in its *withdrawal*, or being *as* withdrawal. Da-sein is ceaselessly immersed in its world, a world that, as long as it has been opened, is opened to the inauthentic. Da-sein's potentiality for inauthenticity is the pole toward and around which it constantly moves, incapable of escaping its pull. Da-sein is the kind of being that, relating to being, is always and from the beginning capable of forgetting and mistaking being.[91] The wandering of Da-sein is always slightly off track.

"Authenticity," then, is nothing like a counter-pole, or another power, that draws Da-sein away from the pole of inauthenticity. Such a movement could not be described as *der Wirbel*. The potentiality for "authenticity" is more like a *centrifugal* force, not itself a centre of power, perhaps even the *mirage* of a force, the existence

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of being itself. Being itself, however, is thought with respect to the overwhelming prevailing of beings as a whole. In the withdrawal of being in the prevailing of *techne* with respect to the work, there lies a withdrawal of beings as such and as a whole."

[90] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 179. The essential ambiguity of Heidegger's "position" on the relation between *Eigentlichkeit* and *Entschlossenheit*, however, is admittedly revealed in the final sentence of the following passage (pp. 298–9), containing as it does a "temporal" equivocation that Heidegger appears content to let stand: "But, as care, Da-sein is determined by *Faktizität* and *Verfallen*. Disclosed [*erschlossen*] in its '*Da*,' it remains equiprimordially in truth and untruth. This is 'properly' [*eigentlich*] true in particular for resoluteness as *eigentlichen* truth. Thus resoluteness appropriates untruth authentically [*Sie eignet sich die Unwahrheit eigentlich zu*]. Da-sein is always already in irresoluteness, and perhaps will be soon again."

[91] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," p. 76.

and actuality of which is only revealed *by* its relation to the pole of inauthenticity that constantly draws Da-sein inward. *Der Wirbel* is the very term that reveals that Da-sein can never "detach itself" from inauthenticity in order to grasp its own authenticity. Da-sein is neither attached nor detached from *uneigentlichkeit*. Because Da-sein's relation to its own inauthenticity is one of *constant* eddying, swirling, "authentic existence" cannot be something "hovering [*schweben*] over" Da-sein, a firm grasp of which will lift Da-sein out of inauthenticity. Rather, authenticity means a "modified grasp" of everydayness, not a pathway *out of der Wirbel*, not a *return* to Da-sein's true path, but the possibility of gaining some kind of bearing in relation to the whirlpool of inauthenticity, an inauthenticity that *remains* the pole of Da-sein's everyday and "public" relatedness to beings as a whole. In summary: "authenticity" is not the sign that Da-sein can stand firmly fixed, sovereignly centred in its own pole, free from the eddying of (necessarily inauthentic, "fallen") *relation*, or relation-to-others. On the contrary, the very fact that Da-sein exists within a relation to a pole signifies its ex-centricity, and the very possibility of relation depends upon this ex-centricity.

Just as the state does not refer to "an order of relations," but that *framing* out of which ordering can happen, so too the *polis*, in being pole and swirl, is that occurrence of the *Riß*, that eddying tracing, out of which a relation to all beings can happen that is *not* immediately an ordering, not immediately a matter of certainty, self-consciousness, technicity. Thus, it is not that Heidegger is for the *polis* against the state, on the grounds that the *polis*, our origin before technicity, returns us to the propriety before technicity. Rather, the *polis* and the state are *equally* forms in which the relation to all beings takes place. In the latter, "politics" is something that is obvious and unquestioned. That the *polis* might have something to say to us, today, is not a matter of return, but the symptom that, the political having become blindingly obvious in its ubiquity, it withdraws, and what was unquestionable within the state (and not properly questioned in the *polis*) becomes an *apparent* question, for the first time. The state, the political grasped as concept, decides that nothing of the past shall return, yet the retreat of the political opens onto the question of the *polis*.

For Taminiaux, Heidegger's treatment of the *polis* in the 1940s reproduces the structure of the opposition of "authentic" and "inauthentic" that privileges the position of the solitary philosopher over all "human plurality."[92] One risk with this

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[92] Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, pp. 134–5. Also, cf., Fóti, "Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy," in Risser (ed.), *Heidegger Toward the Turn*, p. 176: "Heidegger, however, thinks the *polis* ontologically and aletheically, rather than in

kind of "Arendtian" argument is that, relying upon the apparently incontestable validity of the weapon being wielded against Heidegger, that is, the concrete actuality of "human plurality," such plurality itself becomes something of an *arche*, an unquestionable and unbreakable presupposition. The thing itself, "human plurality," is immediately identified with the essence of the political, and the absence of this *phrase* in Heidegger is immediate confirmation that "politics," too, is absent from Heidegger. The consequence is that what is heard in Heidegger's account of the *polis* is its "polarity," grasped as its ontological and stable centrality, and not that it is *der Wirbel*. But the examination of *Verfallen* in *Sein und Zeit* makes clear that what it means to be the pole is not something separate from being the swirl. The *polis* is not the pole, that is, the sovereign guarantee of Da-sein's access to being, *and then also* the swirl, a place in which there can be found inauthenticity, publicness, politics. The *polis* is not the authentic place of being, but what, as the pole, withdraws from all position. The polarity of the *polis* is this movement of withdrawal that, in its withdrawal, keeps its relation to all beings. Thus when Heidegger offers a description of the *elements* of the *polis*, it is difficult to see how it is possible to accuse him of any kind of expulsion of human plurality, even if he insists that these elements must not immediately be identified with "politics."[93]

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terms of pluralistic *praxis*." For Fóti, the fact that for Heidegger the *polis* is the pole and the "pivot" is further evidence for its "ontological" character, rather than the reverse. The basis for such readings, in other words, is the presupposition that for the *polis* to be "ontological" is necessarily the exclusion of the "pluralism" of human *praxis*. Could it not be, as Nancy argues, that the very thought of the "plural" involves thinking in relation to "ontology"?

[93] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 82: "Yet what is the *polis* if its distinctiveness lies in being a kind of pole? It is neither merely state, nor merely city, rather in the first instance it is properly 'the stead' [*die Statt*]: the site [*die Stätte*] of the abode of human history that belongs to humans in the midst of beings. This, however, precisely does not mean that the political has priority, or that what is essential lies in the *polis* understood politically and that such a *polis* is what is essential. Rather, it says that what is essential in the historical being of human beings resides in the pole-like relatedness of everything to this site of abode, that is, this site of being homely in the midst of beings as a whole. From this site and stead there springs forth whatever is granted stead [*gestattet*] and whatever is not, what is order [*Fug*] and what is disorder, what is fitting [*Schickliche*] and what is unfitting. For whatever is fitting determines destiny [*das Geschick*], and such destiny determines history [*die Geschichte*]. To the *polis* there belongs the gods and the temples, the festivals and games, the governors and council of elders, the people's assembly and the armed force, the ships and the field marshals, the poets and the thinkers. [...] From out of the relation to the gods, out of the kind of festivals and the possibility of celebration, out of the relationship between master and slave, out of a relation to sacrifice and battle [*Opfer und Kampf*], out of a relationship to honor and glory, out of the relationship between these relationships and from out of the grounds of their unity, there prevails what is called the *polis*. For this very reason the *polis* remains what is properly worth of question, that which, on account of such worthiness, prevails [*waltet*] in permeating all essential activity and every stance adopted by human beings. The pre-political essence of the *polis*, that essence that first makes possible everything political in the originary and in the derivative sense, lies in its being the open site of that fitting destining [*Schickung*] from out of which all human relations toward beings—and that always means in the first instance the relations of beings as such to

If on the other hand we are permitted to question "human plurality," then what must most obviously first be asked is the following: what is at stake *between* "human plurality" and Heidegger's *polis* as a ground for politics? If "human plurality" is the ground of politics, does this indicate a ground in "difference," a ground in our *not* being related to the other, or else a ground in our *relation* to the other, which therefore immediately *conditions* the *plurality* of the human? If we say that the meaning of human plurality is difference, then the question becomes: how does difference translate to politics, which, if nothing else, necessarily involves our "being together"? How does such difference become the ground of anything other than an "infinite ethics"?

The inevitable response to such reasoning is that politics is nothi   ther than the possibility, *within* difference, for being together. Thus politics is not the reduction of our differences to a "totalitarian" agreement, but rather the possibility for co-existence within difference. But what is the ground for this possibility, if not the thought that we are not *only* existing within difference, but that we are already a "we," that we are *already*, therefore, within the *polis*? Without the "we," would not the ground for co-existence within difference be nothing other than the fact of the possibility of (apolitical) *law*, of a technics that regulates difference? And if our "already being a *we*" is something presupposed, rather than what remains worthy of question, are we not already dwelling within the "everything is political" of a kind of totalitarianism? Perhaps the presupposition of human plurality, then, is susceptible to concealing a presupposition that, in spite of our difference, *we* are all friends, friends of the wisdom that makes us a community of the different. This is therefore a logic that remains "philosophical," beginning with the "philosophical" thought of a community of *doxai*, yet open at all times to judging who is no longer or never was a proper friend of this wisdom.

Thus, once again, Plato is not the antithesis of the plurality of the sophists, but in fact its completion. It is with Plato that the threat of the uncontrollable difference of *poiesis* first becomes governed and governable according to the law of technics. It is the *Heideggerian* diagnosis that the technical understanding of politics is not the forgetting but rather the instituting of the philosophical. But neither can the philosophico-political tradition that has been handed down through the interpretation of Aristotle be the way out of the political, conceptual determination of the *polis*. Within this tradition, what is "remembered" first of all, is that humanity is the *zoon politikon*, and that therefore the *polis* is the place of "politics," the place of political *praxis*, humanity's end in itself. Such a tradition conceives itself as being the

humans—are determined." Cf., Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (new trans.), pp. 162–3.

very remembrance, *contra* Plato, of human and political finitude and antagonism. Yet what such an Aristotelian tradition continues to imagine is that Aristotle gives us a *typology* of the *polis*. The *polis* is grasped as the completion or accomplishment of humanity, as the limit into which it pours itself in its fullness, which means into the proper form for the containment and resolution of difference. This traditional relationship to Aristotle conforms to grasping "our" relationship to the Greek world as a matter of *der Vollendung des Menschentums*. If *praxis* means action as accomplishment, then politics means the accomplishment of the human in its being-together in the *polis*, even if this end is thought asymptotically. And the mechanism for this accomplishment is precisely thought to be the technics of proper debate and decision, for resolution of difference within an acceptance of the law of decision. Political philosophy is then the *ordering* of the finitude of humanity, an ordering that brings what is finite into the infinite possibility of completion; it relies on the possibility that antagonism is securely "orderable." Politics then becomes the *system* whereby "we," we whose speech is recognized and valid, take charge of our destiny and control our course.

When Heidegger states that the *polis* is *der Pol, der Wirbel*, it is this kind of "Aristotelian" political philosophy that is being excluded. The *polis* is not the name for a Platonic transcendent harmony, nor for a system that organizes the plurality of debate into properly functional legislation. Heidegger states explicitly that from the pole of the *polis* comes not just order but disorder, what is fitting and what is unfitting. It is not a question of rescuing the pole from the swirl, the authentic from the inauthentic. The *polis* is the pole and the swirl *because* the *polis* is what withdraws. The *polis* is not the substantiality of relation, the sovereign guarantee of being a "we," but what, in its withdrawal, *grants* relation, in the positivity of its *Uneigentlichkeit*. For Heidegger, this is also a question of Aristotle against the Aristotelians. That the human being is *zoon politikon*, and that the human being is *zoon politikon* because it is *zoon logon echon*, are not the invitation to "institute debate" as political *praxis*. This remains the "philosophical" interpretation. As Heidegger was already stating in 1924–25, *logos* is not the place where *aletheuein* is at home. In 1942 it is not a question of a "true" politics, grounded in the truth of unconcealment, guaranteed by the *polis*. Heidegger insists: that human being is *zoon logon echon* means that humans are those beings who can address beings with respect to their being.[94] But, far from determining politics as a philosophical,

[94] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 83: "No one asks why the human being is and is able to be a 'political being.' One pays no attention to the fact that Aristotle also provides the answer to this question at the beginning of his *Politics*. The human being is a *zoon politikon* because the human being, and only the human being, is a *zoon logon echon*—a living being that has the word, which means: *that* being that can address beings as such with respect to their being. Who or what the human being is precisely cannot be decided

speculative *praxis*, the fact that humanity is *zoon logon echon* is what *places* it into the endlessly questionworthy *problems* of ground and relation. That human beings are *zoon politikon* is ensured not by the truth of the relation to being, but by the fact that, *in* existing within the ex-centric, *uneigentlich* relation to being, they are those who must persist within the fact of a relation to being *and* non-being:

> Human beings are placed into the site of their historical abode, into the *polis*, because they and they alone comport themselves toward beings as beings, toward beings in their unconcealment and concealing, and can be mistaken within the being of beings, and at times, that is, continually within the most extreme realms of the site, must be mistaken within being, so that they take non-beings to be beings and beings to be non-beings.[95]

There is therefore continuity between 1924 and 1942 in terms of the *centrality* of non-being. The problem of being, from Greek Da-sein to today, is the problem of the withdrawal of being, the problem of non-being. There is continuity too in the translation of *kalon*, which in 1924 does not mean "beautiful" but rather "its proper ontological character."[96] Similarly, in 1942, "non-beings" is the translation of "*to me kalon*," which, once again, must not be thought as the "un-beautiful." From Plato *kalon* and *agathon* are related, and "the beautiful" becomes the highest idea, the possibility of a proper fit, that which delivers a relation to the distant and constant. Yet even Plato remains a "transition," and *kalon* is also thought "non-aesthetically," insofar as it is associated with being. Hence, also, there remains another sense of *to me kalon*:

> In the pre-Platonic sense, *to me kalon* therefore means non-beings [*das Un-seiende*], those beings that are not altogether nothing [*das nicht schlechthin nichts*]—but rather, as beings, are "opposed" ["*zuwider*"] to beings in a counterturning [*gegenwendig*] way—that is, something that entangles the senses [*was die Sinne verwirrt*] and entangles us in that which is without constancy [*und in das Bestandlose verstrickt*] and is thus unable to let anything come to constant presencing [*und so nichts zum beständigen Anwesen kommen läßt*], except the possibility of not being [*die Möglichkeit des Nichtseins*], a mere threat to being, the absencing and annihilating of beings. To the extent that human beings are "together" with non-beings, so that they take non-beings as beings, they have entrusted beings to the danger of annihilation, put them at stake/into play [*es aufs sein Spiel gesetzt*].[97]

'politically' according to *that* thinker who names the human being the 'political being,' because the very essence of the *polis* is determined in terms of its relation to the essence of human beings (and the essence of human beings is determined from out of the truth of being). Aristotle's statement that the human being is *zoon politikon* means that humans are those beings capable of belonging to the *polis*; yet this entails precisely that they are not 'political' without further ado."

[95] *Ibid.*, p. 87. Cf., Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (new trans.), p. 170.

[96] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 255.

[97] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 88–9. On *kaion* in Plato, cf., Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 53: "In the *Phaedrus* Socrates declares that what distinguishes the beautiful

Once again, non-being does not mean nothing at all, but refers on the contrary to the way Da-sein is *together* with being *in its withdrawal*.[98] Beings in their obviousness and their concealment play out the *symploke* between being and non-being. The human entanglement with non-being in the *polis*, that is, the way in which beings are put at stake in *der Wirbel* of the *polis*, is one *form* in which beings themselves play out this entwinement. "Thus beings themselves play out their appearances [*So spielt das Seiende selbst seinen Schein aus*] and hide non-beings within such appearances."[99] Being and non-being is played out in the *polis* between *der Wirbei* and withdrawal. Yet this *Spiel* does not make the *polis*, in its essence, an example (*Beispiel*) of being, in the sense of any kind of privileged figure for being: "nowhere in beings is an example [*Beispiel*] given for the essence of being, because the essence of being is itself in the play [*weil das Wesen des Seins das Spiel selber ist*]."[100]

If the *polis* remains an *arche*, then this is only on the condition that what we remember from Aristotle is that the *archai* remain what is inaccessible via *logos*. This does not make the *polis* "transcendent" in the sense that in the proper *polis* lies the possibility of dwelling beyond mediation, beyond the mediation of *logos*. Rather, what is true of *zoon logon echon* is true for *zoon politikon*—if there are *archai*, then these are what stand as testament to the fact that *logos* and *polis* can retreat, possibilities grounded in *logos* and *polis* themselves.[101] This retreat is not the presentation of the essence of *logos* and *polis*, but the becoming unapparent of *logos* or *polis* in their withdrawal from presentability. Similarly, the *polis*, like *logos*, is not the condition for the possibility of dwelling authentically, truthfully, but more like the reverse. That human beings belong to the *polis* means nothing other than that not only being but also non-being must be involved in the form of their being-

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from all else is that it is the most shining forth (*ekphanestaton*) and the most beloved (*erasmotaton*). Leaving the latter determination aside (as expressing the link between the beautiful and *eros*), one can say: the beautiful is that which shows itself (*phainesthai*) forth; it is the being that most shines forth in its self-showing, that shines forth into and in the domain of the visible, the generated. *The beautiful* names the shining-forth of being in the midst of the visible, and whatever among generated things can be called beautiful are such precisely by their capability for letting such shining forth occur."

[98] Cf., William McNeill, "Porosity: Violence and the Question of Politics in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*," p. 206: "A non-being (*das Unseiende*) does not mean that which simply is no being at all, but that which belongs to b... as a whole in the very withdrawal of this 'as a whole'."

[99] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 89.

[100] Heidegger, "The Onto-theo-logical Constitutional of Metaphysics," *Identity and Difference* (New York, Evanston & London: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 66 & p. 134. This is translated by Joan Stambaugh as: "nowhere in beings is there an example for the active nature of Being, because the nature of Being is itself the unprecedented exemplar," which, at least, draws the connection between *Spiel* and *Beispiel* that is untranslatable in English.

[101] This relation between *polis* and *logos* (and also *physis*, *techne*, *theion*) as what the Greeks do *not* think about, receives discussion in Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 160–4.

together. The difference between *polis* and state is not the difference between the absence and presence of non-being at the heart of being-together, but on the contrary the difference between two grounding forms of the entwinement—the swirl—of being and non-being in being-in and being-together. For Aristotle, politics is *praxis*, and tied thereby to the finite. Yet, in spite of Aristotle's insistence upon the finitude of *praxis*, and on the necessity of granting to *phronesis* the impossibility of its being reduced to *sophia*, nevertheless the *form of presentation* of this insight—*theoria*, philosophy—maintains its claim upon a *logos* tied to the everlasting.[102] l s *figures* in Aristotle. By 1942 it is not in Aristotle but in Sophocles that *ethos*, the pole and swirl of relation, of being-in and being-together, is more properly preserved.

[102] Thus, too, here is the gap between the "phenomenological research" of 1924–25 and of *Sein und Zeit*—for which Aristotle is the most crucial reference point—and the "thinking" that Heidegger is engaged in by 1942. Cf., William M·Neill, "A 'scarcely pondered word.' The place of tragedy: Heidegger, Aristotle, Sophocles," in Miguel de Beistegui & Simon Sparks (eds.), *Philosophy and Tragedy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000).

Chapter Six

The Figure of the Law

> *"What tragedy depicts is one cike in conflict with another, a law that is not fixed, shifting and changing into its opposite. To be sure, tragedy is something quite different from a legal debate. It takes as its subject the man actually living out this debate, forced to make a decisive choice, to orient his activity in a universe of ambiguous values where nothing is ever stable or unequivocal."*
> Jean-Pierre Vernant.[1]

Heidegger's *polis* withdraws from any political determination. That is, there can be no guarantee that any concept of "politics" will make possible an approach toward what Heidegger thinks concerning the *polis*.[2] If the *polis* in any way remains an *arche*, this must refer to an *arche* in the proper sense, as something prior to any concept of the political. Such a conclusion means little, however, for those for whom the task remains to assign the philosophical in Heidegger to the political. Cracks where it is still possible to gain a foothold in the Heideggerian edifice may be identified, at least being in those very few places where Heidegger risks referring to "politics" not *merely* to differentiate it from the true substance of thought. There is, for example, a moment in his reading of *Antigone* in 1935 where, having listed all those beings that belong to the *polis* (the gods, the temples, the priests, the celebrations, the games, the poets, the thinkers, the ruler, etc.), Heidegger dares to ask what makes these things *political*:

> All this does not first belong to the *polis*, is not first political, because it enters into a relation with a statesman and a general and with the affairs of state. Instead, what we have named is political—that is, at the site of history—insofar as, for example, the poets are *only* poets, but then are actually poets, the thinkers are *only* thinkers, but then are actually thinkers, the priests are *only* priests, but then are actually priests, the rulers are *only* rulers, but then are actually rulers. *Are*—but this says: use violence as violence-doers [*als Gewalt-tätige Gewalt brauchen*] and become those who

[1] Jean-Pierre Vernant, "The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece: Some of the Social and Psychological Conditions," in Vernant & Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 26.

[2] Cf., Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Transcendence Ends in Politics," *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 267.

rise high [*Hochragende werden*] in historical being as creators, as actors [*als Schaffende, als Täter*].[3]

A Promethean delimitation of the political is thus presented. The political means the conjunction of creating and doing, an interweaving of *praxis* and *poiesis*. Politics is the creative violence of those who are violent, of the form-giving creators, and those who, rising high, are not subject to the judgment of the sub-political mass who merely reside in the *polis*.[4] As creators, as those who ground in each case, they are without ordinance and limit, without *Bau und Fug*, outside the law, for they themselves are the *arche* of the law. Most generally, politics is thereby referred to *techne*, and to art:

> The political (the City) belongs to a form of *plastic art*, formation and information, *fiction* in the strict sense. This is a deep theme which derives from Plato's politico-pedagogic writings (especially *The Republic*) and reappears in the guise of such concepts as *Gestaltung* (configuration, fashioning) or *Bildung*, a term with a revealingly polysemic character (formation, constitution, organization, education, culture etc.) The fact that the political is a form of plastic art in no way means that the *polis* is an artificial or conventional formation, but that the political belongs to the sphere of *techne* in the highest sense of the term, that is to say in the sense in which *techne* is conceived as the accomplishment and revelation of *physis* itself.[5]

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe refers here not specifically to Heidegger, but to a certain Germanic dream of politics as a work of art, into which it would be possible to place Heidegger's thought. *Techne*—which in 1935 is characterized as building, *Erbauen*, and "knowing pro-ducing" ("*wissendes Hervor-bringen*")—is "essentially the same" as *physis*.[6] *Techne* is thus on the one hand referred to a kind of facticity. But, as also a ficticity, a figuring, forming, fashioning, the political *techne* is the "accomplishment" of *physis* in the sense of emerging from an "excess" which is proper to *physis* itself. Thus, in 1935, *physis also* means essentially the same as *dike*, and the *agon* between *dike* and *techne*—that is, the *deinon*—is nothing other than the accomplishment of this excessive relationship. That the *polis*, and the creator, are violent, means nothing other than that they accomplish the figuring of this excess.[7] Politics is

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[3] Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2000, new trans. Gregory Fried & Richard Polt), p. 163.

[4] Cf., Clare Pearson Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Richard Polt & Gregory Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 172; cf., Véronique M. Fóti, "Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy," in James Risser (ed.), *Heidegger Toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 166.

[5] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 66.

[6] Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (new trans.), p. 18.

[7] Cf., Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Polt & Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 167; cf., William McNeill, "Porosity: Violence and the Question of Politics," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 14–5 (1991), p. 189. Both Geiman

figuring, it works through works, but the violence of this working is *also* at the service of *physis*, of *dike*, that is, of being. "The overwhelming, being, confirms itself in works *as history* [Als Geschichte, *bestätigt sich werkhaft das Überwältigende, das Sein*]."[6] That is, the truth of politics is something not subject to the judgment of justice, but something that, coming from *dike*, is an act of self-confirmation. Confirmation, then, does not refer to a structure of difference and delay, to any kind of aporia, but still here to the self-assertion of the creator who violently gives him- or herself the law.

Confirmation, again

Being, the overwhelming, confirms itself in works as history. The resources that permit such a law of history to be formulated are to be found in *Sein und Zeit*. What is at stake in such a formulation is a law of history, or a law that history confirms, that is, a law of confirmation. The law of confirmation for *Derrida* means the law that inauguration, the instituting of the institution, begins with a "yes," but that this "yes" immediately *calls for* its own repetition, the memory of that initial promise. It means *secondly* that this repetition is at once the preservation of this memory *and the*

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and McNeill argue that what draws *deinon* into the constellation of *Walten* and *das Gewaltige* is this relation to "excess," with, however, different results. For Geiman, what this indicates is that at this time what stands out for Heidegger is that *techne* is a "forcible imposition" upon *physis*, that human action is a violent necessity, an exceeding of limits rather than a revelation of the limits of human action and knowing. For McNeill, this excess is more like a *differential* structure, a name for nothing other than the finitude of human being in relation to being. Michel Haar, too, notes the relation between *physis*, *Walten* and *Gewalt*, and like McNeill emphasizes that to translate this as man's "doing violence" is misleading. But whereas McNeill widens the meaning of violence beyond its everyday meaning, Haar *limits* what Heidegger is referring to in order to exclude it from the possibility of being understood *as* violent. *Da-sein's Gewalt-tätigkeit* cannot be grasped as acts of violence, according to Haar, because those activities Heidegger is referring to—poetry, thought, the founding of states—require "control" and a harmonizing with and taming of the overwhelming. Heidegger cannot be referring to ordinary violence—brutality, force, injury—because "no control can result from violence." But this act of exclusion is not found in Heidegger, for whom it is clear that the violence of *deinon* refers to *more than* everyday violence, without it ever becoming apparent that this thereby removes the *deinon* from also being violent in an everyday sense. There is a sense in which Heidegger, like Benjamin, is with *deinon* trying to think the "*Gewalt*" as such. Cf., Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 153–4. Also, cf., Haar, *The Song of the Earth: Heidegger and the Grounds of the History of Being* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 105–6. Finally, does not Haar's exclusion of "violence" from *deinon* itself repeat an oratorical exclusion practiced by the Greeks themselves, as noted by Loraux, according to which sovereignty is expressed with the term *arche* rather than *kratos*, and where the whole point is to protect the former from contamination by the uncontrolled and dangerous violence of the latter? Cf., Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City: On Memory and Forgetting in Ancient Athens* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), pp. 56–7.

[6] Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (new trans.), p. 174.

threat to what is thereby instituted. It is not that the second "yes" which confirms the first is somehow destructive, but that the very structure of difference and delay—a mechanical, technical structure—is in itself haunted by this need for repetition.[9] This *need* means that the second "yes" always threatens to become something like an automatic repetition rather than an "actual" affirmation. But it *also* means that the original "yes," the inauguration, is without confirmation *yet*, in need of confirmation, that it is a "yes" to something that *is not yet*, the sign and seal of what is not yet delivered, hence marked with its own ficticity, pretense and "retroactivity."[10] What is inaugurated remains haunted by the possibility that there will no longer be confirmation, and hence remains threatened by the possibility that what was inaugurated *never* was at all, that history will *renounce* the work.

Surely this *différantial* law of confirmation is nothing but the deconstruction of confirmation, and hence of the law of confirmation as it appears in *Sein und Zeit*. Heidegger speaks of confirmation in section 44 (a), "The Traditional Concept of Truth and its Ontological Foundations." The relation between these two parts—the traditional concept of truth on the one hand; ontological foundation on the other—means the relation between "truth" and "disclosedness for Da-sein." "Truth," traditionally, means "agreement" (*"Übereinstimmung"*), and depends upon the judgment that there is agreement between what is "real" and what is "posited." To know that a statement is true means that it must be available for "confirmation" (*"Bewährung"*). But, Heidegger asks, do we know what confirmation means? With the answer to this question Heidegger moves from the traditional concept of truth to the question of its ontological foundation. Asking about the truth of something means asking about the truth of a statement about a thing. Confirming such a statement means confirming our perception of that thing. Being able to confirm the statement, "we are a people," for example, means confirming our perception that the thing that we are, a people, is.

But, Heidegger states, making statements is itself a way of being to..ard that thing itself. Confirming a truth really means confirming the disclosure that happens in our being toward the thing in question: "what is to be confirmed is *that it*

[9] Jacques Derrida, "The Villanova Roundtable: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida," in John D. Caputo (ed.), *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), pp. 27–8.

[10] Cf., Derrida, "Declarations of independence," *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2001* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 49–50: "The 'we' of the Declaration speaks 'in the name of the people.' [...] But these people do not exist. They do *not* exist as an entity, the entity does *not* exist *before* this declaration, not *as such*. If it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can hold only in the act of the signature. The signature invents the signer. This signer can only authorize him- or herself to sign once he or she has come to the end—if one can say this of his or her own signature in a sort of fabulous retroactivity. That first signature authorizes him or her to sign."

discovers [entdeckt] the being toward which it is." Statement, assertion, is an *act*, an act that discloses, and this disclosure is also what *confirmation* does. But this does not make assertion, true statement, merely *invention*, something fictive or fabulous, because what is discovered and confirmed is the relation to what *shows itself* in the relation to the thing. What is stated, the thing, the being, shows itself as being the same thing that it is. *"Confirmation* means *the being's showing itself in its self-sameness* [Selbigkeit]."[11]

Are we not thereby justified in distinguishing between Heidegger's law of confirmation and Derrida's, on the basis that Heidegger's is a thought of the *possibility* of confirmation, and Derrida's a thought of confirmation in its *impossibility?* Such a conclusion is tempting, but in the end it is not possible to confirm such a distinction. Firstly, because it is not clear that for Derrida, just because the structure of confirmation is both "mechanical" and "haunted," that thereby inauguration or confirmation is *necessarily* impossible. But it is also clear that by ontological foundation Heidegger does not mean the simple appearance of what is in its coming toward the possibility of being stated in its truth.

Firstly, what *leads* Heidegger to the description of confirmation is the question he explicitly raises about the relation between the real and the ideal, that is, about truth. Truth is supposed to *"subsist"* (*"bestehen"*), that is, to continue to stand.[12] What leads Heidegger to pursue the being of confirmation is the need to ask about the meaning of "standing."

Secondly, if confirmation means the being's showing itself in its self-sameness, does this not imply that confirming means showing *again, another* showing, which, even if it *repeats* what is shown in its *being* the same, is still *an-other* showing? If there were no iterability, then 'truth" would simply stand, continue to stand The need for confirmation shows that even if what is confirmed remains the same, the showing that confirms a true statement remains a "yes" that follows the original showing.

Thirdly, there remains an ambiguity about the initial discovery of truth. There remains a sense in which it appears that truth *is* inventive or violent. That Da-sein is a being *capable* of discovering comes out of Da-sein's facticity, that is, out of the fact

[11] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), p. 218: "What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its object, still less something psychical with something physical, but neither is it an agreement between the 'contents of consciousness' among themselves. What is to be demonstrated is solely the being-discovered of the being itself, *that being* in the how of its being discovered. This is confirmed by the fact that what is stated (that is, the being itself) shows itself *as the very same thing. Confirmation* means *the being's showing itself in its self-sameness.* Confirmation is accomplished on the basis of the being's showing itself. That is possible only in that the knowing that asserts and is confirmed is itself a *discovering being toward* real beings in its ontological meaning."

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

that Da-sein has always already fallen prey, is already within untruth. Again, truth, discovery, is an *act* of Da-sein, a cutting into things or figuring of beings, a matter of the *Riß*: "Truth (discoveredness) must always first be wrested from beings. Beings are torn [*entrissen*] from concealment. The actual factical discoveredness is, so to speak, always a kind of *robbery.*"[13] Discovery and confirmation are possibilities that come from the fact that Da-sein is *placed* in an essential way within the swirl of *un*truth.[14] Heidegger immediately refers to the poem of Parmenides, and to his placement between two paths—hence at the crossroads—of truth and untruth.

Truth and its confirmation are *acts* of distinguishing and deciding. The *polis* is this crossroads, the place from out of which comes the possibility of inaugurating and confirming, including inaugurating and confirming politics and political truths. Thus, if *being* confirms itself in works as history, this does not necessarily mean that the creator, the one who acts violently, simply *conforms* to "being" in what is set up, and is simply vindicated by history. That *being*, the overwhelming, confirms, and that this confirmation happens in history, are two sides of a *limit* to the power of the possibility of "our" confirming what is instituted or agreed.

Nevertheless, some kind of need draws Heidegger back to *Antigone* in 1942. In the later reading Heidegger appears not to engage a rhetoric of "violence" in the same way as in 1935, and the relation of Da-sein to being is not staged as the *agon* between *techne* and *dike*. This has been interpreted as a response to the realization by Heidegger that the characterization of Da-sein as a violent creator remains within the logic of subjectivity, and that only a more "passive" or "poetic" relation to being can avoid the risks of legitimating a violent politics.[15] Such an interpretation, however, risks re-writing the law of confirmation, such that the acts of Da-sein simply reveal and confirm being without iterability. The opposition of a "poetic" to a "technical" relation to being, where one is violent and the other non-violent, maintains its own relation to subjectivity, and contains its own political risks, the risks of an "aesthetic" politics. Against this reading, what will be argued is that in 1942 Heidegger is rethinking the law of confirmation, not by rejecting the structure of confirmation, but by putting into question the very idea of law.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 222.

[14] And cf., Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Basic Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993, revised & expanded edn.), pp. 185–6.

[15] Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Polt & Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics.*

Sovereignty and burial

How is it possible, as Vernant describes tragedy, for one law to be in conflict with another? Can there be a law that is not fixed, that shifts, and that changes into its opposite? Vernant observes that "the fact is that law is not a logical construction. It developed historically, out of 'prelegal' procedures."[16] Yet, even given this fact, does not law, like logic, fundamentally rest upon the exclusion of contradiction? Does it not rest upon the idea that, in spite of the historicity of its origin and emergence, it *must* rest, must stand, that, like logic, the law of identity is fundamental, such that law must *remain* what it is, and *cannot* change into its opposite? If law does not stand, for now at least, then it cannot be law. The possibility of judgment, for instance, rests upon a certain remaining-standing of law. Such is the idea of law.

Why, then, if Vernant is correct about what is staged in tragedy, does tragedy *happen*? He argues that tragedy occurs at a turning point, at the moment when a gap appears in the heart of "social experience," when *there is* law, yet when what law *stands for* is still questionable.[17] The law pursued in tragedy is still in the making and, furthermore, is pursued through the presentation of the extreme, exceptional situation.[18] Tragedy is the *polis* staging the problem of law by turning itself into theatre.[19] What is at stake is a difference between the ideal and the real, the idea of the law, the idea that there is law, and the fact that there is conflict, lawlessness, contest, between specific determinations of the law. What tragedy draws from the law is the technics of its terminology, legal language, and what it stages is the possibility for such language to hold more than one meaning, to remain equivocal.[20] Vernant insists that in *Antigone* the conflict is not between "state" law and "religious" law, but "between two different types of religious feeling."[21] Furthermore, neither of these two religious laws can wholly exclude the other. Tragedy, then, is not the staging of a conflict in order to distinguish and decide the correct law, but the staging of the conflict in the heart of divine law itself, that is, a cosmic conflict, a conflict in being.

The legal conflict in *Antigone* concerns the placement of the hearth. What is at stake is the *position* of the law—the question of whether the *meson* is the hearth or

[16] Vernant, "The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece," in Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 25.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[18] Vidal-Naquet, "Oedipus Between Two Cities: An Essay on *Oedipus at Colonus*," in Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 339.

[19] Vernant, "Tensions and Ambiguities in Greek Tragedy," in Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 33.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

the pole. Or, rather, whether the *meson* is in the middle of the *oikos* (Antigone) or the middle of the *polis* (Creon). Or again, what is at stake and in play in *Antigone* is the *positing* of the law as such—a debate about the *arche* of the law, the law of laws. Creon's law is nothing other than the law of the sovereign exception, the beginning and end of law as such. As is also the case for the sovereign at the head of the Leviathan, the act that institutes the law, that grants sovereignty *to* the sovereign, is for Creon the act of submission *to* the law, *whatever it is*, in justice *and its opposite*.[22] The law of the sovereign must stand, in the name of the *polis* as what must be protected and preserved. From the moment of the institution of the sovereign, sovereignty becomes a question of the sovereign determination of friend and enemy.[23] Only in this way can the sovereign fail to be false, *pseude*, to the *polis*.[24]

Before it is possible to conclude too surely that Creon thereby represents an antidemocratic spirit, it must be remembered that Solon and Cleisthenes are the founding heroes of democracy for the Greeks, and that in both cases what was crucial was that, after a period of disorder, of political sickness and darkness, of *crisis* in law, they were each *given the power* to institute their "reforms." Only by being capable of enacting their laws, only by giving or taking the freedom to *make* these laws, to make them stand, could democracy emerge *as a possibility*. The *archon* is the one to whom is given sovereign rights, in the face of *dike* and its opposite. The

[22] Cf., Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, revised edn.), p. 122: "Because the Right of bearing the Person of them all, is given to him they make Soveraigne, by Covenant onely of one to another, and not of him to any of them; there can happen no breach of Covenant on the part of the Soveraigne; and consequently none of his Subjects, by any pretence of forfeiture, can be fr⁓ from his subjection." The sovereign is thereby conceived by Hobbes, as Robert Ber asconi expresses it, "as a beneficiary rather than as a party to the contract." Thus, as Bernasconi points out, in this conception of sovereignty—the conception of Hobbes and Creon—an agreement among the "subjects" to grant sovereignty, to institute the sovereign, an agreement that must obviously occur *prior* to this act of institution, is *also* an agreement that institutes the subjects *as* subjects, as subject *to* the sovereign. Cf., Bernasconi, "Opening the Future: The Paradox of Promising in the Hobbesian Social Contract," *Philosophy Today* 41 (1997), pp. 78–9.

[23] Sophocles, *Antigone*, 184ff. (line numbering following the Loeb edition of 1994): "I would never be silent, may Zeus who sees all things for ever know it, when I saw ruin coming upon the citizens instead of safety, nor would I make a friend of the enemy of my country, knowing that this is the ship that preserves us, and that this is the ship on which we sail and only while she prospers can we make our friends." As in the Leviathan, then, here the sovereign must conform to certain laws, yet no subjects within the *polis* have the right to judge this conformity.

[24] Sophocles, *Antigone*, 655ff.: "For since I caught her openly disobeying, alone out of all the city, I shall not show myself false to the city, but I shall kill her! In the face of that let her keep invoking the Zeus of kindred! If those of my own family whom I keep are to show no discipline, how much more will those outside my family! The man who acts rightly in family matters will be seen to be righteous in the city also. But whoever transgresses or does violence to the laws, or is minded to dictate to those in power, that man shall never receive praise from me. One must obey the man whom the city sets up in power in small things and in justice *and its opposite*."

law of sovereignty means the possibility of one decision, rather than what makes the *polis* many and not one. The law of sovereignty is what is meant when Plato argues that the best *polis* is the one most like a singular individual.[25] What most threatens the *polis* with ruin is the possibility for disagreement about sovereign concerns. There exists, of course, a long tradition of such reasoning *by* the defenders of "democracy." It can be seen "structurally" in many "democracies," for instance, in the placement of the armed forces under the command of the head of state, the representative of the sovereign decision of the state as such. When what is at stake is the preservation of the existence of the state, according to such reasoning, the state must be able to act as an individual, and be able to count on its ability to *make* decisions in the name of its self-preservation.

The chorus *ambiguously* confirms the sovereign's right to decide, in justice and its opposite, and to decide without limit, as reigning equally over the living and those no longer living.[26] For Antigone sovereignty has its limits. Or, rather, what is truly sovereign *is* the instituted limit. If Antigone stands for the law of the *oikos*, of the hearth of the house, this does not mean that she thinks economically. It is not Antigone but Creon who speaks of the preservation of the living. For Antigone the law of laws is not the right to preservation of the living, but the right to preservation in memory of the dead. What matters to Antigone is the law of burial, but this too is not just any law. What is burial? Burial is nothing but the "living out" (through death—the death of the other) of the law of confirmation. Burial is a rite, that is, it possesses its own mechanics. Funerary rites have their proper form, beginning with *prothesis*, the laying out of the corpse, then the *ekphora*, the public carrying and display of the corpse (on its procession to or beyond the borders of the *polis*), the burial itself (a private rather than a public event, followed by the technics and pyrotechnics of sacrifice and banquet), and ending with the marking of the grave—the *sema*, the sign of what remains present in its absence.[27]

To what end is this technics of burial directed? Burial is the confirmation of the dead, and the confirmation of the inaugural "yes" to the *memory* of the dead, through the inscription of death in ritual. Death calls for its confirmation, in order not simply to mean the utter vanishing of the dead. The grave and its mark stand as testimony to the memory of the singularity of the one who has died. The *sema* marks a boundary and a distance, the separation of those who are living from the hearth

[25] Plato, *Republic*, 462. Also, cf., *Crito*, 51.

[26] Sophocles, *Antigone*, 211ff.: "It is your pleasure, son of Menoeceus, to do this to the man who is hostile and to the man who is loyal to the city; and you have power to observe every rule with regard to the dead and to us who are alive."

[27] Cf., Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 190–4.

beneath the earth, but stands also as the memorial to the nearness of this distance. Burial is obsignation—the sign and seal. When Antigone refers in *Oedipus at Colonus* to this *chthonian hestian*, it is out of the longing to *see* the tomb, the site that marks Oedipus' absence.[28] What is marked is the still-being-together-with the dead, even in spite of death as revealing of—as Heidegger says—the ownmost nonrelational possibility, the utter singularity, of the dead (Polynices singular irreplaceability). But, in conformity with the law of confirmation, this memorialization is haunted by the dead themselves in each of their singular instances, a threat to our instituted relation to them. Haunted, too, by the technicity of the act of burial, which threatens, even in its private moments, to be *merely* a public event, merely a mechanics of memory rather than a living memory, merely a tranquillization and evasion of death in its singularity.[29]

Antigone has been interpreted as a response to this haunting. The *polis* is the place of the advent of technics, the place of the possibility of passage through all things, and this means, the place in which the confrontation with the fact of the *impossibility* of by-passing mortality is staged. Technical life—that is, dying.[30] Hence the *polis* is the place in which mortality is rendered subject to economico-technical demands. With the curbing of funerary expense, and the limits placed upon mourning, the *polis* risks "domesticating" death, subordinating it to the "economic" considerations that place the living above the dead. The *polis* is haunted by the possibility that, legislating death, the dead are appropriated and forgotten in the name of an economically determined politics. *Antigone*, then, is the staging of the sacrifice of the heroine, with whom the *polis* identifies, a public act of "true," confirmable memorialization, that restores and re-founds the balance of justice in the *polis*.[31] Such an interpretation makes too simple the opposition between a law of the *oikos* and a law of the *polis*. Antigone then would not represent the memory of the singularity of the individual in their death in contrast to the collective law of the *polis*. On the contrary, she would then represent another, proper, *arche* of the law as such. Law, in its institution, cannot have a legal origin. Yet this does not mean, as it does for Creon, that sovereignty demands obedience without limit. Rather, the origin of sovereignty, of sovereign singularity, is the singularity of the individual in their mortality. Sovereignty cannot appropriate death, cannot decide for or against

[28] Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, 1726.

[29] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 253–4.

[30] Cf., Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 186.

[31] John D. B. Hamilton, "Antigone: Kinship, Justice, and the Polis," in Dora C. Pozzi & John M. Wickersham (eds.), *Myth and the Polis* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 86–98.

the law of proper burial, for this is to appropriate the inappropriable, the *arche* of sovereignty itself.[32]

In other words, the law is cryptic. It is not just that its linguistic technics is ambiguous, but that the possibility for this ambiguity comes out of the non-legal exception that *founds* the law, a beginning that must be marked, re-marked, that is, confirmed, *and at the same time* hidden, concealed, forgotten.[33] For the law to stand, for it to be legal *today*, from now on, it must *know* its origin in the form of not knowing it, must remember it in the form of forgetting its original violence and non-legality. Law, even law that calls itself "natural law," begins with a crypt, or, in other words, the fundamental *invention* is not "politics" but the crypt.[34] Law *begins* with the differentiation between a proper and an improper relation to death, the inappropriable. Thus the crypt covers *both* of the etymological meanings of *dike*: both *sign*, mark (from which comes the meanings of *dike* as custom, way, etc.), and *boundary* (from which comes the meanings of *dike* as settlement, the line of division and separation).[35] Tragedy presents the cryptic essence of law not as an abstract legal fact, but as what is "lived out" in the *polis*. More than that, tragedy *is* this act of memory *and* forgetting, this staging of the memory of the exception in order for the "balance of justice" to be, constantly, refounded.[36]

[32] Cf., Dennis J. Schmidt, "Can Law Survive? On Incommensurability and the Idea of Law," *University of Toledo Law Review* 26 (1994), p. 150.

[33] Cf., Derrida, "*Fors*: The Anglish Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok," in Nicolas Abraham & Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. xiv: "What is a crypt? No crypt presents itself. The grounds [*lieux*] are so disposed as to disguise and to hide: something, always a body in some way. But also to disguise the act of hiding and to hide the disguise: the crypt hides as it holds. Carved out of nature, sometimes making use of probability or facts, these grounds are not natural. A crypt is never natural through and through, and if, as is well known, *physis* has a tendency to encrypt (itself), that is because it overflows its own bounds and encloses, naturally, its other, all others." In terms of the psychoanalytic theories of Abraham and Torok that Derrida is concerned with here, the crypt is the consequence of the mourning that cannot take place, the loss that cannot be repressed, that is, forgotten, the result of *what must not have happened*. The crypt is the result of the exception to proper mourning, the exception that in fact haunts all work of mourning. Is this not what is pointed to by Hamilton's reading of *Antigone*, according to which what is staged is the impossible forgetting of Polynices, such that the *polis* can "go on" legislating funerals, that is, the memory and forgetting of the dead?

[34] Cf., Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 279: "The fact that it is man who invented the sepulchre is evoked discretely. One cannot finish off someone who is a man as if he were a dog. One cannot be finished with his remains simply by forgetting that the register of being of someone who was identified by a name has to be preserved by funeral rites."

[35] Cf., Michael Gagarin, "*Dike* in the *Works and Days*," *Classical Philology* 68 (1973), p. 82.

[36] Thus, would not an equivalent today to tragedy be phenomena such as "truth and reconciliation commissions," war crimes trials, etc.? Following a *stasis* of such proportions that law is rendered impossible, these tribunals are forums where justice is strictly impossible. They are the *staging* of the *fact* of injustice, in order that it be possible to *bear* the horror of this fact. But in the bearing of this fact is concealed its forgetting. It is never

Such an approach to tragedy suggests that it is less the memory of the violence that institutes the law of the *polis*, so much as the staging of the origin the better to forget this wound. It is to suggest that there is a difference between, on the one hand, a recognition that there is "ambiguity" within law, law that nevertheless remains "one," in one place, and, on the other hand, a remembrance of true *division* in the *polis*. Could it be that the very thought of *polis*, and of the *hearth* and the *meson*, the thought that there is a pole or a centre, even a centre that withdraws from (political) determination, is the thought that tries to mask or forget that the *polis* remains a "divided city"?[37] Politics, then, as Rancière argues, is the gap or the

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possible to commit *all* those responsible to trial and punishment, and the "legality" of the tribunal itself cannot afford to be examined too closely. The real function of such phenomena is not justice, but the refoundation of the law, the establishment of the "fact" that from now on the law is in place, can and will stand. A mere murderer may need to remain unpunished, because it is only practically possible to try those who have murdered hundreds, or because all trace of the crimes have been erased in deaths without burial, without any remaining sign. *But*, the process having been *done*, *from now on* the law will be enforced for *all* crimes. The difference between such tribunals and tragedy, obviously, is that the former cannot afford to dwell on the ambiguities of terminology, for their very existence relies upon maintaining the standing of the law of the tribunal itself. In both cases, however, the origin of law is both shown and hidden, staged only in an encrypted form. In both cases, what is presented as the institution of the memory of the crime risks instituting the forgetting of the impossibility of justice.

[37] Cf., Nicole Loraux, *The Divided City*. Loraux's argument, in its essence, is that the *polis*, the fact and the name, is "a founding forgetting," and that what is forgotten is that *stasis* internal to the city, "as if the memory of the city were founded on the *forgetting of the political as such*" (pp. 42–3). What is forgotten is division, debate, conflict, for the *polis* masks from itself "the reality of its own processes" (p. 22). Yet what Loraux is pointing toward is subtler than the recognition of "ideology" and "class division" within Athens. If she is calling for a "repoliticization" of the *polis*, it cannot too quickly be presumed that such an effort necessarily transgresses the Heideggerian prohibition on explaining the *polis* via a "concept" of the political. Loraux argues that the ancient *polis* remains divided today, between the "city of historians" and the "city of anthropologists." For the historian the city is political, the narrative of events, the story of the battles, internal and external, practical and theoretical, fought by "important" Greek figures. It is the *polis* of *dike* grasped as boundary, as division, snaring, and settlement. The city of the anthropologist corresponds to *dike* grasped as sign, as custom and way. The city is grasped as essentially "one," as *the* atemporal place of a unity of myth and ritual, where politics is grasped through the relation to sacrifice, and the political reduced to the "politico-religious," the *myth* of the political, a *figure* (pp. 18–9; p. 55). Thus, in calling for the repoliticization of the understanding of the *polis*, she is calling for the re-placing of division at the heart of the *polis*, and for a conjunction of the city of historians and the city of anthropologists. Yet, in arguing that even the very reference to "the *polis*" (by the Greeks *and* by us) is the *means* of forgetting division, she nevertheless hesitantly insists that *in order to do this*, in order to repoliticize the *polis*, it remains necessary to think that "*the city thinks*." As the anthropologists but not the historians do, the city must be understood as expressing some kind of sovereign thought, however divided. Thus, secondly, she insists that neither can the *meson* be abandoned, nor reduced *simply* to a Greek projection of itself, for "this figure is too beautiful and often too powerful not to return stubbornly in all its seductive and simplifying charm" (p. 60). How is division thought within such a context of the maintenance of the *meson* in the city that thinks? Loraux risks another step: the need to endow the thinking city with an unconscious (p. 61). Of course, Loraux is concerned with the specifics of what "really" happens in the *polis* in a manner totally foreign to Heidegger. Yet, what if we think this thinking city's "unconscious" not only psychoanalytically, but

wrong (the crime) in the heart of the configuration of the *polis* (the conjunction of the invention of politics with the invention of the sepulchre).[38] Tragedy at least remembers the violence of the origin in the form of staging the ambiguity of the law, and the necessity of the exception, the necessity of remembering the death even of the absolute criminal, however catastrophic such a memory may prove.[39] But the forgetting at the heart of the *polis* finds its completion in what Rancière calls "political philosophy," where *logos* no longer refers to argument but rather, purified of all rhetorical technics, only names the truth of the proper political configuration in its self-sameness.[40] Politics is the impossibility of a just configuration and the impossibility of excluding configuration from being-with-one-another. Or, to put it another way, the necessity that law remain that which stands, and the impossibility of getting law standing justly. It is not only a question of the violence of the political configuration, of the system. Antigone too, takes a stand, follows the law of her heart, a law that, too, comes from some cryptic origin.

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rather as referring to a "thinking in withdrawal," that is, in terms of the *polis* as *what* withdraws? What if we think the conjunction of the *meson* and division as gesturing toward something similar to the conjunction of the pole and *der Wirbel*? While Heidegger would claim to be thinking at a level prior to all anthropology, for Heidegger it can nevertheless be argued that what matters is *also* the "beings" in the *polis*, hence the list of battles and sacrifices, the gods and the people's assembly, etc. Is there not a convergence between Heidegger and Loraux? Even though her entire argument is for a "repoliticization" that remains seemingly alien to Heidegger, nevertheless, in arguing for a movement beyond the historian and the anthropologist, *toward* the centre *and* division, *her* point too is that the political must be thought beyond the historian's eternal refuge in "the event of Greek reason." And this is why, beyond anthropology also, but with Lévi-Strauss in mind, she ends her article entitled "To Repoliticize the City," with the following echo of *der Wirbel* (p. 62): "For the Greek city, may the time of turbulences come."

[38] Cf., Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 19: "Politics begins with a major wrong: the gap created by the empty freedom of the people between the arithmetical order and the geometric order. It is not common usefulness that founds the political community any more than confrontation or the forming of interests. The wrong by which politics occurs is not some flaw calling for reparation. It is the introduction of an incommensurable at the heart of the distribution of speaking bodies. This incommensurable breaks not only with the equality of profits and losses; it also ruins in advance the project of the city ordered according to the proportion of the *cosmos* and based on the *arkhē* of the community."

[39] Cf., Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 283: "The fruit of the incestuous union has split into two brothers, one of whom represents power and the other crime. There is no one to assume the crime and the validity of crime apart from Antigone. Between the two of them, Antigone chooses to be purely and simply the guardian of the being of the criminal as such. No doubt things could have been resolved if the social body had been willing to pardon, to forget and cover over everything with the same funeral rites. It is because the community refuses this that Antigone is required to sacrifice her own being in order to maintain that essential being which is the family *Atē*, and that is the theme or true axis on which the whole tragedy turns."

[40] Cf., Rancière, *Disagreement*, p. 43.

Sophocles, again

Heidegger returns to read Sophocles in 1942. Reading means obeying the law, the law of *logos*. There can be no reading without this obedience to the law of what words mean, the law of the dictionary. If this law ceases to stand, understanding is threatened. Yet, although one is always legally entitled to appeal (*Berufung*) to the dictionary, in the end the judgment found there always remains merely one interpretation.[41] And this interpretation can never displace the responsibility of the reader, can never undo the fact that translation means a "decision," and, first of all, a decision about whether language is *chrematistic*, something merely useful and technical, or rather something that must by such decision be honored, worthy, *würdigen*.[42] Thus, when it is said "Heidegger reads Sophocles," what is meant is equally that Heidegger *writes about* Sophocles. Or, even more, that Heidegger reads Sophocles *through* writing about *Antigone*. This writing is only to find out what Sophocles *says*, never to invent, yet there is no reading without this act of translation. It is only a matter of confirming the very same thing in its self-sameness, yet writing, the act of confirming the reading, remains *an-other* saying. Thus, when Heidegger reads Sophocles, there must also be a kind of violence in relation to the "text," in relation to what is just there on the page, in order for what *is* there to show itself in what is written. There is necessarily the threat and the *risk* of disobedience in relation to the law of reading, which means infidelity and betrayal. This is what Heidegger means (translating here) when he remarks that "all translating must be an interpreting" and vice versa.[43] And this is no mere technical issue concerning the law of translation, but a law that is lived out in who one is: "Tell me what you think of translation, and I will tell you who you are."[44]

Who is Heidegger, in 1942, when he reads Sophocles? Is he the same, the same thing, the same one, as the Heidegger of 1935 or 1933? Surely in 1935 Heidegger would have said about translation what he does say seven years later. Yet Heidegger does not translate in precisely the same way. Heidegger repeats himself, but in this repetition there is difference, and this is a difference in the way in which what is handed down for reading is read. And the most economic formulation for the reason for this difference is that Heidegger's "hero" is no longer Nietzsche but Hölderlin. Lacoue-Labarthe has argued with good reason that at the time of the

[41] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 61–2.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 66. Cf., Bernasconi, "'I Will Tell You Who You Are.' Heidegger on Greco-German Destiny and *Amerikanismus*," in Babette E. Babich (ed.), *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire: Essays in Honor of William J. Richardson, S. J.* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), p. 302.

[43] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 62.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

rectorate Nietzsche was this "hero," the one who opens the path of "this (tragic) philosophic-political heroism," a (violent) confrontation with the loss of force of modern knowledge, a confrontation, that is, with the fact of the "death of God."[45] And Lacoue-Labarthe emphasizes that with the term "hero" he means explicitly the Heideggerian delimitation of the hero in *Sein und Zeit*.[46] For Lacoue-Labarthe, the hero amounts to a model or an example, a means of identification, a configuration that dictates configuration, a choice of what to choose. But this is surely to forget (and hence to betray Heidegger) that from the Introduction of *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger could not be more explicit that what is handed down to us carries its own kind of betrayal in being handed over to obviousness, and that only in "destructuring" what is handed down is it possible to be loyal.[47] And if, as Vernant argues, the *second* crucial aspect of tragedy (after the conflict of *nomoi*) is that its possibility is both handed down in the form of the myths of heroes, and yet that tragedy "establishes a distance between itself and the myths of the heroes that inspire it," then there is room to interpret what it means to assign to Heidegger his hero.[48] And there is room for the thought that between readings of Sophocles, Heidegger is living out a debate, choosing *an-other* choice, between the laws of the two heroes, that is, the divided hero.

When, therefore, Heidegger re-turns to *Antigone* in 1942, it is ostensibly in order to place this reading in the service of a reading of Hölderlin. He thus starts not with the first stasimon that will nevertheless still dominate this reading, but rather with the *entry song* of the chorus. He does so in order to establish that Sophocles was Hölderlin's hero that Hölderlin did not cease to read, to translate, to interpret Sophocles—to point out the act of translation that leads from "O radiance of the sun...Did you finally come to shine" (*Antigone*, 100ff.), to the Ister hymn's opening,

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[45] Lacoue-Labarthe, "Transcendence Ends in Politics," *Typography*, pp. 291–2.

[46] Lacoue-Labarthe includes a long citation from *Sein und Zeit*, p. 385: "It is not necessary that in resoluteness one should *explicitly* know the origin of the possibilities upon which that resoluteness projects itself. It is rather in Da-sein's temporality, and there only, that there lies any possibility that the existentiell possibility-for-being upon which it projects itself can be gleaned *explicitly* from the way in which Da-sein has been traditionally understood. The resoluteness which comes back to itself and hands itself down [which is for itself its own tradition], then becomes the *repetition* of a possibility of existence that has come down to us. *Repeating is handing down* [*Überlieferung*] *explicitly*—that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the Da-sein that has-been-there. The authentic repetition of a possibility of existence that has been—the possibility that Da-sein 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 that which can be repeated." The translation here follows that in Lacoue-Labarthe, "Transcendence Ends in Politics," *Typography*, p. 291.

[47] Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 21–2. Cf., *ibid.*, p. 392.

[48] Vernant, "The Historical Moment of Tragedy in Greece," in Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, p. 26.

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"*Jezt komme, Feuer!*" What both these texts speak of, in Heidegger's reading, is the arrival of the sovereign moment, the moment of the possibility of commencement, a possibility for a clearing-lighting that stands as testament to a darkening that must have already occurred. The sun, the fire (and Heidegger will later draw attention to the etymological relation of *hestia* to what burns and radiates), is what, from out of darkness, gives the possibility of an emergent unconcealment that comes to stand anew. It is still a question of sovereign poetizing, of a *breaking* of day.

Antigone is not this day, and Creon the night. One is not *Schuld*, the other *Unschuld*. Rather, both are the entwinement of presence and non-presence, that is, both dwell within the swirl of concealment and unconcealment. Yet in the tragedy *Antigone*, Heidegger still insists, it remains a matter, within this movement, of "truth" coming to stand. In reading Sophocles we give ourselves the possibility of having handed down a truth that may come to stand for us, and hence take for ourselves the possibility of making a light where we dwell in modern darkness. What then has changed, if Heidegger has substituted one hero for another, if one hero has been replaced and another come to stand in his place? Heidegger seems to mark the distance from the old hero clearly, a sign that indicates the line of separation from what *must* be left behind. In 1933 the highest form of knowing was thought "philosophically": Heidegger *lets* "Nietzsche" read (be identified with) Plato. One philosophical figure reading another. Lacoue-Labarthe sums up the rectorate address: "the *Gestalt* is not the Worker but the Philosopher: Nietzsche, the modern double of Plato. And whose 'hero,' in a word, is named Prometheus."[49] In short, an "overvalorization" of the philosophical is at work.[50] The result was the *Schlußwort* to the address: "All that is great stands in the storm."

In 1942, however, Heidegger lets "Hölderlin" read Sophocles, *and* lets "Sophocles" illuminate the reading of Hölderlin, that is, permits each poetic, tragic figure to be read through the other. "In recalling this poetic work of Sophocles, we are in the process of thinking through the heart, *Herzstück*, of Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing in its inaugurating form, *anfänglichen Gestalt*."[51] Sophocles is the figure who gives Hölderlin his heart. At the beginning of the *re*-reading of Sophocles in 1942 (which will come to speak of the singular figure, *einzigen Gestalt*, of Antigone),

[49] Lacoue-Labarthe, "Transcendence Ends in Politics," *Typography*, p. 296.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 290.

[51] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 60. Thus the earlier statement that Sophocles is placed by Heidegger in the service of a reading of Hölderlin, is not necessarily counter to Bernasconi's apparently opposite formulation: "Hölderlin and Greece were not two different sources of Heidegger's thought between which he could be understood to be oscillating, so that one might sometimes be chosen at the expense of the other. Hölderlin was a guide to reading the Greeks." Bernasconi, "'I Will Tell You Who You Are," in Babich (ed.), *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, p. 307.

in the return *from* philosophy *to* tragedy, Heidegger thereby *also* re-reads, and re-writes, *himself*, thereby not-so-cryptically marking Nietzsche's burial:

> For our initial task it must suffice to juxtapose the beginning of this entry song with the beginning of the first stationary song of the chorus, so as to intimate something of the range and conflictedness [*Gegensätzlichkeit*] of the truth within which this tragedy sways back and forth and yet stands. That which truly stands [*Das wahrhaft Standige*] must be able to sway [*muß schwanken können*] within the counter-turning pressure of the open paths of the storms. What is merely rigid shatters [*Das bloß Starre zerbricht*] on account of its own rigidity.[52]

In this very first glance at *Antigone* in 1942, it is made clear that what is at stake is *still* a question of what comes to stand, and there is nothing in this that excludes "the violence of creators" or "violent acts of historical founding."[53] There is no beginning, no emergence of light, without something coming to stand, without, therefore, sovereignty and figuring of some kind. Yet, obviously, there is also another thought here. It is not only that the reference to "greatness" has been dropped. Heidegger supplements the rhetoric of standing with the figure of swaying, and includes a sense of the "storms" (plural now) *donating* the possibility of passage on "open paths" rather than being *simply* what Da-sein must struggle against in coming-to-stand. He seems to be confessing the tyrannical injustice of 1933. Heidegger, in fact, is here permitting a rhetorical figure to be dictated from Haemon or, as Creon (to whom Haemon is dictating) puts it, Heidegger allows himself to be taught—where Creon, but perhaps Heidegger too, resists until it is too late—*phronein*.[54]

That Heidegger is making some kind of admission here appears undeniable. Taking a stand means taking a risk, risking the catastrophic confusion that takes non-being for being. Yet even for those with ears to hear what is a confrontation not only with National Socialism but with what Heidegger himself had proclaimed, the *significance* of this confession is something that can only be translated and interpreted. Firstly because it is not possible to conflate 1933 and 1935. Heidegger himself in the *Der Spiegel* interview draws the boundary line for his relationship with National Socialism at 1934. Perhaps in 1935 Heidegger is letting "Nietzsche" read Sophocles. Yet, in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Hölderlin is given the last

[52] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 52. Also, cf., lines 473ff., where Creon ascribes to Antigone what Haemon will ascribe to him.

[53] Cf., Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Polt & Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 177.

[54] Sophocles, *Antigone*, 710: "It is not shameful for a man, even if he is wise, often to learn things and not to resist too much. You see how when rivers are swollen in winter those trees that yield to the flood retain their branches, but those that offer resistance perish, trunk and all. Just so whoever in command of a ship keeps the sheets taut, and never slackens it, is overturned and thereafter sails with his oarsmen's benches upside down." And Creon's response to Haemon, 726: "So men of my age are to be taught sense by a man of your age?"

word, and Hölderlin's "Greece" already surpasses Nietzsche's.[55] Thus, for instance, if the *polis* is the place of the open paths of the storms, then McNeill is already properly able to interpret the 1935 lecture course as insisting that if there is violence and confrontation in the *polis*, this means that the place of openness is *used by* being, and this violence is *needed by* being. Da-sein's struggle *against* (*techne* against *dike*) is really a struggle *with* being, where the "with" indicates both a contest and a conforming: Da-sein is conducted by being. For McNeill, this is precisely what is confirmed with the thought that the overwhelming, being, confirms itself as history.[56] McNeill's conclusion is that both *techne* and *dike* must be thought in terms of the "finitude" of being, and that the very boundary *between techne* and *dike* marks this finitude.[57] "Politics" would then be that risky activity that takes place in the gap between *techne* and *dike*, and which is indicated by the doubled reference of that word that forms the heart of Heidegger's reading of Sophocles in both 1935 and 1942: *deinon*.

McNeill's reading might suggest that the two readings of Sophocles diverge in terms of whether Da-sein *acts* on being, or rather, *needing to sway*, Da-sein must conform to the current of being, almost in a rhythmic, harmonizing way. The mark of this might be that Nietzsche stands against the Greeks, whereas in 1942 Hölderlin's relation to the Greeks is described not as a confused mixing, *wirre Vermischung*, but rather as a "fugal differentiation" (*"fügende Unterscheidung"*).[58] Thus in her reading of the 1942 lecture course Geiman emphasizes that, in contrast to *techne*, poetizing takes up the finitude of being and is in fact the preservation of the mystery of this finitude: "Unlike *techne*, poetry is conceived as a receptive knowing that is fundamentally non-violent."[59] Heidegger is thereby understood to be escaping metaphysics, and transforming the "practical and political realm," not as a kind of fatalism, yet in a manner that concludes that no "counterviolence" in relation to being is possible, and that "the only effective response" to technology is our "resolute" removal "from all attempts to control."[60]

Does not Heidegger stamp his authority upon such a reading? Heidegger constantly repeats in 1942 that Hölderlin's poetizing falls outside the bounds of metaphysics. And metaphysics means also technology, the notion that our activity

[55] Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (new trans.), p. 133 & p. 221.

[56] McNeill, "Porosity," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal*, pp. 204–5. Thus McNeill already finds in 1935 what Fóti argues is the difference between the two readings. Cf., Fóti, "Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy," in Risser (ed.), *Heidegger Toward the Turn*, p. 179.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[58] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 54.

[59] Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Polt & Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 180.

[60] *Ibid.*, pp. 180–1.

shall always find a way through, our thought that, whatever the storms, we can find ways to stand amid them. Metaphysics means the Platonic distinction between the real and ideal worlds, the foundation of all modern concepts of sovereignty and law.[61] Yet this is *also* the context in which Heidegger argues the impossibility of overcoming metaphysics by denying it, and further that "all that remains" is to "unconditionally actualize" the spirit of technology. What is Heidegger for and what is he against, and can this be regarded as an argument for "non-violence"? Still, in 1942, this most immediately means an argument for the *Heimat* and against "Americanism," the "properly dangerous configuration" (*"eigentlich gefährliche Gestalt"*).[62] And this means, *for* a kind of memory and *against* the form of forgetting that technology can institute. As in 1935, it means the resolution to await the proper time, the stellar hour. But awaiting too is a kind of standing and actualizing, a standing within "the indestructible," which could not happen without undergoing "the pain of sacrifice."[63] In 1942, Heidegger still draws poetizing into a constellation with "actions" governed by a sacrificial technics, marked by an ambiguity which is anything but definitively "non-violent." That what stands also sways means only that it is subject to an economy of supplementarity, of give and take, an economy that does not weaken but rather is intended to strengthen the hold of what stands. And, as inaugurating, as "historical," poetry, however "receptive" a knowing, would mear precisely what *truly* stands, what succeeds, in its works, in breaking into being.

In order fully to pursue the question of the relation between the reading of Sophocles in 1935 and the reading of 1942, it would be necessary follow all the paths and detours of language through which Heidegger attempts to understand the *deinon*. It is a word that in 1942 Heidegger will emphasize throws into doubt the laws of reading as given in dictionaries. In following these paths what first becomes clear is that this word—the *Grundwort* for the entire reading of the first stasimon and of the tragedy as a whole—is constantly referred to *walten, Gewalt*, etc. This reference is first of all to the "counterturning" character of *Gewalt* and *deinon*, to that violence that causes fear, and to that violence that commands and calls for reverence as that which stands firm—in short, to violence as such, before and beyond the question of its "legitimacy."[64] Heidegger in fact rejects an early translation by Hölderlin of *deinon* with *gewaltig*, on the grounds that it is too unsided, pushing *deinon* towards "brutality."[65] Hölderlin's later "*Ungeheure*"

[61] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 53.
[62] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[64] *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

remains closer to the meaning of Sophocles' *deinon*, and Heidegger's own *"Unheimliche"* is closer still, because the matter at stake with *deinon* is profoundly "ontological." Yet the very first translation of the first stasimon that Heidegger offers in 1942—and which differs from the translation followed throughout the rest of the lecture course—will translate *"pelei,"* that is to say, "being," with *"waltet."*[66] Being is thought initially in relation to Sophocles in terms of sovereignty, of what comes to prevail. After this initial citation, Heidegger will translate *"pelei"* with *"ragend sich regt,"* that is, with a composition of *ragen*, towering, and *sich regen*, a kind of stirring movement. In short, with this formulation "being," the overwhelming, is already thought in relation to the place of towering-standing, *hypsipolis-apolis*, and the movement of *pantoporos-aporos*.[67] Thus, when Heidegger comes to think the *polis* as that which thrusts one into excess and tears (*reißen*) one into downfall, the duplicity of *deinon* is thought as the fact that humans *must let prevail* (*muß walten lassen*).[68]

Deinon, then, is not the key that unlocks what the chorus has to say concerning *polis* and *poros*, but rather each are read from out of the relation to the other. Thus, when describing the couplet *"pantoporos aporos,"* Heidegger writes that they are *"gegeneinandergestellt,"* posited-together-against-one-another, and *"ineinandergefügt,"* interwoven with one another, and that what is named is the essence of the *deinon* "from the side of *poros*."[69] With the thought that *poros* means self-powering irruption, *selbstmächtige Aufbruch*, it becomes obvious that with *poros* what is at stake is an-other saying of the same as *deinon*.

Once again, in order to pursue all of the ways in which Heidegger does and does not re-write his reading of Sophocles, it would be necessary to follow all of the intricacies of the *deinon*, and its relation to *pantoporos aporos* and *hypsipolis apolis*. The economics of reading, however, demands that another procedure be adopted. The cue for this other reading may be taken from the following hypothesis: in 1935 Heidegger limits his reading of Sophocles almost exclusively to the first stasimon, because *Antigone* is being grasped essentially as a philosophical text, or at least as a text that exists in a relation to philosophy, *whereas* in 1942, Heidegger is concerned with *Antigone* as a tragedy, which is to say, firstly, a poetic text. This does not mean that Heidegger is concerned with the tragedy as an "aesthetic" artifact, yet he does

[66] *Ibid.*, p. 52: "Manifold is the unsettling, yet nothing / beyond the human being prevails, *waltet*, as more unsettling." Whereas McNeill uses "uncanny" for *das Unheimliche*, here "unsettling" will be used, as it keeps a greater sense of the relation to the home. This is the translation employed by Geiman. Cf., Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Polt & Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 168.

[67] Cf., *ibid.*, pp. 71–2; cf., *ibid.*, p. 108.

[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 86–7.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

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concern himself to some degree with plot and characters in a way totally absent from the earlier reading. Nor does it mean that he is no longer concerned with the relation to the philosophical. But, even though thinking and poetizing are thought in this course in their difference, philosophy is placed within a broader thought of the ways in which *logos* founds.

To commence with the impossible

That Da-sein is *deinon* means first of all that Da-sein is placed within the ontico-ontological difference. The mark of this placement is *logos*, the fact that Da-sein "knows of beings" and, knowing them, is capable of addressing and pronouncing them ("*anspricht und ausspricht*").[70] The constellation of thinking and poetizing is thought in terms of this relation between addressing and pronouncing. That these two possibilities are available marks the fact that Da-sein is placed and stands *in the middle* of beings, yet also *outside of* being. And this placement within the ontico-ontological difference, this possibility for turning toward beings in being able to address and pronounce them, itself marks the fact that humans must be those capable of forgetting being.[71] Heidegger thus repeats what he said philosophically in the reading of Plato in 1924. And this is thought "tragically" as the catastrophic potentiality of Da-sein, that is, in terms of this possibility for being turned toward *or away from* being.

Just as in the reading of 1924, what is crucial to thinking the relation to being is the fact of the possibility of non-being, of being turned *from* being, of forgetting. In 1924 Heid⸱ ⸱ger argued that the fact that the sophist—the one who speaks of what is not in being—finds a place in the *polis* forces Plato, contra Parmenides, to give a place to the need for thinking non-being. It is much clearer, however, that in 1942 Plato is less the initiator of the questionworthiness of non-being, than he is the sign of the burial of the question of non-being.[72] With Plato's cryptic relation to non-

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 76.

[71] *Ibid.*: "For it belongs to this kind of unsettledness, that is, unhomeliness, that whatever is of this essence knows of beings themselves and knows of them as beings, addressing them and enunciating them. This is something of which no thing of nature and no other living being is capable. Human beings alone stand in the midst of beings in such a way as to comport themselves toward beings as such. For this reason, it is left to beings of this essence alone to forget being in their relation to beings. As a consequence of this state of forgetting, the human being is in a certain manner outside of that wherein all beings are beings, namely, outside of being. [...] And because they understand being, human beings alone can also forget being."

[72] *Ibid.*, p. 77: "The metaphysics that begins with Plato within Greek thinking was itself not up to the essence of the 'negative'."

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being, the history of the "reduction" of the negative to the positive is inaugurated, that is, the history of the forgetting of being. How is the negative to be taken up, if not in its positivity? How can non-being be addressed or pronounced without being reduced to a being within being?

> Negating [*Verneinung*] is one way in which human beings take up a stance [*Stellungnahme*]. The same is the case for the positing of the positive [*der Position des Positiven*]. We can indeed grasp everything that has the character of a "not" in terms of negation, yet negation does not in turn exhaust the essence of the "not." In particular, it contains no indication of that realm from out of which the essence of whatever has the character of a "not" becomes manifest, if it manifests at all.[73]

The great un-thought remains non-being. Being able to think negation and position in their relation to one another means thinking of them as two ways of taking up a stand. Humans are those capable of addressing and pronouncing their stance wrongly. But there can be no stance without risking discovery that non-being has been taken for being. This is the hinge from the discussion of *poros* to the discussion of *polis*. The *polis* means the fact that there is no way of being together that does not involve taking a stance in various instances and circumstances.[74] The *polis* is the place of negative and positive standing. Or, rather, the *polis* is the place of taking a stand, and this possibility means making decisions, turning in one direction or another.

The thought of non-being, of "negation," then, takes Heidegger from *poros* to *polis*. All of Da-sein's paths break through everywhere yet come to nothing. All of Da-sein's positing—philosophical, political, poetic—comes from out of the fact of non-being, a fact *found* for the first time in the *polis*. It is to the "not" that Heidegger returns with the closing words, the *Schlußwort*, of the first stasimon. There, the chorus of elders pronounce an expulsion from the hearth. The chorus appears to expel, through the pronouncement of a double "not," those who are *hypsipolis apolis*, those for whom "non-beings always are for the sake of risk." The one who takes non-being for being—the one who rises above the *polis*, then finds himself without *polis*—is obviously Creon. The chorus are then those who, simply dwelling in the *polis*, sing in praise of the middle measure, of mediocrity, *Mittelmäßigkeit*. And what they sing against, what must be expelled, is the exception, *die Ausnahme*.[75] Such a reading takes Creon as the representative of the sovereign exception that haunts the *polis*, and that the *polis* constantly wishes to forget and to bury, without ever being able to do so. What the *polis* can never accept nor successfully forget is that the grounds of the sovereign exception are not something "positive." Or, in other

[73] *Ibid.*, p. 78.
[74] *Ibid.*, p. 81.
[75] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

words, that the *polis* only ever is in withdrawal. Taking and having a stand, *Stellungnahme*, must initially and therefore always take the form of the exception, *die Ausnahme*.

Such a reading of the resolution of the chorus, however, is too sure that the exception lies in the figure of Creon. If the one who is *deinotatos*, the most unsettling, is in question, then does the *Schlußwort* also expel Antigone? Is Antigone also or even more so the figure of sovereign exception? If Antigone is the one who takes a stand, does she do so as one of those who dwells within the *polis*, or does this stand place her outside of the *polis*, outside the proper place of being-together? "Does Antigone stand outside the relation to *deinon*?"[76] This is Heidegger's question.

It is thus in pursuit of the meaning of the *Schlußwort* of the first stasimon that Heidegger is lead beyond this song, and first of all to the difference between the stands taken by Antigone and Ismene, that is, to Ismene's attempt to dissuade Antigone from her resolution (*Entschluß*) (88–99). This dialogue begins with Ismene referring to Antigone's heart, *kardian*, as turned toward the cold, that is, toward the dead. But the critical line is the following: "Yet to commence in pursuit of that remains unfitting, against which nothing can avail."[77] Heidegger draws this translation from out of a reading that is strictly literal, that thinks the relation of the first word of the sentence, *archen*, to the final word, *tamechana*. Even Hölderlin's translation does not capture the astonishing *Gefüge* here, the "construction of the sentence" ("*Bau des Spruches*"), the tightness of the bond between its first and last words."[78] What is at stake is the relation between the *arche*—commencement, the principle of inauguration—and that which is *a-mechanon*—without possession of means of passage, the impossible thought as the aporetic.

Archen is read not as a rhetorical figure, as though opening an argument, "To begin with...":

> *Arche* means that from which something proceeds, namely, such that that from which something proceeds is not left behind, but rather, in going out beyond everything proceeding from it, prevails in advance and determines it [*sondern über alles hinweg, was von ihm ausgeht, vorauswaltet und es bestimmt*]. *Arche* means at once beginning, point of departure, origin, rule [*Beginn, Ausgang, Ursprung, Herrschaft*]. Taken by itself, *arche* can indeed frequently mean simply something like "right at the commencement" ["*gleich anfangs*"] or "initially" ["*zunächst*"]. In that case, the word merely expresses the order of a sequence. Yet in the words of Ismene, *archen* is spoken with regard to *tamechana*, that which is of no avail, that is, with regard to

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Cf., Lloyd-Jones: "But to begin with it is wrong to hunt for what is impossible"; Grene: "It is better not to hunt the impossible at all."

[78] Cf., Hölderlin, cited in Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 100: "*Gleich Anfangs muß Niemand Unthunliches jagen*" ("Right at the commencement no one must pursue what cannot be undone").

that over which human beings can neither rule nor dispose [*Herrschaft und Verfügung*].[79]

It could not be more clear that, reading *arche* as *Ursprung* and *Herrschaft*, as that which, inaugurating something, determines it and moves beyond it, Heidegger is reading this line from Ismene in terms of what there is every reason to call "sovereignty." Ismene is with this sentence excluding the impossible, the law of a heart turned toward the nothing, from sovereign commencement. Ismene speaks from the side of beings, from the thought that a *Grundgesetz* of the *living* is the only possible ground. The *ta amechana*—that which resists, stands against (*widersteht*), all the paths of *poros*—that is, death, the nothing, could only ever be an abyssal ground. Yet Antigone's resolution is precisely to make the fact of the death of her irreplaceable brother into the *Ausgang* governing all of her actions.

The tension between *arche* and *a-mechanon* is sustained by *theran* and *ou prepei*. The first of these words, *hunting, pursuit*, was already encountered in 1924 in the *Sophist*, in the course of that method, undertaken at the beginning of the dialogue, of cutting and splitting, of division, in order to locate the specific meaning of a specific concept. All the forms of *techne*, it was asserted there, are divisible between those that take the form of *poietike* and those take the form of *ktesis*, appropriation. Within "appropriation," it is possible to distinguish between *metabeltike*, exchange, and *cheiretike*, seizing. Within the forms of seizing it is possible to distinguish between *agonistike*, to gain through struggle, and *thereutike*, hunting down. Thus hunting is a form of appropriation, and specifically a form of seizing, that is, seizing *something*. Thus hunting, properly speaking, must always be the attempt to appropriate *beings*, and is in fact a *mechanism* for this seizing and capturing of *things*.

Furthermore, already in 1924, this seizing was *also* divisible between a seizing through *erga* and a seizing through *logos*, that is, the difference between an "actual" seizing of things through force, and seizing as "persuasion," as rhetoric. The sophist is a kind of hunter who seizes through *logos*, draws people toward him with the promise of *paideia*, that is, with "the possibility of bringing oneself into a proper existence within the *polis*."[80] The philosopher, in Plato, is the one who, wholly within the *polis*, is also excluded, because the *arête* that the philosopher donates to the one who is appropriated remains ambiguous with respect to the *polis*. The philosopher, in this dialogue, is the one who pursues the sophist, that is, the *logos* of non-being. And the sophist is the one who pursues beings in *logos*, on the ground of a law of the living, of proper living in the *polis*.

[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1.
[80] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 203–4.

Thus, were it permissible to "translate" from Plato to Sophocles here, Ismene would be the sophist and Antigone the philosopher. Just as in the *Sophist* it is the case that the philosopher is mistaken for a madman, so too the chorus in *Antigone* is read by Heidegger as concluding that where what is at stake is *proper* knowing, that is, a distinguishing and deciding between one knowing and another, then precisely a proper knowing will give the *appearance* of delusion.[81] It should not be forgotten that in 1924 Heidegger emphasizes that this method of cutting and splicing derives its possibility not only from the possibility of dividing beings amongst themselves, but from *deloun*, disclosure. As grounded in *deloun*, this method is able to translate itself from the realm of beings to being itself.[82] The entire course of the dialogue is the enactment of this translation. The philosopher does what the sophist declares impossible—to break into non-being with *logos*—and does so, really, from out of a sense of the insufficiency of the sophist's middle ground in relation to the *polis*. For the sophist, *paideia*—that speaks about everything but that never leaves the circuit of beings—is the proper foundation of the proper *polis*. But for the philosopher this can only be a kind of education that never thinks the impossibility of its ground. From the stance of the sophist, Antigone is like one who has forgotten any kind of proper education, one who, in the name of the impossible, pursues what can never be appropriated.

To appropriate what is inappropriable is what, according to Ismene, remains an unfitting *arche*. Heidegger translates *prepei* as *das Schickliche*, as "that which is fitting in the essential sense, that which, within the law of being [*Gesetz des Seins*] is structurally articulated and ordered (decreed) [*gefügt und verfügt*]."[83] Ismene, in other words, thinks the law (of being) from the moment *after* its sovereign inception, from the thought that, *given* that the law of being, in its configuration and its command, has *already* commenced, this is a law that sends Da-sein in pursuit of what may be pursued. Ismene takes a stance "for" beings, for a law of being that conforms to a law of the living and a law of the possible. But what gives the law itself, what makes possible the writing of the law, its being set down in *logos*, cannot itself commence with the possible and the written. Antigone stands for the remembrance that the law commences with the impossible appropriation of mortality, with the crypt.

[81] Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 106.
[82] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, pp. 197–9.
[83] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 101.

Heart and hearth

To make that which is *a-mechanon* into the *arche* is hence to remember that sovereignty begins with the impossible exception. That this is Antigone's "position" is indicated by her response to her sister: *pathein to deinon*. Antigone confirms her stance with this identification with *deinon*, the "decisive word." Yet with this phrase there is at least the appearance that the "impossible," that which is of no avail, is placed into a sacrificial economics. If Antigone is describing her own essence with this phrase, then what is at stake is the meaning of having a relation to the *deinon* that is describable in this way. Antigone is determined by the *deinon*, such that the *deinon* is the other that *she is*.

> *Pathein*: to suffer, to bear [*erleiden, ertragen*]. This first of all entails that the unhomely is nothing that human beings themselves make but rather the converse: something that makes them into what they are and who they can be. Here, however, *pathein* does not mean the mere "passivity" of accepting [*Hinnehmen*] and tolerating [*Dulden*], but rather taking upon oneself [*Aufsichnehmen*]—*archen de theran*, making it through to the end [*das Durchmachen bis zum Ende*]: properly experiencing [*das eigentliche Erfahren*].[84]

Antigone finds the proper path right through to the end, the path of enduring and suffering, *Erleiden und Leiden*, the path that takes this end upon itself as the *arche*. Hence this enduring and suffering is the "fundamental trait" ("*Grundzug*") of the doing and acting that constitute the essence of the tragic. How is it possible not to see a connection here to Heidegger's characterization of Europe, that is, the *Heimat*, in its relation to the destruction being unleashed by "Americanism"? Against American ahistoricality, against the fact that Americanism is a decision in favor that which is "without commencement" ("*Anfanglose*"), Europe is essentially an "awaiting" ("*Erwarten*"). This awaiting of Europe, of the West, of the *Heimat*, comes out of *Gelassenheit* and *Ruhe*, releasement and tranquility. It is a matter of awaiting what is destined, yet an awaiting that, like Antigone, is not passive or actionless. Awaiting is a standing that is already a standing-leaping-out-ahead in the indestructible. Waiting and standing: what stands against "Americanism" is thus something borne, something decided and suffered, and as such Heidegger asks whether it must not involve "the pain of sacrifice."[65]

There is, therefore, every reason to associate Antigone's *Leiden und Erleiden* with Europe's, that is, with Heidegger's account of the planetary confrontation, a confrontation between, on the one hand, technics that is the forgetting of the *arche*, and on the other hand, that which holds onto the *arche* in going beyond this

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84 *Ibid.*, p. 103
65 *Ibid.*, pp. 54–5.

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forgetting of technics. There is every reason to suppose that the account of *Antigone* and the account of the destiny of the West, the evening land, mutually determine one another. And there is every reason to suppose that in relating the tragedy of Europe to the "tragic" as such, Heidegger, far from escaping technics, inscribes both Europe and Antigone within an economy of sacrifice and redemption, of the enduring of what is painful in the name of what finds a way where the paths of technology cannot. There can be no doubt that Heidegger is engaged with a rhetoric that, imagining it escapes metaphysico-technics, remains entirely within metaphysics, and does so first of all by invoking the constellation: standing, enduring, sacrifice, finding a path, taking a decision, proper experience.

Heidegger offers the confirmation of this reading when he states that Antigone, in her exclusion from the realm of human *possibilities*, in her unmediated placement in the heart of the conflict of beings, achieves an *Aufhebung* of the "subsistence" ("*Bestandes*") of her own life.[86] What does this reference to a distinctly Hegelian rhetoric indicate, other than the fact that what must be excluded from the site, the absolute exception, is in fact the foundation of the site *in its cancellation?* The one who is excluded from the *polis*, the one who, sacrificially and ritually, sends herself and is sent to her mortal end, is the one who continues to "looms over" ("*überragt*") it, that is, the one who *transcends* the *polis*.[87] Antigone appropriates the inappropriable, her own death, and thereby brings mortality within an economy that makes death into the sovereign event, the guarantee, in a technical manner. Hence Antigone is *das höchste Unheimliche*, and her endurance of the *deinon* is the *höchstes Handeln*.[88]

If there can be no doubt that Heidegger is concerning himself with such a rhetoric here, then there can also be no doubt that in 1942 Heidegger is still allowing himself to be heard as maintaining an affinity with "the worst." Yet it nevertheless also remains the case that Heidegger explicitly prohibits a reading of his account of *Antigone* that would interpret Antigone's "*kalos pathein*" as indicating a "kitschy 'beautiful death'."[89] To ignore such a prohibition, or to insist that such a prohibition is *only* a suppressed confession of what Heidegger *knows* to be the essence of his own interpretation, presumes the impossibility of reading this prohibition literally. It would be to refuse to accept the commandment to read *pathein to deinon* in another way, in spite of appearances. Yet if it is admitted that law works by

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

[87] The most economical formulation of this possible relation between sacrificial and speculative logic is given in a question from Lacoue-Labarthe: "What if the dialectic were the echo, or the reason, of a ritual?" In Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Caesura of the Speculative," *Typography*, p. 209.

[88] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p 115.

[89] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

admitting the sovereign exception in the form of excluding it, that it remembers the *arche* in the form of forgetting it, that is, according to a cryptic technicity, then it must also be asked whether another relation to impossible sovereignty *is* possible. However much Heidegger himself occludes the question by remaining within such a cryptic technicity, in referring the sovereignty of Antigone to an abyssal ground in *deinon*, he is *also* exposing sovereignty in its impossibility.

Sovereignty means *phronesis*. That is, it means thought that is always already concerned with action, and that therefore is always coming to the limit in the form of the *Schluß*, the resolution, *and* that this necessity is not grounded in a certainty but in the finitude of all being-in-the-world. Sovereignty, like *phronesis*, always involves risk. When Heidegger concerns himself with reading the *Schlußwort* of the chorus in the first stasimon, it is first of all with the problem of what is meant by the "expulsion from the hearth." In order justly to pronounce the expulsion, the chorus must know the hearth. What this knowledge *is* remains unspoken in any unmediated way, yet it is referred to by the chorus *as* a *phronein*, a knowing that comes from the innermost middle, from the heart, *phren*.[90] What relates heart to hearth is *phronesis*. This is the ground for the interpretation, however questionable it may be, that the hearth means being. The hearth, like the *polis*, is what withdraws from knowing, yet is thereby what opens the possibility for *phronesis*, for a knowing that can advance toward what withdraws. It may be that such "knowing" is wholly inaccessible to "philosophy," that such knowing will never be available for translation into the form of a "philosophical treatise" (*"philosophischen Abhandlung"*).[91] As a "poetizing knowing," however, the expulsion carried out in the words of the chorus is itself a decision *to* expel, a decision that, grounded in the *deinon*, carries and endures its own risk.

When Heidegger carries out the separation of myth from philosophy—that is, the separation of poetizing and thinking—it is more than possible to hear this in the light of Walter Benjamin's account of mythological violence, where myth is the retroactive foundation of the sovereignty of the law. And this is the case, furthermore, where myth is grasped in terms of Tom McCall's extension of Benjamin as the "textual form" of violence itself, and as what is "pursued" by the law that covets "the universality of the mythical instance."[92] Myth is then what ties

[90] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[92] Tom McCall, "Momentary Violence," in David S. Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 186. Cf., Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 111–2.

the singularity of the fact of law to the universality of being. Heidegger, as Lacoue-Labarthe argues, thereby follows the essentially romantic path that calls for a "new mythology," a proper textual violence that will legitimate a properly embodied, living law.[93] Liberated from the relation to technics that Plato's philosophy inaugurates, myth is then nothing other than the disavowal of its own technics. Insisting that "thinking is not the sediment [*Bodensatz*] of the demythologized myth" would then itself be a form of that violence that preserves myth in its specificity, all the better to conclude with the sovereign resolution: Being is the hearth.[94] Then, the assertion that the *phronein* spoken of by the chorus is *ein dichtendes Wissen* means only that, as mythological violence, the *Schlußwort* grounds the propriety of the *polis* through the act of "giving a hint" ("*gibt den Wink*") toward the *Heimstatt*.[95]

Life, death, blood

Yet it remains impossible to legitimately conclude that this is what is happening when Heidegger refers to poetizing and to myth. In 1924 Heidegger moved from the account of *phronesis* in Aristotle, that is, of finite thought embedded in its situation and always mediated through beings, to the account of non-being in Plato, that is, to the necessity, exposed by the sophists, for finding or inventing a way into thinking and saying non-being. What this double manouevre exposes is a *need*, commencing from out of the *polis*, for another way of addressing and pronouncing beings and being-together than that which begins with Plato. It is in order not to settle for the precisely "political" priority of *techne*, a priority that begins with the completion of sophistry in Plato's thought, that Heidegger returns to the *polis* in 1942.[96] Heidegger returns to the *polis*, the site of being-together, in terms of *der Pol* and *der Wirbel*, in terms also of the *deinon*, the unsettling, in order to escape the circuit of mythological violence that would found the *polis* "positively." What is at stake is a return to the site of *phronesis*, that is, sovereignty, in an attempt to find a way of addressing and pronouncing the interweaving of being and non-being in all being-together. The resort to Sophocles is precisely in order to come again at a problem that Heidegger was already pointing toward in 1924. Whatever ideological equivocations remain excavable from the text, it remains obvious that the

[93] Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p. 14.
[94] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 112.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

constellation determined by the *polis* and the *deinon* is a constellation that comes from out of the need for thinking non-being.

The violence of the technical conception of the *polis*, that is, of the *concept* of the political, is given by the rela'ion between *Vermessenheit* and *Vergessenheit*, presumptuousness and forgetfulness:

> Being unhomely can be enacted [*ergehen*] in a mere presumptuousness [*Vermessenheit*] toward beings in order to force from them in each case a way out [*Ausweg*] and a site [*Stätte*]. This presumptousness toward beings and within beings, however, only is what it is from out of a forgottenness [*Vergessenheit*] of the hearth, that is, of being.[97]

"Political philosophy," in Rancière's terms, and the technical conception of law, where law presupposes its own "standing," are the marks of this *Vermessenheit-Vergessenheit*. Juridical thought, which certainly claims reason as the basis for argument, must nevertheless presuppose that the ground of the law remains transcendent and inaccessible, and that, therefore, it need not be pursued.[98] The entirety of what is thought in the relation between *pantoporos-aporos* and *hypsipolis-apolis* is thought in this conjunction. What is forgotten by and in the law is that the ground, the hearth, is *deinon*, the counterturning entwinement of being and non-being. What this forgetfulness makes possible is the presumption of the law to grant itself its ground, and to appropriate this ground through the retroactive pursuit of "mythological violence." Thus when Heidegger speaks of the separation of myth and philosophy, of poetizing in its separation from thinking, he means myth and poetizing *insofar as* they are unable to be brought within the circuit of the technical conception of law and sovereignty. This does not, however, mean that "belonging to the hearth," or an *Andenken* that counters forgetfulness, are non-violent.[99] If *Vermessenheit-Vergessenheit* is violent in its positing, nevertheless *Andenken*, Antigone's belonging to the hearth, is itself a "rupturing" ("*brechen*"), of the forgottenness of th: order of the law. And what ensures the violence of this rupture is precisely th: fact that this "remembrance"—that gives Antigone the *arche* that determines her decision and action—is *not* able to be explained in terms of one law in conflict with another, at least insofar as law is understood as something *gefügt* and *verfügt*, structured and decreed, from out of the relation to beings. Thus, in spite of the efforts of all those who would seek to "explain" Antigone's actions, this cannot be reduced to a decision that comes from any kind of cult of the dead

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 115.

[98] Cf., Pierre Bourdieu, "The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field," *Hastings Law Journal* 38 (1987), pp. 818–9.

[99] Cf., Geiman, "Heidegger's *Antigones*," in Polt & Fried (eds.), *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 180–1.

(*Totenkult*) nor from an insistence on the importance of familial blood-ties (*familienhafte Blutsverbundenheit*).[100]

It is necessary to insist upon this, because it is at this point that Heidegger approaches what appear to be his most risky formulations. In support of the notion that the sovereignty of ties of blood, or of ties to the dead, are *not* what determines Antigone's actions, Heidegger reads lines 449–57 of the tragedy. Creon interrogates Antigone on what enabled her to dare, *etolmas*, to transgress his law, and Heidegger translates the opening of her response as referring to herself:

> It was no Zeus that bade me this,
> Nor was it Dike, at home amongst the gods below,
> who ordained this law for humans...[101]

At stake here is a question of *reference*. Heidegger's translation is counter to most in hearing Antigone as arguing that it was *not* the gods who ordained her actions, whereas the usual translation has it that what Antigone is referring to here negatively is not her own actions but *Creon's* decree.[102] It is presumed by most translations, that is, that Antigone is setting one law, the true law, ordained by the gods, against the law that Creon is forgetful and presumptuous enough to proclaim. *Antigone* is thereby grasped as a plea for the remembrance of the sovereignty of divine law, to which human law must conform, and first of all in the matter of human burial. Law begins with the tie, and yet, in presumptuousness and forgetfulness, the tie is left untied. Creon's is a false sovereignty, and this is exposed by his *failed* attempt to decide on an exception. In the anti-*polis*, Thebes, the ground of law is forgotten, and the staging of this forgetfulness makes the tragedy into the enactment of mythological violence, *par excellence*.[103]

Heidegger's translation, however, is not obviously more violent in relation to the text than the interpretation that aligns Antigone with the law of the gods. Lacan,

[100] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 115–6.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

[102] Cf., Mark Griffith, *Sophocles, Antigone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 199–200: "It was not 'audacity' that drove her to defy Kreon's edict, but consciousness of the penalty for disregarding the gods' statutes." Contrary to Heidegger, Griffith assumes that it *is* a matter of ties to the dead and of blood: "Her concern is not to distinguish and define the limits of secular authority, nor to articulate a coherent set of religious principles (cf. 453–5n.), but simply to defend her deeply-set conviction that her brother and the gods below *must* be honoured, come what may." The translation by Lloyd-Jones is typical: "Yes, for it was not Zeus who made this proclamation, nor was it Justice who lives with the gods below that established such laws among men..." Grene, too, has Antigone referring to Creon rather than herself: "Yes, it was not Zeus that made the proclamation; nor did Justice, which lives with those below, enact such laws as that, for mankind."

[103] On Thebes as the anti-*polis*, that is, the anti-Athens, the city of division, cf., Vidal-Naquet, "Oedipus Between Two Cities: An Essay on *Oedipus at Colonus*," in Vernant & Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*, pp. 334–5.

for instance, presumably in ignorance of Heidegger's lecture course, in his own lecture course goes out of his way to insist upon the literal justice of the Heideggerian translation in contrast to the traditional understanding.[104] Lacan, it is true, still speaks of the laws of the gods, but what is emphasized is that this is a matter of "a certain legality" withdrawn from its determination in *write-able* law. From neither Zeus nor Dike, the law involved here, if it can be called that at all, is *agrapta*, without *graptus*, which, before it refers to writing, means *scratching* or *tearing*. If such a translation is taken seriously, then a decisive ambiguity unfolds itself here. What is a law without being able to be written, without scratching or tearing a way into beings, law without figure? If what is in question is "law without trace," without *Riß*, then it remains ambiguous whether this is the exposure or the transcendent erasure of *différance* in the law, especially if this law without figure remains embodied *in* the figure, the *Gestalt*, of Antigone herself.[105]

At stake, then, in this reading of Sophocles, is that which is determinative beyond the upper and lower gods, yet that which is "thoroughly determinative" (*"durchstimmt"*) of the humanity of the human. Yet, as such, it can be no mere human statute, for such would have no power over the decree of the gods, and thus fall below what remains sovereign, what prevails (*waltet*) even beyond the gods. The determinative, here, cannot be encountered as something "posited" (*"gesetzt"*) on a particular occasion, but must rather have always already appeared before anything else.[106] It is in response to this determination that Antigone makes what is

[104] Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 278: "She says clearly, 'You [Creon] made the laws.' But once again the sense is missed. Translated word for word, it means, 'For Zeus is by no means the one who proclaimed those things to me.' Naturally, she is understood to have said—and I have always told you that it is important not to understand for the sake of understanding—'It's not Zeus who gives you the right to say that.' But she doesn't, in fact, say that. She denies that it is Zeus who ordered her to do it. Nor is it *Dike*, which is the companion or collaborator of the gods below. She pointedly distinguishes herself from *Dike*. 'You have got that all mixed up,' she, in effect, says. 'It may even be that you are wrong in the way you avoid the *Dike*.' But I'm not going to get mixed up in it; I'm not concerned with all these gods below who have imposed laws on men.' *Orisan, orizō, oros* means precisely the image of an horizon, of a limit. Moreover, the limit in question is one on which she establishes herself, a place where she feels herself to be unassailable, a place where it is impossible for a mortal being to *uperdramein*, to go beyond *nomima*, the laws. These are no longer laws, *nomos*, but a certain legality which is a consequence of the laws of the gods that are said to be *agrapta*, which is translated as 'unwritten,' because that is in effect what it means. Involved here is an invocation of something that is, in effect, of the order of law, but which is not developed in any signifying chain or in anything else."

[105] In other words, what is at stake here is essentially the same ambiguity that appears with Benjamin's thought of "divine violence," the "sign and seal" but never the "means" of "sacred enforcement," and which, therefore, may be called "sovereign" (*"waltende"*). Divine violence, it must be remembered, remains invisible to the human realm, except in its effects, and this is the basis on which Benjamin appears to sustain the notion that divine violence does not return to the economy of mythological violence.

[106] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 116-7.

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a-mechanon into the *arche*, and it is as a *call* in this direction that the chorus speaks of the *phronein* of the hearth. Yet if that which is determinative is beyond the upper and lower gods, and if it must remain *agrapta*, then there can be no certainty that the one who is determined has been so in any proper way. The appropriation of the inappropriable may itself be done appropriately or inappropriately:

> *Das Schlußwort* conceals within it a pointer [*Wink*] toward that risk—that has yet to be unfolded and accomplished, but that is accomplished in the tragedy as a whole—between that being unhomely proper human beings and a being unhomely that is inappropriate [*zwischen dem eigentlichen Unheimischsein des Menschen und dem uneigentlichen zu scheiden und zu entscheiden*].[107]

Antigone, then, does not represent the sovereign exception that founds the law and that is remembered only in order to be forgotten. Rather, she represents the impossible possibility, the *risk*, of properly responding to a law without figure, that is always at stake and in play. Yet, again, if this is without figure, nevertheless, "Antigone herself is this highest risk within the realm of the *deinon*."[108] The law without figure is presented in the figure of Antigone. Does this return the *arche* of the law to the person of Antigone, as the hero of the law, its embodiment? This possibility is why it is necessary to listen to Heidegger's *refusal* to refer Antigone's actions to blood- and death-ties, a refusal he then repeats:

> To be this risk is her essence. She takes over [*übernimmt*] as her essential ground *arche tamechana*—that, against which nothing can find a way out [*wogegen nichts auszurichten ist*], since it is not known from where it appears. Antigone takes over as what is fitting [*Schickliche*] that which is destined [*zugeschickt*] to her from the realm of that which prevails beyond the higher gods (Zeus) and the lower gods (Dike). Yet this refers neither to the dead, nor to her blood-tie to her brother. What determines Antigone is that which first gives—to the distinction of death and to the priority of blood—their ground and their necessity. What that is, Antigone, and that also means the poet, leaves without name. Death and human being [*Menschsein*], human being and embodied life [*leibhaftes Leben*] (blood) in each case belong together. "Death" and "blood" in each case name different, uttermost realms of human being, and such being is neither fulfilled in one nor in the other exhausted. That the human being and only the human being properly belongs to death and to blood is itself first determined through the relation of human beings to being itself.[109]

This passage has been heard, perhaps unsurprisingly, as containing a "disturbing echo of the political rhetoric of 'blood' (in inevitable conjunction with death)," yet it appears to be the case that Heidegger is here at pains to *exclude* any "biological" explanation of Antigone's actions.[110] Heidegger is explicit that humanity is fulfilled

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[107] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–8.

[110] Fóti, "Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Sophoclean Tragedy," in Risser (ed.), *Heidegger Toward the Turn*, pp. 174–5. Fóti relies not only upon a selective citation from this passage in order to sustain her reading, but also a false one. She erroneously translates the final

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neither in death nor by the relation to blood. These are not the ends of man. What is beyond Zeus and Dike also *cannot* be referred to blood- or death-ties. That death carries a certain distinction, and that blood maintains a certain priority, are possibilities that arise from out of an-other ground, a ground that is *left without name*, that is, that remains *unwritten, untraceable*. It will be recalled that Vernant argued that tragedy presents the equivocality of the law exposed to the extreme situation. The extreme does *not* mean the conflict between the law of the *polis* and the law of blood-ties, nor the conflict between the law of the *polis* and the law of ties to the dead, the law of the mourning-work. These "conflicts" are in fact already accommodated in the "political philosophy" of the *polis*. The extreme or exceptional situation, the uttermost realm, is what, beyond these ties, remains untie-able. It is the law of the *polis* itself that presumes and regulates these joins and separations of blood and death. What calls for thought is the fact that the human being is a being capable of being strewn between the possibilities and forms of life and death. The nameless ground of these possibilities is indicated by Heidegger with a citation of the concluding line from *"In lieblicher Bläue blühet"*: "Life is death, and death is also life."[111] What calls for thought is the *conjunction* of the invention of the law and the invention of the sepulchre.

What remains to be thought, in other words, are two ways of grasping the singular figure of Antigone: firstly, as making her decisions sovereignly from out of the situation that one is always in as embodied life-death; and, secondly that

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sentence of the above passage as referring not to a determination by *being* but to a determination by *death*: "The belonging to death and to blood which characterize the human being alone is itself determined, first of all, by the human being's relation to death itself." On this basis she argues that Heidegger has not demonstrated that Antigone's commitment is determined by a relation to the hearth, that is, being. While recognizing that "birth and death are, to be sure, the trace of the ontological mystery in moral life," this "does not imply a willingness to sacrifice one's own life [...] for the sake of burying a corpse." Yet is not such a conclusion itself a determination of what this "ontological mystery" *ought to mean for action*? For Fóti, it is apparently clear that Ismene, rather than Antigone, represents a more appropriate relation to this mystery, for, in contrast to Antigone's fixation on the burial of her already dead brother, Ismene "shows herself ready to give her life out of sisterly love for Antigone [...], but not for the dead." But is not Ismene's willingness to sacrifice her life for Antigone itself derived from the fact that, although still living, Antigone has by her actions firmly placed herself on the path to certain death? Is there not at least a question here about the meaning of taking life *or* death as the *archē*? Fóti insists that Antigone's actions cannot be "a matter of 'blood'," nor "a commitment to being's enigma." As opposed to Ismene, who "advocates being sensible," Antigone acts "out of her difference" but, she insists, *"her difference cannot be subsumed under some aspect of the ontological Differing."* Heidegger essentializes Antigone's actions in the same way as he essentializes the *polis*. Is it not necessary, in this case, to ask of what Antigone's difference consists? Might it not be the case that this difference is well on the way to being reduced to the same, to something utterly understandable, to speak of it as nothing other than "her passion for those with whom birth, fate, and love have joined her"? Is not the very question here that of this particular "joining"? To whom or what is Antigone joined, in her difference from Ismene?

[111] Hölderlin, cited in Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 118.

Antigone is "the purest poem itself."[112] The temptation remains to hear the invocation of "purity" here in its relation to the purity of her commitment to "death" and "blood." But Heidegger is neither trying to refer embodiment to poetizing nor the reverse. Rather, it is a question of the ground of the human being as both a being with *logos* and an "embodied" being.[113] It is not a question of a correspondence between something physical and something psychical, but rather what is staged by "law" is the splitting of these aspects of Da-sein.

Phronesis, sovereignty, has its ground from out of what appears as embodiment and poetizing, as the law of the heart and the law of the *polis*. That is why Heidegger agrees with Vernant that the "counterplay [*Gegenspiel*] of this tragedy is not played out in the opposition between the 'state' on the one hand and 'religion' on the other."[114] Yet it remains the case that Vernant explains tragedy in terms of both a conflict *of* law, *and* a conflict between two types of religious feeling. He further differentiates between the law as given in the *polis* and the law as "lived out" by the hero. For Heidegger it is a question of out of what ground *all* of these possibilities emerge, and it is *this* extreme that is staged in Antigone, and given the nameless name of the *deinon*. Whereas according to Vernant what is staged is a conflict about the proper ground of sovereignty, in Heidegger it is a matter of exposing that the ground of sovereignty is the nothing, the fact of non-being, from which emerges both the invention of the law, and the forms into which life-death figures itself.

In 1924 Heidegger was insistent that *phronesis*, the *praxis* of the philosopher, was referred not to *zoe* but to *bios*, looking upon the various *bioi* in the *polis* from above.[115] With this insistence Heidegger apparently remained within the politico-philosophical tradition, according to which politics is given in the (philosophical) distinction between mere life and the good life.[116] Mere life, bare life, is what is excluded in favor of *forms* of life, and the first *mark* of this exclusion is *logos*, the obedient submission of the voice to the laws of language.[117] From that beginning,

[112] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

[113] Cf., Christopher Fynsk, *Language and Relation: ...that there is language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 98.

[114] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 118.

[115] Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 168.

[116] Cf., Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1–7.

[117] Note that Agamben takes the phrase "mere life" or "bare life" from Benjamin's "Critique of Violence." With *bloßes Leben*, for which blood is the symbol, the rule of law over the living ceases. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 250.

sovereignty is understood as the sovereign right of enforcement of the good life, represented, for example, in Creon's insistence on the sovereign right to distinguish friend from enemy. But what Heidegger finds in Antigone is the figure of the remembrance of the singular sovereignty of bare life, the ground from out of which the separation between law and life emerges:

> The question "In what way does the living being have language?" corresponds exactly to the question "In what way does bare life dwell in the *polis*?" The living being has *logos* by taking away and conserving its own voice in it, even as it dwells in the *polis* by letting its own bare life be excluded, as an exception, within it. Politics therefore appears as the truly fundamental structure of Western metaphysics insofar as it occupies the threshold on which the relation between the living being and the *logos* is realized. [...] The fundamental categorical pair of Western politics is not that of friend/enemy but that of bare life/political existence, *zoe/bios*, exclusion/inclusion. There is politics because man is the living being who, in language, separates and opposes himself to his own bare life and, at the same time, maintains himself in relation to that bare life in an inclusive exclusion.[118]

Antigone, however, is determined by the *deinon*, or the law *without* name, beyond divine law (that is, beyond what is *taken for* sovereignty). However "mad" Antigone appears, she is the one in possession of *phronesis*, that is, true sovereignty, beyond its Aristotelian configuration, beyond all *bios*. "Sovereignty is, after all, precisely this 'law beyond the law to which we are abandoned,' that is, the self-presuppositional power of *nomos*."[119] And she is so, precisely, because she takes as her *arche* the very facticity of life-death as such, in its impossibility. The very meaning of the argument that Antigone is determined by the hearth, that is, by being, is that she takes her situation to be that of mere life, in its indistinction from death. If the city of anthropologists reduces politics to sacrifice, as Loraux argues, then the prohibition on Polynice's burial demonstrates Creon's refusal to inscribe his death within the law of ritual. Polynices becomes sacred (to Antigone) precisely because his death is exceptional in being utterly excluded from the *polis*. Even the ordinary criminal is included enough to find his proper place within such rituals, but Polynices occupies a zone of indistinction between sacrifice and homicide, utterly outside law. Polynices conforms to what Giorgio Agamben calls the *homo sacer*, the figure that it is possible to kill but that may not be sacrificed. Antigone stands, in Heidegger's account, not for the re-inclusion of the excluded within the law of sacrifice. Rather, her insistence upon her brother's burial is only the confirmation and the preservation of the memory that the law of the *polis* is grounded in the exclusion of

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[118] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 8.
[119] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

bare life as such. *Antigone* is the staging of the sacrifice of Antigone, the *making sacred* of this figure, in place of the unsacrificeable Polynices.[120]

It is therefore strictly impossible to accuse Heidegger in 1942 of a metaphysics of blood and death, for what concerns him is precisely that "zone of indistinction" from out of which the *logos* of the law is turned in one direction or another. *Phronesis* means the sovereignty of *zoe* as opposed to *bios*, that is, of life (or life as life-death) in its absolute facticity, rather than in its figures and forms. It is on this basis that Agamben offers one of the most succinct and precise formulations of what is the same and what is different between Heidegger and National Socialism. What is the same is the rejection of forms of life, the insistence that no longer can sovereignty be founded on the exclusion of life itself:

> For both Heidegger and National Socialism, life has no need to assume "values" external to it in order to become politics: life is immediately political in its very facticity. Man is not a living being who must abolish or transcend himself in order to become human—man is not a duality of spirit and body, nature and politics, life and *logos*, but is instead resolutely situated at the point of their indistinction.[121]

Both Heidegger and National Socialism, therefore, constitute a *radicalization* of sovereignty, a placement of sovereignty right at the heart of being, in the conjunction of embodied life and mortality. For Agamben, this is today's condition, according to which *zoe* is made into the very heart of the political, the political element as such. And this is where Heidegger therefore is utterly differentiated from National Socialism (and from today's "biopolitical" paradigm):

> And this is the point at which Nazism and Heidegger's thought radically diverge. Nazism determines the bare life of *homo sacer* in a biological and eugenic key, making it into the site of an incessant decision on value and nonvalue in which biopolitics continually turns into thanatopolitics and in which the camp, consequently, becomes the absolute political space. In Heidegger, on the other hand, *homo sacer*—whose very own life is always at issue in every act—instead becomes Dasein, the inseparable unity of Being and ways of Being, of subject and qualities,

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[120] Cf., *ibid.*, p. 83: "We have already encountered a limit sphere of human action that is only ever maintained in a relation of exception. This sphere is that of the sovereign decision, which suspends law in the state of exception and thus implicates bare life within it. We must therefore ask ourselves if the structure of sovereignty and the structure of *sacratio* might be connected, and if they might, from this perspective, be shown to illuminate each other. We may even then advance a hypothesis: once brought back to his proper place beyond both penal law and sacrifice, *homo sacer* presents the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted. The political sphere of sovereignty was thus constituted through a double exclusion, as an excrescence of the profane in the religious and of the religious in the profane, which takes the form of a zone of indistinction between sacrifice and homicide. *The sovereign sphere is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating a sacrifice, and sacred life—that is, life that may be killed but not sacrificed—is the life that has been captured in this sphere.*"

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 153. And note that Agamben *already* finds evidence for this in 1935, in the thought that the *polis* signifies the *Da* of Da-sein.

life and world, "whose own Being is at issue in its very Being." If life, in modern biopolitics, is immediately politics, here this unity, which itself has the form of an irrevocable decision, withdraws from every external decision and appears as an indissoluble cohesion in which it is impossible to isolate something like a bare life. In the state of exception become the rule, the life of *homo sacer*, which was the correlate of sovereign power, turns into an existence over which power no longer seems to have any hold.[122]

Agamben here offers what amounts to an exact account of Antigone as presented by Heidegger in 1942. Antigone is the *homo sacer*, the unsacrificeable, the one for whom all existence at issue in an incessant decision, the figure over which power no longer seems to have any hold, for whom the rule of law of the living ceases. The very meaning of *phronesis* as Heidegger described it in Aristotle was that it does not mean a knowledge of rules of action, conforming to a figure of the law, but rather means the incessant need for decision in relation to the situation as such. In substituting heroes, and in changing registers from philosophy to tragedy (poetizing), Heidegger is looking for a figure for *phronesis* in its proper finitude. Antigone, the purest poem itself, is this singular figure.

But does this mean that, in identifying the figure of Antigone and poetizing as such, Heidegger has escaped from the metaphysics of sovereignty? Perhaps Heidegger's ultimate political equivocation concerns this poetizing that Antigone, for instance, is. Decision always means the risk of deciding between a being unhomely that is appropriate and a being unhomely that is inappropriate, between being driven about amid beings (*Vermessenheit und Vergessenheit*), and becoming homely out of a belonging to being. It is the understanding of poetizing that determines whether Heidegger is grasped in 1942 as finding a way out of the metaphysics of subjectivity, that is, sovereignty, or whether it is grasped as the ontological appropriation of difference. This equivocation is revealed in the distinction Heidegger makes between *er-finden* and *erfinden*, between finding out and inventing.[123] On the one hand, poetizing is a rupture of forgottenness, a breaking into beings such that something "is" that was not before. On the other hand, however, that which is to be poetized is not something to be freely invented and cannot be any kind of "willful imagining" ("*willkürlichen Einbildens*"). Poetizing cannot picture something new, can never be creative, but can only *find out* what is to be poetized. "Poetizing is a telling finding of being." As a telling finding ~~ ·ing, that is, of what withdraws, such finding is the highest finding, not because of the concealment of being, but because "it is that which is already revealed for human beings and is the nearest of all that is near."[124] What equivocates here is whether, as

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[122] *Ibid.*

[123] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 119–20.

[124] *Ibid.,* p. 120.

what is *near*, being is that to which human being relates, or whether poetizing is a telling finding of what remains without relation. Agamben tends toward the former conclusion, such that Heidegger's "politics" finds its substance in the *figure* of Antigone, even in the figure of Antigone as deciding *for* bare life. Only when the exception is no longer the ground, only when sovereignty and relation have been left behind, will law be able to escape the cryptic violence of memory and forgetting:

> How is it possible to "politicize" the "natural sweetness" of *zoe*? And first of all, does *zoe* really need to be politicized, or is politics not already contained in *zoe* as its most precious centre? The biopolitics of both modern totalitarianism and the society of mass hedonism and consumerism certainly constitute answers to these questions. Nevertheless, until a completely new politics—that is, a politics no longer founded on the *exceptio* of bare life—is at hand, every theory and every praxis will remain imprisoned and immobile, and the "beautiful day" of life will be given citizenship only either through blood and death or in the perfect senselessness to which the society of the spectacle condemns it.[125]

Even if Heidegger avoids the "biological" determination of the sovereignty of bare life, even if in fact Heidegger offers, in his reading of *Antigone*, a diagnosis of what distributes political possibilities between the technics of forgetting and the technics of totalitarian memory, nevertheless Heidegger retains the figure of sovereignty in the person of Antigone. She is the hero of proper *phronesis*, and she remains herself the figure of the innermost middle. As such, is she not still the overcoming of technics, and the overcoming of division? She is the figure without *Riß*. Yet Heidegger continues to insist that, even if what is apparently at stake is that which *determines* Antigone, nevertheless, insofar as this is spoken of, found, in the expulsion pronounced by the chorus, then "all this indeed remains indeterminate."[126] What does indeterminate mean here? Heidegger states that indeterminacy, *die Unbestimmtheit*, or what is given this name, whether this is the right name or not, is that which is undecided yet first to be decided for this poetic work and in it.[127] That which determines Antigone remains undecided, yet it is that which must *first* be decided—that which, not yet decided, must immediately be decided. With this thought poetizing—not inventing but finding out—becomes a matter of something that is "not yet." *Antigone* is still to be found out. What is buried there, what law hides in its crypt, is indeterminate, not yet determined, and cannot simply be decided, yet is what must be decided. With this thought, perhaps, *phronesis*, that is, sovereignty, the *Schluß*, is left behind, in favor of that which remains undecided and in want of decision. Antigone, then, would not be the hero

[125] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 11.
[126] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 121.
[127] *Ibid.*

of politics, from whom, through identification, a political configuration could be determined. Rather, to conform to Antigone's law remains impossible due to its indeterminacy, due to the fact that it is a law that abandons us, leaving us without figure, without even the relation through which any "us" could be constituted. Such a possibility unsettles democracy.

Chapter Seven

Unsettling Democracy

> *"During the past thirty years, it should meanwhile have become clearer that the planetary movement of modern technology is a power whose great role in determining history can hardly be overestimated. A decisive question for me today is how a political system can be assigned to today's technological age at all, and which political system would that be? I have no answer to this question. I am not convinced that it is democracy."* Martin Heidegger.[1]

Democracy, if it is taken in its *most* general sense is the unquestioned and unquestionable ground of virtually all "politics" today. When political discourse refers to "democracy," however, it is usually grasped in a restricted sense as "Western democracy." In this restricted sense, democracy usually means a sovereign, representative, parliamentary electoral system embedded within what Jean-Luc Nancy refers to as "ecotechnics," embedded, that is, within that *other* peculiar, endless, global, contemporary sovereignty that combines the "free market" and "modern technology." When objections are raised to this *restricted* sense of democracy, it is either *from* the side of ecotechnics, or else an objection from the side of "true democracy" *against* the tyranny of ecotechnics.

The *former* objection argues that "democracy" is in fact an impediment to its own apparent ends. It is argued, for instance, that democracy only *inefficiently* secures or protects the welfare of its citizens, or that the rule of the majority leads to the oppression of minorities, or that elections in the context of media technology are in fact only a kind of disruptive perturbation within the functioning of the overall system anyway. "Democracy" is then conceived as a sort of naïve ideal, and the solution to the *problems* of the democratic process then lies in some kind of benevolent vision of legal or bureaucratic—that is, technological—intervention, or else in the recognition that the best thing is just to permit the system simply to

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[1] Martin Heidegger, "Der Spiegel Interview," in Günther Neske & Emil Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), p. 54.

follow its own path without interference: "ecotechnics in the guise of Cause."[2] The *latter* objection amounts to the thought that "democracy" today is merely apparent, merely a spectacle, that ecotechnics itself is sovereign, and as such the *danger* to democracy. Most moral, religious, socialist, or communist opposition to "democracy" falls more or less within the orbit of the thought that the appearance of democratic process is only a mechanism by which an *other* power works itself.

In the "Der Spiegel" interview Heidegger puts democracy into question, as though it were possible that another politics might emerge that it would be more appropriate to assign to the fact of modern technology. What remains interesting in this seeming rejection of "democracy" is the impossibility of deciding whether it is "from the side of" ecotechnics or not. Taken *literally*, Heidegger appears in this statement to be accepting the fact of technology as something inalterable and permanent, to which it is only possible to respond either fittingly or unfittingly. It appears as though the only question is what kind of politics modern technology will *permit*, and perhaps this might be seen as evidence that Heidegger is gesturing toward what Lacoue-Labarthe refers to as "arche-fascism."[3]

Yet, between the lines, from what is *in question* for Heidegger, from the question he *cannot* answer, it appears possible to conclude that the very idea of assigning a politics to our "time" is itself a technical way of thinking. It seems possible to conclude that the very reason "democracy" is a questionable response to the contemporary situation is that the theory and practice of democracy today is no response at all, inasmuch as it itself *emerges from* ecotechnics. Democracy is not the possibility of an other politics because it is itself the "properly dangerous figure of measurelessness," where this measurelessness should be grasped in the sense of

[2] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 90.

[3] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poetry's Courage," in Aris Fioretos (ed.), *The Solid Letter: Readings of Friedrich Hölderlin* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 79. Lacoue-Labarthe argues strongly that from the rectorate address onwards the "theologico-political" finds itself confirmed in Heidegger's text. Specifically, it is confirmed in the rhetoric of "only a god can save us." For Lacoue-Labarthe it is a theologico-politics supported by a theologico-*poetics*, that is, by an appeal to *myths* and *heroes*. He more or less opposes Benjamin's Hölderlin to Heidegger's, as a difference in the understanding of the poet's courage, the difference between the courage to *invent* poetry (Benjamin) and the courage *of history* (Heidegger). Whether this difference of interpretation can be sustained or not, it is interesting to note that toward the end of the paper Lacoue-Labarthe returns to the "lack of God," this time invoking Hölderlin rather than Heidegger. The poet's courage relates to the lack of God, he argues, so long as "we finally accept what is being testified to [...], our *a-theistic* condition" (p. 92). Everything, surely, hangs on the meaning of the hyphenation, here, that seems to imply something other than the simple non-existence of gods, to some thought that the divine remains to be thought in its absence. If so, obviously, Lacoue-Labarthe may be forced into another relation to the Spiegel interview.

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meaning that it is subordinated to the endless end (the *praxis*) of technology itself.[4] It is from this thought that Heidegger yet again refers to the possibility that it is *das Denken und das Dichten* that most provide us with a "measure."[5] Here, therefore, Heidegger makes it explicit that any possibility of answering the questions posed by our situation today—questions of politics, democracy, and technology—may lie in the thought of "thinking and poetizing," and he thereby authorizes measuring out a response to such questions from out of a consideration of this thought.

Theologico-political democracy

There is, of course, no necessity and no teleology in the broken line of descent from the Athenian *polis* to the "restricted" sense of democracy as a representative electoral process within global technological capitalism. Democracy was for the Greeks something entirely other than this. Yet it remains possible to ask whether a "general" sense of democracy is formulizable. Such a general formulation, however, risks finding itself needing to include within its terms many other "political systems" than "our" democracy and "Greek" democracy.

In its *most* general sense, democracy is the thought that, being-together, there should be no other sovereign than ourselves, that our destiny should be determined to the greatest degree possible by *ourselves*, by our own hands, with our own decisions. It is this most general thought of democracy that forms the unquestionable ground of politics today. On what grounds could it be questioned? Yet it seems that this state of being unquestionable is not itself an eternal fact but a historical consequence, that it is only *recently* that such a thought has *become unquestionable*. This unquestionableness is the consequence of what Carl Schmitt

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[4] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 70: "This priority of quantity is itself a quality, that is, essential in kind, namely as that of measurelessness. The latter is the principle of what we call Americanism; Bolshevism is only a derivative kind of Americanism. The latter is the properly dangerous figure [*die eigentlich gefährliche Gestalt*] of measurelessness, because it emerges in the form of the democratic bourgeoisie [*in der Form der demokratischen Bürgerlichkeit*] and mixed with Christendom, and all this in an atmosphere of a decided ahistoricality."

[5] Heidegger, "Der Spiegel Interview," in Neske & Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, p. 55. Heidegger is asked what politics might be appropriate to our time, to which he responds: "First we would have to clarify what you mean by 'appropriate to our time' ['*zeitgemäß*'], what 'time' means here. It is even more important to ask whether appropriateness to our time [*Zeitgemäßheit*] is the measure for the 'inner truth' of human actions, or whether *das Denken und das Dichten*, despite all censure of this phrase, are not the actions that most provide us with a measure [*das maßgebende Handeln nicht*]."

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famously calls the "secularization" of theological political concepts.[6] Thus even if there remain those for whom (political) sovereignty is still *from* God and *with* God, it is rarely the case today that this sovereignty is not also and at the same time with "the people." Might it not even be the case that in the greatest theological monarchies the very *need* to refer to sovereignty from God testifies to a more or less covert need to *justify* sovereignty in the face of the people? But then, this general thought of democracy expands to such a great degree as to potentially include virtually anything that gives itself the name of politics. Without further qualification, for instance, it would need to include any National Socialism capable of this sentence from Rudolf Hess: "All power comes from the people."[7]

Schmitt cites this sentence in *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*. This monstrous work from 1933 is his version of Heidegger's rectorate address, in the sense that it is his justification of National Socialism—or the German people—taking for itself the freedom of giving itself the law. In so citing Hess, therefore, Schmitt is distinguishing and deciding between National Socialism and Weimar democracy (democracy in the restricted sense), to distinguish, that is, between the *same words* in the *mouth* of the *Führer's* deputy, and the *text* of Article 1 of the Weimar constitution.[8] The method by which Schmitt discriminates between the Weimar republic and National Socialism is the assertion that beneath them lies a different conception of the political articulation of the people. Everything turns on the difference between a *binary* and a *threefold* political structure.

The binary conception, Schmitt argues, has its origin in the nineteenth century, and corresponds to an increasingly technical conception of politics, such that the

[6]Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: MIT Press, 1985), p. 36.

[7] Rudolf Hess, cited in Schmitt, *State, Movement, People* (Corvallis: Plutarch Press, 2001), pp. 7–8.

[8] *Ibid.*: "At the 1933 Party Congress in Nuremberg, Rudolf Hess, our Leader's deputy, has said that the Party Congress [*Parteitag*] is a 'parliament' [*Reichstag*] of the Third Reich, and that hits the nail on its head. But the notion of 'parliament' is not meant in the sense given to that institution by the Weimar Constitution. And when the Leader's deputy utters the following sentence: 'All the power comes from the people,' this is essentially different from what was meant by the liberal-democratic Weimar Constitution when it used the same words in its Article 1. All our public law, including all the provisions taken over from the Weimar Constitution and subsequently valid, rests on an entirely new foundation." In this work, Schmitt is very concerned with the *mouth* that speaks the law. That the law must be mouthed and not merely written is the new requirement of a politics embodied in the leadership principle that joins leader and people. Law that is only written thus bears the hallmarks of technicity, of a law that is concerned with itself only in terms of *what* it is, and not in terms of *who* is speaking. In the conclusion to the book, Schmitt presents what might be termed a "linguistic bio-logism" concerned with the "how" of how mouths speak. It is the differences in how words are formed and spoken in different mouths that necessitates not only submission to *one* law, but to one law in the specificity of its pronunciation. According to Schmitt's conclusion, a "total leader-State" could not stand its ground a single day without such an *accented* politics. Cf., *ibid.*, pp. 51–2.

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law is grasped as the calculable machinery of the state.[9] The binary structure is thus itself testament to a forgetting of the threefold essence of the political structure of the state. Grasping politics in binary terms means thinking the relation of the state and the people *antithetically*, in terms of mutual conflict and danger. This corresponds to the "liberal" understanding of democratic constitutionality. Politics is thereby grounded in the concept of freedom, and to the state is given the task of securing the freedom of the individual. Yet, as the state is also itself a threat to this freedom, the organizing principle of the constitution is to protect the individual, the people, *from* the state. The relation of state to people is one of confrontation, and this is a confrontation in which the freedom of the private individual is paramount.[10] As in Heidegger's rectorate address, the emptiness of the liberal conception of the freedom of the individual makes this conception the enemy of the proper state. Freedom belongs not to the individual but to the people as such, together and as a whole, in the sovereignty of their act of political foundation.

Jürgen Habermas offers a contemporary example of a philosophico-political discourse that appears to conform to Schmitt's notion of binary political structure. Habermas gives himself the task of delimiting the articulation between "the rule of law" and "democracy." More specifically, given the passing of the possibility of any "religiously or metaphysically grounded natural law," Habermas asks how—given "the whirlpool of temporality enveloping positive law," given, that is, the fact that law appears only as the endlessly variable legislation of the legislator—how, then,

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 25: "The duality rests on the contrast between the *State* and the free *individual person*, between statal *power* and individual *freedom*, between *State* and State-free *society*, between *politics* and the apolitical *private sphere*, therefore irresponsible and uncontrolled. This division explains the typically binary constitutional schema of the bourgeois legal State, the constitution of which, as it is known, consists of a basic legal part, namely, basic rights and freedoms of the society composed of free individuals, free in the sense of not statal and not 'constituted,' and of an organizational part that establishes norms constitutive of and holding together the State. The part consisting of the liberal basic rights is no constitution in the organizational sense. On the contrary, it designates a non-constituted self-organizing sphere of *freedom*. Against it stands the organizational part of the statal constitution, the constitution of the *State*, that is to say, the commitment, delimitation and restriction of the political power of the State. The so-called 'precedence of the law' over all the other kinds of statal activity aims at the political subjection of the State to the allegedly apolitical society, because in that ranking system, the law is essentially a decision of parliament, but parliament is the representation of the non-statal society against the State. The universally recognized organizational principle of the so-called division of powers into three parts, the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary, had the same political sense, namely, to divide the State power in such a way as to allow the non-statal society to rule and effectively 'control' the State 'executive,' that is, the reality of the State command. Everything was set to regulate and control the political power of the state and to shield the freedom of the sphere of society from the 'encroachments' of the State."

can law possess any "legitimation," any proper ground?[11] In other words, Habermas is attempting to address the impossibility of founding law *legally*, and gesturing toward the thought that the way out of such an aporia lies in the relation of law to democracy.

The problem with liberal political theory, according to Habermas, is that legitimacy is grounded differently whether what is in view is law or democracy. Law, traditionally, is grounded in the status of individuals as "rights-bearers," as bearers of basic rights, human rights, whereas democracy is grounded in the principle of "popular sovereignty," in the thought that, given the possibility of public communication and public autonomy, democratic sovereignty is also possible.[12] At stake between law and democracy, then, is the difference between private and public autonomy, that is, private and public freedom and sovereignty. The separation between these grounds then means, as Schmitt also argues, that law and democracy are viewed as counter to one another, as a conflict to be balanced. This balance is viewed more in one direction or in the other, given the degree to which one is espousing a liberal or a republican political philosophy, but the conflict remains what is essential.

It is clear to Habermas where the solution to this conflict lies. The rights of the individual to private autonomy in fact constitute no ground in themselves, for from what authority could one derive such rights? It is this fact that threatens any doctrine of individual rights with being merely "paternalistic."[13] But this risk of paternalism already signals the solution to the conflict, for paternalism means thrust upon the people from outside, from above, as though rights could ever be determinable any way other than through the democratic process itself. Any notion of human rights must be the *outcome* of this process. Law can only *acquire* legitimacy through the process of democratic legislation. Yet, on the other hand, Habermas argues, it is demonstrable that the democratic process itself depends on the supposition that the collectivity of individuals possess autonomy. Unless each member of a democracy is autonomous—and autonomy could be interpreted very broadly, indicating not only the absence of "oppression," but the possession of adequate sources of knowledge, of skills for communication, adequate means of participation in general—then there cannot really be any popular sovereignty either. Habermas concludes that "private and public autonomy mutually presuppose each other in such a way that neither human rights nor popular

[11] Jürgen Habermas, "On the Internal Relation between the Rule of Law and Democracy," *European Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1995), pp. 13–4.

[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 15–6.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

sovereignty can claim primacy over its counterpart."[14] The conflict between law and democracy is thereby overcome in the democratic thought of mutual presupposition.

In spite of the apparent reasonableness of this solution, it seems likely that the Carl Schmitt of 193? would reject this political "balance" out of hand. Habermas offers a binary, and therefore empty, liberalism, maintaining a separation and conflict between the individual and the state that short-circuits the possibility of any *effective* politics. Even if "private autonomy" is *necessary* for real popular sovereignty in Habermas' view, it remains the case that the freedom of the individual is understood as something *standing apart* from the state, that the state still potentially threatens in the facticity of its arrangements. Furthermore, there is nothing in Habermas' solution that ensures that the freedom of the individual might not itself threaten the very democracy that presupposes it. It may still also be the case that democracy not only demands the freedom of the individual, but demands also the limits to this freedom. From the Schmittian perspective there is nothing in Habermas' argument that effectively counters the binary liberal conception that places the state and the individual in confrontation with one another.

For Schmitt "the political unity of the people" depends upon the *overcoming* of this confrontation, and this overcoming depends upon the *threefold* thought of political articulation. Between the state and the people lies the *movement*, which is not only between but *pervading* the other two. The movement *carries* the state and the people, as the body and substance that makes the state and the people what they are. Each element of the threefold articulation is a separate instance, yet the movement both penetrates the other two and grants them their form. Whereas the people remains as the apolitical element, and the state is "the politically static part," the *movement*, as movement, is both political *and* dynamic.[15] "It is the leading body that carries the state and the people."[16] There is thus a parallel between Schmitt's text and Heidegger's rectorate address. not only in the sense that both are the attempt to overcome a "liberal" conception of freedom by grounding a true and higher sovereignty. Heidegger's address, it will be remembered, also affirms the existence of three "bonds" which bind the student and themselves lead to three

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Schmitt, *State, Movement, People*, pp. 11–2.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

"services," and a more detailed reading could articulate these bonds and services with Schmitt's threefold articulation.[17]

It is unnecessary to point out that Schmitt is offering a political foundation for "totalitarianism" in this text, and that his goal is ultimately to justify the actions of "the movement," however *un*democratic, on the grounds that without the movement the people is no people. And this is the case even without Schmitt's explicit arguments concerning "ethnic identity" that close the text. The threefold articulation itself is the substance of the justification of the regime, for in the end what Schmitt is arguing for is that there is no popular sovereignty, no legal sovereignty, but only the sovereignty of the movement itself in its "carrying" of people and state.

Yet perhaps it is not the notion of a threefold political articulation that separates Schmitt's totalitarianism from "democracy." Perhaps his end of *justifying* the political situation in which he found himself meant that Schmitt could only see the "liberalism" of Weimar "democracy" in binary terms. Perhaps the very idea of democracy can also be seen as presenting a threefold articulation, to which Schmitt was blind at the time. The *method* of this blindness, a method which liberal theory itself perhaps tends to confirm, is to see the site of confrontation as between the people and the state. The *third* is then what comes between these to mediate and carry them. But if the state in democracy is the *expression* of the people, then perhaps the threefold scheme can be refigured.

Does it not make more sense to speak of a separation between the two halves that form the word "democracy"? On the one side is the *demos*, the people, popular

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[17] The first bond binds the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the community of the people, and the service which corresponds to this bond is *labor service*. The second bond binds to the worth and destiny of the nation. This bond encompasses and penetrates the entire existence of the student as *military service*. The third bond binds to the spiritual mission, and corresponds to *knowledge service*. This threefold structure can be brought into relation with Schmitt's as people (apolitical), movement (dynamic political), state (static political), respectively. If this fit is not exact, it is a matter of whether the third bond and service (spiritual mission, knowledge service) can be made to match with Schmitt's "state," but perhaps this represents less a difference in their conceptions of a threefold articulation, than it does the difference between Heidegger and Schmitt about what is ultimately the ground: for Heidegger truth (knowledge); for Schmitt politics and law (the state). Note that this schema also correlates Schmitt's "movement" with Heidegger's "military service," thus reflecting Schmitt's concern with the sovereignty of the nation in the context of its endangerment at the hands of its enemies. The "movement," the determining element, has an essentially military character. Cf., Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University," in Neske & Kettering (eds.), *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, pp. 10–1.

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sovereignty; on the other side is *kratos*, rule, in *its* autonomy.[18] Democracy, in its *widest* sense, as the idea of the being-together and going-along-together of the people, has *always* depended on this separation. Why? Because democracy has *never* meant the simple fact that people *are* together, has never meant the absolute *absence* of law, where law is grasped as the process, the technics, the *way*, of democracy. The law in its most general sense means, within democracy in *its* most general sense, the way in which democracy *happens*. The law is thus subordinated to the sovereignty of the people, yet, in order that there be democracy, the law must have the strength to stand. There must be proper process. The law means the standing of the proper *conditions* for democracy, and this, after all, is the essence of Habermas' position.

What makes this a threefold articulation and not simply the presupposed yet countering relation of the sovereignty of law to the sovereignty of the people? Democracy means "the rule of the people," yet this rule is itself dependent upon an "autonomous" standing of democratic procedure, democratic law. Again, at stake is a thought of democracy so wide as to *include*, say, communism and National Socialism. Democracy in general is a threefold political articulation because it is not *only* the case that law cannot be instituted "legally," with a lawful act. It is just as much an impossibility that democracy be instituted "democratically." The *institution* of the rule of the people is never an *example* of that rule. Democracy, if there is any, begins with the *decision* to commence democracy. *After* this moment of decision and commencement, democracy *then* means a *way* of determining the *subsequent* decisions of the people. But for this way of democracy to *get* underway, there must have *already been* a determination that there is "a people." There must, then, have *already been* a determination of all the borders of that people (borders of blood and soil, of citizenship, of age, but just as possibly of race, sex, literacy, character, even "life," etc.—*demos* probably originally referred to an enclosed area of land), and there must have *already been* a determination of the method *for* the determination of the decision of that people.

Yet if it remains impossible that the decision to institute democracy be a democratic decision, it is nevertheless not so simple to conclude that all democratic institution is therefore merely *un*democratic. If there cannot be democracy without the decision, then the originary act of democratic institution is something of a zone of indistinction with regard to democracy "as such." And, since such an act always begins with the premise that what is being instituted is the democracy *of a people that is already there*, democracy depends upon what Derrida calls a temporality of

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[18] *Kratos*, which refers to strength and power, is frequently thought in its opposition to *nomos*, law. Here, in thinking the *kratos* of *demokratia*, it is thought in its conjunction with *nomos*, in a sense given by the two-sidedness of the word "rule."

"fabulous retroactivity."[19] Democracy begins with the event of a *here*, a *now*, and a *we*. The originary act emerges from out of a past that is only found or invented in that act. This past continues to haunt democracy as the undecidability of whether the people have been found to be a people, or whether they have been invented.[20]

Furthermore, democracy is threatened from out of its future, with the possibility that it will be *discovered* that the initial decision will have been for something other than democracy, will lead to somewhere other than democracy, or simply will be an event that does not take place. Nothing guarantees that the moment of institution will last, and the fact that democracy begins with a decision that cannot be properly democratic means that "democracy" will always be in want of confirmation. Democracy needs a while, but how long is that? There remains the risk that any proclamation of the inauguration of democracy will *turn out* to be saying non-being.[21] And the confirmation of democracy is not something that can be granted by the sovereignty of the people, nor by the sovereignty of law. The people can never vote in a referendum that determines that *yes*, we are a democracy, because such a referendum always presupposes both that there is a people who decides, and the method of determination. It is only democracy "itself," in its *future*—as what lies behind and beyond these binary sovereign gods—that could ever confirm the act of institution and the fact of democracy.

But democracy "itself" is precisely what never appears. Democracy, traditionally, would take this "itself" as a regulatory ideal, as what lies behind and beyond popular and legal sovereignty. In this way political philosophy tries to "solve the problem" of instituting democracy, just as for Schmitt the movement solves the problem of the division between state and people. Democracy, traditionally, is the *idea* that *carries* the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of the law. It is the idea of the determination in the last instance, of the sovereign exception, of what, beyond the sovereignty of the people, must continue to occupy an impossible position. This is the position occupied by the sovereign, *as opposed to*

[19] Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *Negotiations: Interventions and Interview, 1971–2001* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 49–50.

[20] An obvious example is the multitude of democracies that began with the decision that the people means the male citizenry. In this case, modern democracy follows the lead of ancient democracy. The subsequent decision to include women as voters can of course be made constitutionally, "within" democracy. Yet the democracy that *makes* this decision is still a democracy without women, that began with their exclusion, yet calling itself democracy. It remains haunted by this legacy. Obviously, other examples are also possible.

[21] That is, for example, we can ask how long after the decision to institute democracy, after the *proclamation*, before it is possible to conclude that the event really has taken place? A day is certainly not long enough. A democracy that ends in a day probably did not happen at all. Thus the proclamation proclaims what is not yet true, what remains to become true. Is fifteen years enough to say that democracy has taken place? Did the Weimar republic happen?

the representative of popular sovereignty.[22] It is the necessity of commencement and the impossibility of commencing from out of what is to be commenced that determines the threefold articulation of democracy.

But insofar as democracy *is* an idea, a solution to the impossibility of commencement, the threefold solution to this impossibility tries to fix this impossible place, both as idea and figure. The sovereign is the figure and leading body of democracy. In the idea that the democratic *idea* carries the people and the law lie the same risks that attend the forgetting of democracy by reducing it to the sum of popular sovereignty and the autonomy of the law. Democracy is *phronesis*, but only if *phronesis* is grasped according to Heidegger's reading, not as the certainty of an *idea*, but such that its impossibility corresponds to the finitude that determines that it be *praxis* in the mode of *pragma*. Democracy is *poietic*, where this is not thought in its opposition to *praxis*. Democracy is not an idea, not the final support of popular and legal sovereignty. Rather, democracy begins from out of a past that can only become true in the originary act, and begins from out of a future that may not ever happen. Democracy, if there is any, is poetizing. The problem for

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[22] That is, it is the idea of the position of the sovereign *figurehead*, the "president," for instance, rather than the "chancellor" (in the terms of Weimar democracy). Schmitt's own political position, *prior* to the advent of National Socialism, in favor of the *right* of the president to ban the National Socialist party, *in spite of* electoral success, is in its essence not necessarily an authoritarian argument for protecting the people from itself. It is just as possible to view such an argument as emerging from out of democracy itself, democracy as what is *beyond the people*. When Schmitt argues for the possibility that a decision by the sovereign on the exception may be necessary, this is essentially a decision that the originary act that instituted the way of "democracy" has *lost its way*. Sovereign is the one, then, who *never* has the right to act in the name of the people nor in the name of the law, but only beyond these. That is why the decision of the sovereign is properly *non-justiciable*. It is when this impossible position of the sovereign is conflated with either popular or legal sovereignty that democracy itself is decisively forgotten. Schmitt points toward the *latter* danger in *State, Movement, People*, with his concern that a court of constitutional supervision makes the court into the true sovereign, makes sovereignty *justiciable*, resulting in "administration of the law instead of political leadership" (pp. 45–6). Yet when on 2 August 1934 Hitler made himself *Führer*, that is, both chancellor *and* president, he achieved the conflation of sovereignty with popular sovereignty, thus forgetting democracy *from the side of* the people, on the grounds of the necessity of leadership. This conflation is also present in American democracy, even though there remains a separation between president and congress, that is, executive and legislature. Despite this separation, both, as elected, are obviously the representatives of popular sovereignty, and there remains no place for the sovereign as such, *beyond the people*. The sovereignty of democracy is forgotten in the name of the people, the sovereignty of which is then divided (threefold if one includes the House and the Senate as separate expressions of popular sovereignty). In this sense, a constitutional monarchy may perhaps "remember" democracy more effectively than an American-style constitution, *precisely because* the sovereign position is not occupied by the people's representative. Of course such a theologico-political constitutional monarchy tends itself to see the sovereign position as either granted "from God" or "from the people." Yet, precisely because of the "modern" tendency for such a monarch to be *incapable* of decision, or incapable apart from the moment of absolute exception, at least the sense of the theoretical *possibility* of the impossible exception is retained.

a democracy to come is to determine whether it could ever be anything other than the event of a *here*, a *now*, a *we*, and a *way* of democracy. That is, the problem for democracy is whether it can ever be grounded in anything other than a "sovereign" decision in want of confirmation. For, being in want of confirmation, "democracy" will the fore always try to fix its sovereignty in place, in order to forget the threat that the eed for the positing of sovereignty represents. At stake, therefore, is a sovereignty beyond the sovereign gods of the people and the law. The interpretation of this beyond is what is also in play in poetizing.

Yet what is that—poetizing?

"*Aber was ist das—Dichten?*"[23] Heidegger opens his lecture course on Hölderlin's poem "The Ister" with a consideration of the meaning of the word "hymn."[24] "Hymn" and "poem" are not the same word, of course, yet this opening remark foreshadows what Heidegger will say concerning poetry and, in particular, Hölderlin's "hymnal poetizing." But what Heidegger says concerning the hymn already bends the poem in the direction, if not of the political, at least in the direction of something public, of the *polis*. The hymn, in its Greek meaning, refers to a song of praise, in praise of the gods or heroes, a celebration and consecration, in preparation of the festival. The hymn is prepared for, and prepares, the public festival. Heidegger immediately points out a moment in *Antigone* when this word appears consecutively as noun and verb, *ymnos ymnesen*—the hymn hymns; in celebratory song to celebrate.[25] Heidegger presents this phrase from Sophocles but offers no commentary on it. He merely notes that the way in which Hölderlin's poems may be called hymns must initially remain an open question, and then continues his remarks on the conditions for reading Hölderlin. Nevertheless, Heidegger's decision to begin in just this way must also be marked.

In drawing attention to this placement by Sophocles of noun and verb against each other, Heidegger echoes his argument in "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" that the essence of language must be understood from out of the essence of poetry and not the other way around.[26] "Hymn" can be grasped as neither noun

[23] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 8.

[24] "Der Ister" can be found in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke (Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe) 2, 1* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1951), pp. 190–2; Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments* (London: Anvil Press, 1994, 3rd edn.), pp. 512–7, for the original and an English translation.

[25] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 1.

[26] Heidegger, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (New York: Humanity Books, 2000), p. 60.

nor verb, because the hymn is not a hymn other than through the fact of its hymning, its preparing the festival. Language is not the means of the hymnal song, for the hymn itself is not a means (of celebration). "Rather, the celebrating and festiveness lie in the telling itself."[27] Heidegger's opening thus foreshadows what he will say about the poem ("*Das Gedicht dichtet...*"), about the calling that is called (*gerufene Rufen*), and the tearing away of the river that tears it from all relation to humans ("*Reißen...entrissse*").[28] In the language of 1924, it is *pragma* in the mode of *praxis*, *praxis-pragma*. It is not merely that the hymn, the poem, the call, the *Riss*, are *things* that also *do*, but that they *are* things only from out of their doing.

When Heidegger asks about poetizing, *Dichten*, it is not only through a remembrance of Greek *poiesis*, but equally of Latin *dictare*. Poetizing means writing down, something dictated to be written down, br[.] dictated from out of the future, a *fore*-telling of what has not yet been told. Poetizing means the setting down of what is dictated (whether dictated *to* or *by* the poet), and what nevertheless only begins, if it begins, with the setting down itself.[29] But what is at stake is precisely a beginning, something that, each time it happens, happens for the very first time, hence a *hapax legomenon*. But this in turn affects the very determination of the meaning of poetizing, such that Heidegger seems to derive its meaning from out of the poem that is itself to be read. That is, poetizing is thought here from out of the first word of "*Der Ister*"—*Jezt*.

The "now" of "Now come, fire!" is, says Heidegger, a beginning that begins as a calling (*Rufen*). The fire is called, called forth, attesting to the "worth" ("*Würde*") of that which is called. The poem dictates to the fire. Yet the next lines—"*Begierig sind wir / Zu schauen den Tag*" ("Eager are we / To see the day")—make apparent that the fire here means the sun, the light of day. The sun, however, comes daily, makes the day, regardless of any call. Thereby, perhaps, it seems that the ones calling are in fact called, called by the day, by the sun, to their calling. The "now," then, names the time of calling of those called, of those called to poetize in their poetry. The poets have not chosen this "now" willfully; the "now" has not arisen through their

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[27] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 13. Also, cf., *ibid.*, p. 49. This also draws the thought of the "hymn" toward "*mythos*," for Heidegger also states: "*Mythos* is what has its essence in its telling." Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 10. This could therefore be seen as confirmation of Lacoue-Labarthe's conclusion that for Heidegger *Dichtung* means the "mythological" as theologico-poetical support of the theologico-political. Such a conclusion assumes that "*mythos*" is equivalent to the "theologico-poetical."

[28] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 8, p. 13, & p. 28.

[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9. Thus Lacoue-Labarthe follows de Gandillac in translating *das Gedichtete*, the poetized, with "*le dictamen*," retaining the stronger sense of dictation, of what is dictated (to/by the poet). Cf., Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poetry's Courage," in Fioretos (ed.), *The Solid Letter*, p. 82

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own cunning, through any Promethean production. Rather, the "now"—that which is called and which is calling—is something given, a gift (*ein Gegebenes, eine Gabe*).[30] As a call to the fire to come, this gift appears to speak *into* the future, yet the fact of the possibility of calling to this now testifies to what has already happened. This occurrence, the fact that something has been decided, that something has happened, is what alone *carries* (*trägt*) all relation to whatever is coming.[31] Heidegger refers additionally to Hölderlin's poem, "*Stimme des Volkes*," in order to grasp this temporality of the "now," that is, the temporality of the rivers. The rivers are "*die Ahnungsvollen*" ("full of intimation"), yet "*die Schwindenden*" ("vanishing"). As vanishing, they pass away, they are constantly leaving, yet as full of intimation, they stand in relation to the future, abandoning the "now," heading into the past or the future. As such, evidently, the rivers are "bearers" ("*Träger*") of a meaning that is as yet still veiled.[32]

The "now," then, as a gift (*Gabe*), as what calls to a calling, is itself perhaps a task, *Aufgabe*. The rivers point us toward, they carry, this task. At this point, Heidegger outlines the metaphysical interpretation of art, in order to differentiate the rivers from anything merely metaphysical. Metaphysics, what carries us beyond physics, means the differentiation of a sensuous (*sinnlich*) from a nonsensuous realm, such that there arises for the first time the possibility that the artwork is an "image" ("*Bild*"). The metaphysical interpretation of the rivers means the *symbolic* interpretation of the rivers as an image of something else. At stake is the question of whether the rivers in Hölderlin's poetry can be grasped *allegorically, metaphorically* (carried over, *Übertragung*). This is what draws Heidegger to refer "allegory" to the agora. The agora is the open public place for the gathering of the people, the place at which, in discussion, they can openly proclaim to and understand one another, where what shows itself appears as what it is in an open, public way. *Allegoria*, then, is "a proclamation" ("*eine Kundgabe*") of something else by way of something, a conveying of something nonsensuous by something *sinnlich*.[33]

Democracy is the task, the calling, the gift, that carries the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of the law. What then, would be the difference between a "metaphysical" interpretation of democracy and one that escapes metaphysics, in the terms that Heidegger employs here? If democracy is thought as the *idea* that lies before and moves beyond the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of the law, as an idea that is embodied in the figure of the sovereign, then democracy "itself" is a nonsensuous idea presented publicly, in the *agora*, by way of the *sinnlich*

[30] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 9.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 16. And cf., *ibid.*, pp. 29–32.

figure of the sovereign. Democracy begins as an *Aufgabe*, but this task must immediately be experienceable in sensuous form as a *Kundgabe*, a proclamation by an inaugurator of a *here-now-we*, an inaugurator whose physical presence continues to be embodied in the figure of the sovereign, who continues to re-present the inauguration by way of something else. The *idea* of democracy is always metaphysical. Thus when Heidegger speaks of the meaning of the rivers as carrying something still veiled, there remains the possibility that with poetizing something else is at stake than merely the proclamation of such a *here-now-we*. The poem *"Der Ister"* explicitly grants the possibility of precisely such an interpretation. It begins with a "now" that speaks from out of a decision that has already happened, and toward a future that is not yet; furthermore, it speaks of this "now" precisely in the terms of establishing a "here" for a "we" (*"Hier aber wollen wir bauen"*; "Here however we wish to build"). The question posed by Heidegger's interpretation of this poem is whether, in distinguishing a metaphysical from a non-metaphysical interpretation, Heidegger escapes a politics determined by the *"idea,"* or whether on the other hand this escape only confirms that Heidegger is determining an explicitly theologico-poetical politics.

The river

If the "now" of the poem signifies a commencement, this is not a commencement that commences from out of the poet's knowledge. What the river does no one knows; the river is an "enigma" (*"Rätsel"*). The poet knows only about the concealment of the river's activity. The poet is thus like the chorus in *Antigone*, that knows that there is a knowledge of the hearth that remains concealed from it. The poet knows that the river flows, but does not know what is decided in this flowing. Thus the poet is not the one who makes an inaugural proclamation, for such proclamation is always pronounced as though from knowledge. The poet brings "us" to the possibility of decision, but not of the poet's *own* decision.[34]

The "now" of the poem, in other words, is a "now" that is to be taken on in a decision that has not yet arrived, and may not arrive. In this way the "now" remains separated from the time of commencement. The same is true of the "here," where we wish to build. Just as the "now" is not the technics of the commencement in the form of proclamation, so too the "here" does not mean the technics of accommodation and housing. Dwelling means rather the taking on of an abode

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

(*Aufenthalt*), and abiding there. It is a whiling (*Verweilen*), that needs a while.[35] It is of course possible to hear Heidegger as giving the "here" a mythical resonance, a sense of *Heimat*, a word that can be found in the lecture course. But it is not necessary to take Heidegger as referring to the *possession* of a "here." If there is ever a "we," it is "we, here" (Heidegger speaks of the abiding of human beings upon the earth), such that the "we" and the "here" presuppose one another. The "we" and the "here" find one another in rest, yet Heidegger states that this does not refer to a cessation of activity nor an absence of disruption (*Störung*).

What Heidegger seems to be gesturing toward is that dwelling in a place is not simply a fact, but something that has its *way*. The "we" and the "here" find themselves in the decision of the poet's "now," but this is a decision that remains to come, that needs a while to find out if a way of being *we-here* really has been decided. If dwelling happens in a place (*Ort*), then it does so in a certain way, a way that determines this dwelling. Heidegger refers to this as "the locality of the locale" ("*die Ortschaft des Ortes*"). Locality, here, means that which bestows (*verschenkt*) rest upon the abode. But, Heidegger immediately adds, the river "*is*" the locality that pervades (*durchwaltet*) the abode of humans upon the earth.[36] What determines the way of dwelling, therefore, is not the steadfastness of the land, but the river in its flowing. The river gives the way of dwelling in its being full of intimation and yet vanishing. "Our claim is this: the river is the locality of the dwelling of human beings as historical upon this earth."[37] Yet, at the same time, the river is what is here now, as what in advance and everywhere "*da-bei is und 'da' ist.*"[38] The river is the *Da* of Da-sein.

That this is the case is made even more explicit when Heidegger returns to "Voice of the People." The knowledge of the rivers is, like the knowledge of the hearth, concealed from humans, and is, furthermore, unconcerned with human knowledge. This is the context in which Heidegger states that in their flowing and tearing (*Reißen*) the rivers appear to tear (*entrisse*) themselves from all human relation. Yet, Hölderlin asks, who loves them not? The *Reißen* of the rivers, in their indifference to human relation, tears humans out of the habitual middle of their lives, tearing them into another centre. The river names that which makes humans *ex centric*, makes them not only beings but *da*-beings, torn into the possibility of other centres. The love for the rivers is the prelude for this being torn out of one's own centre, for being placed in a middle that is other than one's own. But if the love of the rivers is the prelude, what are the rivers inasmuch as they *are* this tearing

35 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
36 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

away from all relation? "The sphere proper to standing in the excentric middle of life is death."[39] Death, that which tears us from all relation, and thus tears us from our own centre, is thus itself related to a tearing that tears into *another* middle. The river names this tearing out of relation that tears into another middle. Is this also another name for the *polis*?

What is the nature of the "we" of democracy? How can the river that tears us from all relation also tear us *into* another middle, with others? The river is an enigma, a riddle—*ein "Rätsel."* This double movement that tears out and tears into is thus enigmatic. But if Heidegger is concerned with the *mystery* of the river, *Rätsel* is itself also a clue to the mystery that it names. A *Rätsel* is not only something concealed, unknown, but something that, in being concealed, is something about which we care. Heidegger thus draws *Rätsel* into its relation with *Raten*, giving counsel, and *Rat*, counsel, which "means as much as 'care' ('*Sorge*')."[40] Counsel, therefore, is more than a technical or useful contribution of advice from one to another, an instruction or a statement of opinion that leaves the counselor untouched. Counsel, properly, means to take into care. Thus, the enigma of the river is the mystery that being torn out of all relation, nevertheless in this very being-torn-out lies the possibility for being-torn-out-*together*. It is not a question of being-together as one substance, one body, one figure, but that in being-torn-out of relation, there lies the mysterious possibility of *thereby* being able to take others into care.

If the river determines a "here," therefore, this does not mean that the river is what appropriates the place of the people for the people. If the river gives the possibility for a "here," it does so only through enigmatically tearing from all relation, tearing us out of our middle, onto another path toward a "there":

> The river is the locality of journeying [*die Ortschaft der Wanderschaft*] because it determines the "over there" ["*Dort*"] and the "there" ["*Da*"] at which our becoming homely arrives, yet from which, as a coming to be at home, it also takes its departure. The river does not merely grant the locale [*gewährt nicht nur den Ort*], in the sense of the mere place [*des bloßen Platzes*] that is occupied by humans in their dwelling. The river itself has its locale intrinsically [*Der Strom selbst hat den Ort inne*]. The river itself dwells.[41]

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 28. Heidegger refers also to a phrase of Hölderlin's, "time that tears" ("*reißen den Zeit*") (p. 39), and later to the time that tears us along and tears us away, "*die reißende Zeit und ihr Fortriß*" (p. 46). Cf., "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry," *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, p. 58. There, taking up the thought from Hölderlin that "we" are a conversation, he asks how this conversation that we are can ever begin, how the word can take hold and be brought to stand, within *reißende Zeite*.

[40] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 34.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 3

Heidegger thereby sets up the problematic that sends him through Sophocles before returning to Hölderlin in the undelivered final third of the lecture course. With the relation of locality and journeying, what is formulated is the relation of the "river" to the *polis*, in their relation of entwinement. Although the river tears from all relation, nevertheless in the way in which humans remain together there prevails a "secret relation" ("*geheim Bezug*") that is as yet unknown. Hölderlin's poem, taking "the form of the 'hymn'" ("*die Gestalt der Hymne*"), nevertheless "presents no prefabricated literary or poetic schema" ("*kein fertiges literarisches und poetisches Schema darstellt*").[42] The poem does not present the "now" as a proclamation that would simply determine the form of the "here." Rather, the poem is a *Dichten* that points toward the enigma of the relation of locality and journeying. In other words, it points toward the way in which there is no coming to be at home, no *here-now-we*, without passage through the foreign. That is to say, in order to see to what the poem is pointing, it is necessary also to think through Hölderlin's famous letter to Böhlendorff of 4 December 1801.

Szondi, Lacoue-Labarthe, Warminski

At least since 1964, when Peter Szondi published "*Überwindung des Klassizismus*," Hölderlin's letter to Böhlendorff has been subjected to intense interpretative scrutiny, almost as though this letter of response to the work of another playwright were a sacred text (even if, perhaps, a sacred text on the deconstitution of the sacred).[43] This serious with which this debate has been conducted seems to take this letter (number 236 in the *Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*) as more than a key to understanding *Hölderlin's* relation to the Greeks, and rather as unlocking the enigma of all relation to the past for "us" at all. It is not possible to review all of the intricacies of this debate, in spite of its inherent interest and relevance. Since one of its enduring themes is to save Hölderlin from Heidegger, however, it is at least necessary to acknowledge some of its stakes and the terms in which it is conducted.

[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9.

[43] Cf., Peter Szondi, "Hölderlin's overcoming of classicism," in E. S. Shaffer (ed.), *Comparative Criticism, volume 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Caesura of the Speculative" & "Hölderlin and the Greeks," *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., & London: Harvard University Press, 1989); Andrzej Warminski, *Reading in Interpretation: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), chs. 2–3; Warminski, "Monstrous History: Heidegger Reading Hölderlin," in Fioretos (ed.), *The Solid Letter*; Eric L. Santner, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Narrative Vigilance and the Poetic Imagination* (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 1986), ch. 3.

What is clear from all interpretations is that, contrary to Winckelmannian classicism, what is first to be asserted is that the relation to the Greeks cannot be one of imitation, of copying an image. Nevertheless, as Szondi remarks, the Greeks remain indispensable for today's poet, because in the relationship to the Greeks lies the possibility of "encountering our proper origin as a foreign element" ("*eigenen Ursprung als einem Fremden begegnet*").[44] Szondi sees this relationship through the prism of German idealism, grasping the relation between what is "one's own" and what is "foreign" as essentially dialectical. What is our own, that which is natural for us, is "Junonian sobriety" ("*Junonische Nüchternheit*") and the "clarity of presentation" ("*die Klarheit der Darstellung*"). For the Germans, the Hesperians, the West, what is our own is sober, calculated presentation, the building of edifices and solid structures. This *is* "natural" for us *because* we are descended from the Greeks. For the Greeks, these were not the things that came naturally, even though it was precisely in these things that they remain unsurpassed. What is proper for the Greeks is the "fire from heaven" ("*das Feuer vom Himmel*") and "holy pathos" ("*heiligen Pathos*"), but precisely because these are what forms Greek *nature*, they are the things that the Greeks did *not* master.[45]

Thus, what is foreign for the Greeks is what is "our own." For us, the Greeks represent a path to what is our own, a detour through which we can approach what is our own. For, according to Hölderlin, to freely use what is one's own (also called *das Nationelle*) is what is most difficult. At one point Hölderlin uses the term "*Geschick*," as what, with "living relation" ("*lebendigen Verhältniss*"), must be the highest ("*das höchste*") for the Greeks and for us, yet also as what *cannot* be at all the same for the Greeks and for us. Whereas we might translate "*Geschick*" as destiny, for Szondi it is clearly a matter of "skill," that is, of *techne*, the rules of poetry. Thus, for Szondi, this is a letter that stands under the sign of *techne*, a question of finding a way past holy pathos, beyond what is *our* foreign, beyond what is *therefore* that in which we excel, toward a regaining of "skill," which for us means a regaining of sobriety and clarity.[46]

For Lacoue-Labarthe it is crucial to recognize Hölderlin's immersion in dialectics, while equally taking care to extricate from the Hölderlinian text the emergence of

[44] Szondi, "Hölderlin's overcoming of classicism," in Shaffer (ed.), *Comparative Criticism* 5, p. 262.

[45] Cf., Friedrich Hölderlin, *Essays and Letters on Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 149–51. The German can be found in Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke* (*Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe*) 6, pp. 425–8.

[46] Szondi, "Hölderlin's overcoming of classicism," in Shaffer (ed.), *Comparative Criticism* 5, pp. 264–6.

another interpretation irreducible to dialectics. The very thought that would *oppose* a dialectical interpretation to an interpretation that exceeds dialectics finds itself immediately back within the logic of opposition and overcoming, that is, precisely, back within what is "insuperable" in dialectics itself.[47] Thus, for Lacoue-Labarthe, it cannot be a matter of escaping speculative metaphysics, but only of what, in Hölderlin's system, succeeds in deconstituting, dismantling, deconstructing itself, in the very moment of its institution.

Where does Lacoue-Labarthe find this impossible moment in Hölderlin that both constitutes and deconstitutes speculative logic? Because what is one's own for the Greeks is not clarity of presentation—what is their own is not that clarity of which nevertheless the Greeks were masters—what is to be sought by us from the Greeks is what remains unsaid in what the Greeks said.[48] With this gesture, the Greeks are disappropriated from themselves, such that Greece itself no longer exists, or exists only divided from itself. And, consequently, this means that "we" too—Germany, the West, Hesperia—do not exist either, or do not exist *yet*, or exist only as what is not. Contrary to the logic of speculation, then, one's own and the foreign do not exist as mirror images, from which "us" and "them" would be able properly to constitute each other. The disappropriation, the foreignness, the fact of *Unheimlichkeit*, is itself original, and probably irreversible. There is no return home, for the home proper does not exist. What is proper for the Greeks is tragedy, that is, homelessness. What is proper for us is now only the deconstruction of the tragic, the no longer being capable of tragedy. The Greeks are, for us, not a home nor a way home, but only what we invent such that we can find or approach the sober impossibility of the tragic.[49]

Andrzej Warminski argues against Szondi that the Greeks could never serve as a mirror image for us because, as Lacoue-Labarthe also argued, the Greeks are divided against themselves. What is foreign for the Greeks—clarity of representation, Junonian sobriety—may be what is our own, but this does not mean that we can simply *find* what is our own in the Greeks, *precisely because for the Greeks it is their foreign*. True Greek nature, what was their own for them, is something from which we are separated, and which separates us from the Greeks.[50] Using various references from Hölderlin's poems, fragments, texts, and tragedies, Warminski

[47] Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Caesura of the Speculative," *Typography*, pp. 211–2.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[49] Lacoue-Labarthe, "Hölderlin and the Greeks," *Typography*, pp. 242–4.
[50] Warminski, *Readings in Interpretation*, p. 33.

argues that Greek nature, what is their own—that is, that which would be most difficult for *them* to learn—is the "Oriental," the "Eastern," the "Egyptian."

Greek nature comes from the East, and thus it is not Greek culture that is radically foreign to us, but this Eastern, Oriental, Egyptian *nature of the Greeks*. To search for ourselves through Greek culture, Greek *art*, is, really, not to find ourselves in the Greeks, but to invent the Greeks on the basis of a culture which is already our nature. In this way we preserve the foreignness of the Orient, in order not to have anything to do with it. But there would also be no way for us to approach this Oriental other, because it is not our other, but our other's other. But, in turn, if the Orient remains utterly foreign, then we cannot *know* the Greeks either, for whom that other is "nature." We are destined to invent the Greeks because we cannot find them. Even the Greeks themselves, since their way was to find what is foreign for them—clarity of presentation, Junonian sobriety—are only the inventions of themselves, an invention we then inherit as our own.[51]

Warminski sees Heidegger too as guilty of the "suppression" of the Egyptians and the Orient in his reading of the letter.[52] Warminski returns to this theme in "Monstrous History," which examires these themes in the context of the 1942 lecture course. If Heidegger recognizes that Hölderlin only has his language in dialogue with the Greeks, Warminski asks, does he also remember to think this *for* the Greeks, to remember that "their own" language is itself divided from itself? Whereas Hölderlin preserves an internal doubleness for *both* us and the Greeks, Heidegger tends to render the situation such that the Greeks are simply the foreign, to which we must journey and return from in order to be our own. Greek nature and Greek culture are simply collapsed, then, into our foreign. Furthermore, Greek *nature*—fire from heaven, holy pathos—is then simply equated with *our own*, rather than what is radically foreign for us, as the other's other.[53] Our origin, our source, cannot simply be Greece, because we come from the East, the Orient, *by way of Greece*. It cannot simply be a question of a dialogue between Greece and Germany. As Warminski puts it: "we are not at home not because we are exiled *from* Greece but, rather, because we are exiled *by Greece* from ourselves: the Orient, the East, Egypt, and so on."[54]

[51] *Ibid.*, pp. 54–5.
[52] *Ibid.*, pp. 56–7.
[53] Warminski, "Monstrous Reading," in Fioretos (ed.), *The Solid Letter*, pp. 208–10.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

The passage through the foreign

Warminski himself acknowledges that Heidegger must to some extent have been aware of this problematic in Hölderlin, and that this is indicated when in "Letter on 'Humanism'" Heidegger writes that "we have still scarcely begun to think the mysterious relations to the East that have come to word in Hölderlin's poetry."[55] It is also possible to cite Heidegger's commentary on the lines from the hymn on the Eastern and the Greek rivers ("*Wir singen aber vom Indus her / Fernangekommen und / Vom Alpheus...*"; "We, however, sing from the Indus / Arrived from afar and / From Alpheus..."). About these lines Heidegger says the following:

> "Here" at the Ister, there "from the Indus"; and this from-there-to-here [*Von-dort-hierher*] goes through the Alpheus. The river determines the journey, and therefore the relation grounded in this journeying [*gegründetern Bezug der erwanderten*] and so the journeying of the locale itself. The journey goes from the Indus, thus from the East, through Greece, here to the upper Donau toward the West.[56]

Thus there seems to be recognition from Heidegger that "we sing" from out of the East, that our origin is not Greece but rather the East *via* Greece. Yet at the same time Warminski's critique of Heidegger also seems to be confirmed when Heidegger speaks of the Greeks and Germans as essentially related to one another:

> And thus what shows itself in the difference between these two humankinds, from Hölderlin's perspective, is that they are different en-counteringly [*daß sie entgegengesetz verschieden sind*], which means, essentially: they encounter one another [*einander begegnend*] and so are related to one another [*aufeinander bezogen*]. What for the Greeks is their own is foreign for the Germans; and what is foreign for the Germans is what is proper to the Greeks.[57]

Heidegger thus seems clearly not only to relate the Germans to the Greeks, but equally the Greeks to the Germans, as though each is known only in relation to the other. Yet note that in the final sentence of this passage Heidegger does *not* say: "What for the Greeks is their own is foreign for the Germans; and what for the Greeks is foreign is the proper of the Germans." Rather, Heidegger constructs the

[55] Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'," *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 257, cited in Warminski, *Readings in Interpretation*, p. 56. Note that at the end of this remark Heidegger places a parenthetical reference to the Ister hymn.

[56] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 36.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 124. Note that in the translation by McNeill & Davis, "*entgegengesetz verschieden*" is rendered as "different in a reciprocal manner." This has the advantages of being readable and grammatical when compared with "different en-counteringly." However, with the thought of "reciprocity" it perhaps pushes Heidegger's text even further toward justifying Warminski's critique than is warranted by the letter of Heidegger's text. *Entgegengesetz* contains a sense of opposition, of standing *against* one another, thus of *countering*, that is intended to be retained by the hyphenation of en-*countering*. Yet hopefully something approaching reciprocity is also conveyed by the *en-*, that is, by the sense that the relation between the Greek and the German is *en*-twined.

sentence in an apparently *tautological* way that confirms only that our foreign is what is their own. Heidegger does not speak about what is foreign for the Greeks in this passage. This may be a suppression, but nevertheless it does *not* exactly determine the Greek foreign in a perfectly reciprocal manner as our own.

Does then Heidegger really suppress the "internal doubleness" of the Greek? Surely the very structure of the lecture course, that travels from Germany to Greece and back again, confirms this suppression and reduces the relation to Greece to speculative logic. Yet it may be that Warminski searches *too hard* for evidence of this suppression by looking for (the absence of) *references* to the East in Heidegger. Does the "internal doubleness" really depend upon such references, given the fact that, *as* our other's other, as what is completely other to us, we only have any access whatsoever to this other through the *mediation* of Greece?

Is it not in fact the most obvious commonplace to say of Heidegger's "Greece" that it is *always* a matter for him of saving Greece *from* the Greeks, of dis-covering a Greece that the Greeks themselves actively concealed, or were not even aware of, a matter of dividing the Greece of the pre-socratics from the Greece after Socrates, of dividing the primordial essence of Greek tragedy from the metaphysics of philosophy, of dividing the essence of the *polis* from the way in which it figures in Greek *thought*? Without giving thought to the way in which Heidegger constantly goes out of his way to *divide* Greece, it is not possible to conclude, as Warminski does, that Heidegger has suppressed or forgotten what the East *names* for Greece, that he has suppressed what is *at stake* or *in play* with Hölderlin's thought of the East.[58] Thus when Heidegger writes that Hölderlin is the one struck by the god of light, and that he is on a return journey, a return then *from* Greece, it should also be noted that this is a return from the journey *to the "fire."* This is as much as to say, then, that Hölderlin returns not from the *known* Greece, from o   Greece, the Greece of "facts," but rather from the Greece that is foreign for us *because* it is *their* Greece, their proper (the "fire from heaven"), the Greece whose nature comes from the relations to the East, and thus *both* for us *and* for the Greeks themselves remains always enigmatic.[59]

[58] Perhaps it will turn out that it is not the East that has been suppressed, but rather the *plurality* of its names—East, Orient, Egypt—just as he tends to suppress the plurality of "our" names—not only Germany, but the West, and the Hesperians. Do not all these need to be thought not only in terms of Hölderlin's overall schema, but equally in their relations to *one another*? In this case, it is not possible to conclude that Warminski has achieved this any more than Heidegger, for he tends constantly to list them together, as though he were *remembering* this plurality constantly without ever accounting for it. It is thus significant that only Greece requires simply *one* name. Perhaps this indicates that Greece means nothing other than mediation itself, what mediates access to differences, what mediates all relations of the proper and the foreign—the inaccessible middle.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 136. Cf., Bernasconi, "On Heidegger's Other Sins of Omission: His Exclusion of Asian Thought from the Origins of Occidental Metaphysics and His Denial of the

If, then, Heidegger does to some degree determine the relations of "us" to the Greeks reciprocally, if to some degree Hölderlin's "East" is suppressed, nevertheless Heidegger's account of the Böhlendorff letter is not as reductive as Warminski's reading indicates. Heidegger at least, unlike most readings, leaves it as an open question, a question for the *future*, whether or not Hölderlin *has* properly determined the interrelation of the Greek and the German.[60] Furthermore, it is simply not the case that Heidegger fails to attend to the internal doubleness of Greece, nor is the difference between "clarity of presentation" and "fire from heaven" reduced to the difference between thinking and poetizing. When Heidegger speaks of the Greek passage through the foreign, through, that is, the "clarity of presentation," this clarity of presentation is graspea as the rigor of poetizing (*Strenge des dichtenden*), and this itself is understood in relation to *thoughtful*, formative grasping (*denkenden, bildenden Fassens*). This passage through the foreign is what first made possible the "building" of the *polis*.[61] Thus the *polis*, that which is taken as *the* Greek fact, *the* Greek invention, is such only from out of the passage through the foreign, that is, from out of thoughtful poetizing. The *polis* is not reducible to thinking *or* poetizing—it is thoughtful, but *as* what is found or invented, it is also essentially *poietic*.

Because the "clarity of presentation" was foreign for the Greeks, it is that in which they excelled. The *polis* was the Greek achievement. Yet, because the "fire from heaven" what natural for them, their proper, it was also their danger, that which for them was the most difficult to learn. Thus, the Greek weakness was the inability to master the fire, which is to say that they suffered from an excess, an over-measure, of fate (*ein Übermaß an Schicksal*).[62] The "fire from heaven" thereby contains an explicit relation to being-historical, to what is sent, such that the achievement of the *polis*, the configuring of being-together, can never be equivalent

Possibility of Christian Philosophy," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 69 (1995), pp. 345–9. Bernasconi, too, puts Warminski's critique of Heidegger's "suppression" into question, asking whether Heidegger's position is not closer to Hölderlin's than Warminski allows. Bernasconi asks, given the fact that Heidegger *did* acknowledge the "Asiatic" relation to the Greek beginning, why, *in spite* of this acknowledgment, it is *also* true that Heidegger did not give a place in thought to this relation. Bernasconi argues that the reason is that, in order for the Greeks to serve *as* the beginning, as the beginning for *another* beginning, for Heidegger a certain *active forgetting* was necessary. Contra Warminski, Bernasconi thus argues that Heidegger remembers the foreignness internal to the Greeks, but only in order the better to forget it. We would only add that this *also* brings Warminski back to Heidegger, in the sense that it means that for *both* of them we are destined to invent the Greeks because we cannot find them.

[60] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 124.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

[62] *Ibid.*

to a mastery of historical sending. This is why the *polis* is *also* the site of Greek tragedy.

Conversely, what is "natural" for the Germans—or the West, Hesperia—is the formation of projects and enclosures and frameworks (*das Bilden der Entwürfe und Einfassungen und Gerüste*), and they are torn away (*reißt*) by the provision of frames and compartments, by partitioning and structuring (*Einteilen und Gliedern*).[63] This, then, is our danger, our weakness, the danger that suppresses every fire, or that takes delimiting and instituting (*Einfassen und Einrichten*)—technics—*as* the fire itself. Thus the journey to Greece, to the foreign, is the journey to the fire, to what is "natural" for the Greeks, *because* it is necessary for the Germans to learn what is most difficult for them, which is the free use of their own gift for presentation (*darstellungsgabe*). The passage through the foreign transforms the relation to what is one's own. Just as what is foreign for the Greeks—the "clarity of presentation"—is not equivalent to thinking in opposition to poetizing, but is instead thoughtful-poetizing, so too what is foreign for the Germans—the "fire from heaven," "holy pathos"—is not equivalent to poetizing. Yet the *way* in which the law that demands exposure to the foreign is experienced and told is *through* the poet.[64]

Courage

The necessity of the poet is not the necessity of a genius, nor the necessity of leadership. Rather, the poet is necessary because poetizing belongs properly to the way in which humans dwell upon the earth. It is a matter of thinking conjointly two poetic thoughts from Hölderlin. The first is from "*In lieblicher Bläue...*" ("In lovely blueness..."): "*Voll Verdienst, doch dichterisch wohnet / Der Mensch auf dieser Erde.*" ("Full of merit, yet poetically / Humans dwell upon this earth").[65] The second is from "*Andenken*" ("Remembrance"): "*Was bleibet aber, stiften die Dichter*" ("Yet what remains, the poet founds").[66] Between these two citations favored by Heidegger lies the necessity of the poet, a necessity that derives from the *temporality* of poetizing and existence. It is what is in common between poetizing and existence that means that existence needs the poet. It is not a question of "representing" life poetically. The poet does not present a figure of life, of existence. But existence itself is rather

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63 *Ibid.*, p. 136.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

65 Cf., Hölderlin, "*In lieblicher Bläue.../*In lovely blueness...," *Poems and Fragments*, pp. 714–9, for the original and a translation.

66 Cf., Hölderlin, "*Andenken/*Remembrance," *ibid.*, pp. 508–11.

something *poietic* in itself, which is to say, torn by figurability, which is what makes existence available for poetizing.

It is clear that for Heidegger the first of these citations is as much as Hölderlin's writing-again-differently the choral ode from *Antigone*. "Full of merit": that is, the achievements of humanity cross all borders. Humanity succeeds in protecting and securing its dwelling, and in constantly furthering its ways. Humanity names as much as *techne* itself. "Yet": humanity, in its dwelling, is not grasped fully by reference to the technical. There is something further than furthering in the essence of humanity, something that escapes "merit." This "other" involves humanity in the middle of its existence, yet if poetizing is the path to this other, it is by definition not a path of merit, and is therefore something entirely inappropriable by technics, for it is a path that involves Da-sein in its mortality. The lines from *"Andenken"* indicate the way in which poetizing poetizes in advance, from out of the past and toward the "not yet" of a future. "The coming in its coming is experienced and preserved [*erfahren und bewahrt*] in poetizing."[67] The poet is the one on the return journey from the foreign, yet, as such, is the one poetizing toward an as-yet unsecured future. That this is also a relation to the past is indicated by the fact that what is founded is founded as what *remains*, from and as the remains that the poet also finds.

The relation between poetizing and existence is figured as *"Geist."* Heidegger himself notes that with this term Hölderlin maintains a relation to metaphysics. That is, perhaps, there is a dialectics of the poet who, as founder of what remains, is exiled from what is founded, and is thereby inscribed in a sacrificial logic.[68] Yet this relation to metaphysics in Hölderlin is, according to Heidegger, a relation only in the sense of encountering and turning away. Heidegger's own text maintains a somewhat ambiguous relation to Hölderlin's discourse on spirit. Whereas *metaphysical* "spirit" names the "absolute," that which "systematically" overcomes the distinction between "subject" and "object," where, that is, metaphysical "spirit" is essentially the absolute as absolute *thinking*, for Hölderlin, we are told, "spirit" is not determined by thinking but the reverse. "Spirit," in the properly Hölderlinian sense, names the difference in spirit itself, the fact that spirit, in *being* spirit, *needs* thinking as what is alongside itself. Spirit, then, means not the absolute but the very fact of finitude itself, of the gathered-separation between spirit and thinking.

[67] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 128. And cf., *ibid.*, p. 138: "The innermost need [*Das innerste Not*] of history demands the necessity of there being a poet what poetizes-in-advance the essence of poetry [*der das Wesen der Dichtung vorausdichtet*]." And cf., *ibid.*, p. 151: "Remembrance here does not mean merely thinking of that which has been (namely journeying into the foreign), but rather simultaneously thinking ahead 'to' what is coming [*sondern zugleich vor-denken 'an' das Kommende*], giving thought to the locality of the homely and its to-be-founded ground [*und ihres zu stiftenden Grundes*]."

[68] *ibid.*, p. 127.

When Hölderlin writes, "*des gemeinsamen Geistes Gedanken sind*" ("thought of communal spirit are"), this is not a "community" that joins poet and life through the substance of absolute spirit, but rather the being-together in being-torn, such that there is *also* the need for thinking. Existence and poetizing are the same in needing another alongside themselves. "Spirit" is not the solution nor the source for poetizing or existence as a well-spring, but rather, as itself something *futural*, "spirit" is something like a determining non-existence. This sense that "spirit" must be grasped as yet-to-come must be retained when Heidegger thinks the poet as the one who "in poetizing lets spirit prevail among beings" ("*dichtend den Geist im Seienden walten läßt*"). What is at stake in the coming of spirit is something "non-actual" ("*Unwirkliche*") that is already "acting" (*wirkende*).[69] And, in a formulation that refers back to poetizing: "That which is as-signed *is* in coming [*Das Gewiesene ist im Kommen*]. What is coming is still veiled and equivocal [*mehrdeutig*]."[70]

It is for this reason that poetizing is the same as courage, *Mut*. If "spirit" means "communal spirit," and if this in turn means in some sense the "spirit" of the people, nevertheless this refers not to the "actuality" of the people. Rather, the people itself is non-actual, without that something other alongside itself that is yet to come. There is no "people" without *poiesis*, without poetizing, but poetizing occurs toward a people that is not yet.[71] If Heidegger associates "*Mut*" with

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 128. Cf., Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 78: "That spirit founds history and that the sending remains for man a future, the coming of future [*avenir*] or the to-come [*à-venir*] of a coming: this is what Hölderlin thinks as a poet. And since, in imposing on him this word from the French language, I have spoken a great deal of spirit as a *revenant*, Heidegger would say here, in another language, that it is necessary to think of 'returning' [*la revenance*] starting from a thought—always yet to come—of coming. Returning itself remains to come, from the thinking in it of coming, of coming in its very coming. This is what Hölderlin thinks, that of which he has experience and preserves experiences as a poet. To be a poet (*dichten*) in this sense is to be dedicated to this experience and this preserving. In that it founds historially, spirit finds its place, it takes place first in the poet, in the soul (*Seele*) of the poet."

[70] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," p. 130.

[71] Cf., Bernasconi, "'Poet of Poets. Poet of the Germans.' Hölderlin and the Dialogue between Poets and Thinkers," *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993), p. 141: "The strange, paradoxical temporality which characterizes the foundation of 'we, the people,' according to classic social contract theory, such that the people must already be a people in order to constitute themselves as a people, undergoes some variation in the case of the poet's foundation of a people. Poetry institutes, founds, and would bring us to the site of the historical existence of a people, a site on which, Heidegger observed, we are not yet standing, although it awaits 'us,' would 'we' but attend to what it says. [...] Who Hölderlin is is not yet decided and will only be decided by the German people. And yet, in a sense it is in that decision that they become the German people. All talk of a dialogue between poetizing and thinking, at least with reference to the 1930s, must be understood as directed to, and in an important sense sustained in advance by, the future or coming people. It is in this respect, and for this reason, that with some consistency Heidegger continued to join thinking, poetizing, and the founding of the state or *polis*, following the Greek model."

"*Gemüt,*" another word for soul or mind, this is not in the sense of "spirit" as a "principle" (*"Prinzip"*) of life, not in the sense of the essence of *zoe.* Rather, *"Mut"* and *"Gemüt,"* mindful courage and mindful soul, belong to one another from out of finitude, that is, from out of the *need* that *Gemüt* has for "taking up thoughts of spirit" (*"die Gedanken des Geistes aufnimmt"*), a taking up that in turn needs the courage to think from out of what is non-actual, what remains veiled and equivocal.[72] It is not that life is "spiritual" or "soulful," but that life itself is excentric, in the sense that it is torn in the direction of needing the *Mut* of poetizing. "*Mut,*" then, in spite of all differences of interpretation, is understood similarly in Heidegger and in Benjamin, for whom it signifies "less a quality [*Eigenschaft*] than a relation of humanity to world and of world to humanity."[73]

Forgetting

For Adorno, Heidegger's thinking concerning poetizing could only ever represent an "ontological hypostasis of the poet's founding" (*"die ontologische Hypostase der dichterischen Stiftung"*).[74] Yet it is also possible to read Heidegger as describing the impossible "conditions" of founding as such, in a way that does not divide the

[72] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 128.

[73] Walter Benjamin, "Two Poems by Friedrich Hölderlin," *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 33. And cf., *ibid.,* p. 34: "The principle of the poetized [*Das Prinzip des Gedichteten*] as such is the supreme sovereignty of relationship [*die Alleinherrschaft der Beziehung*]," and which is figured as "*Mut.*" Thus, Benjamin concludes, the poet is no longer a *Gestalt* but only the *Prinzip der Gestalt* and, as such, that which limits (*Begrenzendes*) and bears (*Tragendes*) his own body (*ibid.,* p. 35). For Lacoue-Labarthe this decisively separates Benjamin's Hölderlin from Heidegger's, for whom the poet remains a *Gestalt,* a figure of existence (Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poetry's Courage," in Fioretos (ed.), *The Solid Letter,* pp. 85–6). In Benjamin, according to Lacoue-Labarthe, "there is no way of hanging anything theological-political on this failing theological-poetical." There is no possibility of any historical mission for the poet, who therefore must bring sobriety to the poem. That is, "the courage of poetry is prose" (*ibid.,* p. 91). Yet this does not prevent Lacoue-Labarthe from also concluding that "the ethical act would then be less the poem itself than what the poem dictates as task" (*ibid.,* p. 92). Is it really so clear that this sobriety and prose-quality of the poem is entirely severed from Heidegger's account of the *Mut* of the poet? How should we definitively think the difference between mission and task? For Lacoue-Labarthe what is at stake is the difference between a theologico-political (Heidegger) and a theologico-poetical (Benjamin) project, and this would be the difference between the attempt to *verify* fascism and its opposite. Yet Lacoue-Labarthe admits that for both Benjamin and Heidegger it is a question of poetry attesting to its relation to the true, its "telling truth" (*ibid.*), hence of what the poem continues to verify. Perhaps, if Hölderlin is to be saved from any theologico-politico-poetics, it is necessary to think terms such as "*Mut*" and "*Gemüt*" in the direction toward which Heidegger appears to be pointing, where *Gemüt* means the tear in existence, and *Mut* means the courage to invent poetry from out of this tear, from out of what is "not yet."

[74] Theodor W. Adorno, "Parataxis: On Hölderlin's Late Poetry," *Notes to Literature, Volume Two* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 120.

"political" from the "poetical," without either making the political into something poetic or aesthetic. That this is *not only* a question of the "truth" of the poem is suggested by the relation between courage, poetizing-founding, and *forgetting*. Heidegger cites a line from Hölderlin: *"Kolonie liebt, und tapfer Vergessen der Geist"* ("Colony, and bold forgetting spirit loves"). According to Adorno, Heidegger immediately distorts this citation, such that the love of colony becomes the love of the homeland, and the courage of journeying is immediately related back to the love of one's own.[75] Does not Heidegger, after all, make this explicit? "[I]n the journey to the foreign the spell of the homeland [*der Zauber der Heimat*] remains preserved."[76] And with this reference to *Heimat* Heidegger is drawn to his primary Hölderlinian law: "the law of being unhomely as the law of becoming homely."[77] For Adorno, as is also the case in a different way for Warminski and Lacoue-Labarthe, what is central and critical in Heidegger's Hölderlin is the *return home* and, in the end, this is what gives Heidegger his politics.

If nothing can ever prevent a reading of Heidegger along these lines, it is nevertheless also necessary to recall that the "return" is explicitly thought as a return to what has never been and, furthermore, is *not only* a remembrance of the origin, but *also its forgetting*. What is the relation between the poet's *Mut* and *tapfer Vergessen*? The paragraph where Heidegger addresses this question seems to be speaking of several kinds of forgetting at once, such that it is difficult to pinpoint what kind of forgetting it is that is at stake with "bold forgetting." Forgetting is first spoken of as the situation where "something escapes us," escapes our memory. But then, in many cases, what escapes us escapes because we flee from it—forgetting as pushing something away—and what we thereby flee from in fact immediately "takes us prisoner" (*"gefangen nimmt"*). In forgetting as fleeing, and in being captured by that which we "forget," we then "forget ourselves."[78] All this is merely a prelude, however, to another kind of forgetting, "in which it is not we who forget something, but rather in which we come to be forgotten and are ourselves those who have been forgotten."[79] Here, then, forgetting means "to be forgotten." We forget because we are the ones who are forgotten. To be forgetful is the consequence of having already been forgotten, Heidegger seems to say, and this seems clearly enough to refer to our situation today in which we are enframed by technics.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[76] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 132.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 132. Cf., Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), pp. 167–70. Heidegger there simultaneously argues *against* the psychoanalytic account of forgetting as repression, and yet *for* the idea that in forgetting a "painful event" what is occurring is the avoidance of oneself.

[79] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 132.

Yet neither does this *seem* to be the forgetting to which Heidegger wishes to allude with his account of "bold forgetting." Bold forgetting is not at first glance the same as the forgetting that comes from having-been-forgotten. The boldness of bold forgetting includes a knowledge of "that upon which everything in our action and in what we can bear [*Handeln und Ertragen*] depends in advance."[80] Boldness, then, when it is proper boldness, is related to *phronesis*, the knowing that knows the situation, and in knowing is able to reach the limit of a *Schluß*. And boldness is proper when it is *wissende Mut*, knowing-mindful-courage. Bold *forgetting*, therefore, is a knowing that knows the situation, and in knowing the situation knows that what is needed is not knowing but forgetting what is known. Only in the courage of forgetting is it possible to pass through the foreign, to learn from the foreign for the sake of one's own. Forgetting, then, is something like a condition of experience itself. Only in *leaving* one's own is it possible to pass through the experience of the foreign.

If, ultimately, it remains a question of one's own, nevertheless this "for the sake of" *depends* upon proper forgetting. It is this that links "bold forgetting" to the "not yet" that governs poetizing. For the necessity of the fact of forgetting means that "one's own," that which is ultimately at stake, *remains* the ultimate, that which is *deferred*, put back such that it is only the last (*hintanzustellen*).[81] Knowing-to-forget, a "*Nicht-denken an die Heimat*," is the decisiveness, the *phronesis*, that first makes possible passage across the border of experience to the foreign, and thus bold *forgetting, proper* forgetting, is that which is *firstly* necessary for the determination of one's own as such.[82] Founding, the founding of what remains, *not only* requires knowing-memory, the memory of institution that makes the confirmation of institution possible. Founding equally essentially depends upon forgetting, upon forgetting what appeared as "one's own" at the moment of institution. This is perhaps because founding depends not only upon *action* in a situation, but equally on the bearing, the carrying (*Ertragen*) of founding itself. Forgetting is even perhaps the originary phenomenon, in the sense that without the courage of forgetting, there cannot be the courage to found. Founding means leaving what is already "one's own" in order to venture into the unknown that nevertheless also relates back to the point of departure. All founding, then, is the bold forgetting of venturing into colony. Thought in this way, Heidegger is concerned not with asserting the primacy of the fatherland, nor of the return from the daughterland to the fatherland, but with the "structure" of poetizing-founding as such, and with the conditions of

[80] *Ibid.*
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 133.

memory *and* forgetting that are essential to that structure. Founding, founding what remains, depends on remembering to have the courage to bear forgetting.[83]

Hospitality

The courage for forgetting is needed in the passage to the foreign. But this, perhaps, is what *returns* this bold forgetting to the forgetting in which we are the ones forgotten. In the passage to the foreign the poet must not think-on the home because the poet is not thought of by the home, and is in fact abandoned by the home. And the poet must journey to the foreign *because* he is the one abandoned by the home, the one no longer *received* at home. Thus when Heidegger describes *this* kind of forgetting, in which we are the ones forgotten, he *also* describes this as "no longer

[83] Cf., Derrida, "Interpretations at War: Kant, the Jew, the German," *Acts of Religion* (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 184–6. At the end of his long reading of Hermann Cohen and Franz Rosenzweig, Derrida turns to Ernest Renan, and to the French nationalist's text, *"Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?"* Renan's answer is that a nation is nothing material, but rather a spiritual principle, which is not the same as race, language, or borders. But as a spiritual principle, as a matter of soul, the nation begins not only with memory but equally, firstly even, with forgetting, the forgetting, for example, of the brutality at the origin of national unity. Derrida describes Renan's position in the following way (p. 184): "Now, Renan's thesis, simultaneously paradoxical and sensible, is that forgetting makes the unity of a nation, not memory. More interestingly, Renan analyzes this forgetting as a sort of repression: it is active, selective, meaningful, in one word, interpretive. Forgetting is not, in the case of a nation, a simple psychological effacement, a wearing out or a meaningless obstacle making access to the past more difficult, as when an archive has been accidentally destroyed. No, if there is a forgetting, this is because there is no bearing something which was at the origin of the nation, surely an act of violence, a traumatic event, some sort of a curse one does not admit." *And, on p. 185:* "If a nation has a soul or a spiritual principle, this is not only, says Renan, because it is not founded upon anything of what is called race, language, religion, place, army, interest, and so on. It is because a nation is at the same time both memory (and forgetting pertains to the very deployment of this memory) and, in the present, promise, project, a 'desire to live together.' Isn't this promise in itself, by structure, a relation to the future which involves forgetting, indeed, a sort of essential indifference to the past, to that in the present which is not present, but also an ingathering, that is, a memory of the future?" It is easy to see the necessity of ascribing boldness to this forgetting, for what is at stake is not just the possibility, but the establishment of the *necessity* of forgetting what that which seems most unforgettable. Of course, Renan's thesis, in answering the question "What is a nation?", serves the interests of a project that seems explicitly theologico-political. Yet the impossible structure thereby described, as the promise and the desire of being-together, applies equally to any foundational project of living-together. In the thought that what must be forgotten, courageously, is *especially* what remains unforgettable, it is also clear how this impossible structure relates also to Derrida's account of "forgiveness," and the impossible-possibility of forgiving the unforgivable. Cf., Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?", in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 11; Derrida, "To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible," in John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, & Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *Questioning God* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001); Derrida, "On Forgiveness," *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (London & New York: Routledge, 2001).

being greeted" ("*nicht mehr gegrüßt sein*").[84] Being-forgotten means the same as no longer being greeted, no longer being received. The home has become foreign. Or, rather, we are foreign to ourselves at home, where we are forgotten. We are in need of being received again, *having been forgotten*, thus in a sense in need of being received for the first time, *as foreigners, strangers*. All of the discourse on *Unheimlichkeit* and *Unheimischkeit* means nothing other than this possibility of greeting ourselves, and of being greeted, as foreigners, strangers, the *deinotaton*. Being-together means the being-together of "us" as strangers-together. The "law of being-unhomely as the law of becoming homely," then, does not refer to a return to the *Heimat* in the fullness of its substantial presence. Rather, it means the founding of what remains as the forgetting of the home, such that there is a togetherness of strangers, an-other law of hospitality.

Thus it should be no surprise that the "guest" and "guest-friendship" make an appearance in the lecture course. The foreign is not only a "what," but also a "who," the foreigner. The Ister hymn itself refers to this lack of surprise at the arrival of the guest:

> *So wundert*
> *Mich nicht, dass er*
> *Den Herkules zu Gaste geladen,*
> *Fernglänzend, am Olympos drunten,*
> *Da der, sich Schatten zu suchen*
> *Vom heissen Isthmos kam,*
> *Denn voll des Muthes waren*
> *Daselbst sie, es bedarf aber, der Geister wegen,*
> *Der Kühlung auch.*[85]

The river has invited the Greek foreigner, Hercules—the Greek with his fire from heaven that remains our foreign—and this invitation of the foreigner comes from our need for the experience of the foreign. The invitation, so the poem tells us, is not surprising because of the mindful courage for this experience. But alongside this courage is another need, another need of spirit, a need for cooling. Cooling: the other side of the fire from heaven, that the Greek foreigner too is in need of and in search of in his journeying as a foreigner.

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[84] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 132.

[85] "Thus it surprises / Me not, that he / Invited Hercules as guest, / Gleaming from afar, down there by Olympus, / When he in search of shade / From the sultry Isthmus came, / For full of courage were / They even there, yet there was need, for the spirit's sake, / Of cooling too."

Heidegger says that we can know nothing of the river unless we understand this guest invited by the Ister.[86] Having any sense of the river, the poet, means *understanding* the guest, the foreigner who is staying with us. The foreigner must be understood. And this is the case because the appropriation of one's own *is* only as "the encounter and guest-like dialogue" (*"die Auseinandersetzung und gastliche Zwiesprache"*) with the foreign. The presence of the guest shows that journeying still prevails, still remains determinative, even in, or *especially* in, one's own locality.[87] The guest, the *invited* guest, must be open to understanding for there to be any possibility for being-homely. The foreigner must be encountered, and in being-encountered must engage in guest-like conversation. Must we and the foreigner then speak the same language, or is this a conversation in two languages, that is, a translation? Yet can there be a conversation that is not in some sense in *one* language only? Does not understanding depend upon speaking the same language, or on making two languages one, in the sense that, between our languages, there is the possibility for translation? Or is it that there is *no* conversation, no *Zwiesprache*, that is not a conversation with an other, an other language, that every conversation is a translation?[88]

Yet Heidegger also emphasizes that the foreigner has been invited *only* as a guest, that is, invited *within certain limits*, limits that apply not only to the guest but to we ourselves. We cannot cross too far the foreigner's (own) borders. The foreigner, to be foreign, to remain our guest, must not be too well understood. The guest remains the one he is in spite of his presence in the foreign land. The foreigner is recognized, acknowledged (*anerkennung*), yet in guest-friendship there is also a resoluteness not to "mix" one's own and the foreign. In not mixing with the foreigner, one lets the foreigner be who he is. Only in this way could guest-friendship make learning from the foreign possible.[89]

On the one hand, the guest is invited, the guest must be available for understanding and dialogue. On the other hand, as an invited guest, the guest remains, and must be permitted to remain, the foreigner who he is, and the one with whom we do not mix. Only in the resoluteness of such non-mixing is the guest able to grant us the possibility of learning what is foreign. Yet how can there be

[86] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 141.

[87] *Ibid.,* p. 142.

[88] Cf., Derrida, "Foreigner Question," *Of Hospitality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 15–7: "This is where the question of hospitality begins: must we ask the foreigner to understand us, to speak our language, in all the senses of this term, in all its possible extensions, before being able and so as to be able to welcome him into our country? If he was already speaking our language, with all that that implies, if we already shared everything that is shared with a language, would the foreigner still be a foreigner and could we speak of asylum or hospitality in regard to him?"

[89] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 140–1.

understanding and dialogue, how can there be *learning*, without mixing? Heidegger, perhaps, concerns himself only with *our* learning here, with the gifts borne by the foreign in our land, and not with the guest's own needs, the need not only to be allowed to remain who he is, but also the foreigner's coming in search of shade. In this sense, perhaps, Heidegger's thought of one's own and the foreign is *not thought reciprocally enough*. The Greek comes to the Ister in search of his foreign, shade from the too-bright sun of Greece, and thus searches for his foreign, the clarity of presentation, not in the East but westwards, as the West that for the Greek is "not yet." Surely the Greek journey to the foreign, too, is not simply a journey eastwards to a past, "known" foreign, but rather a journey from out of the past of its "nature" into the "not yet" of its sending. The Greek is a guest not only because he has been invited, but from out his own foreignness to Greece, out of his own need for journeying. And when a guest comes out of such a need, is it ever absolutely certain that such a guest is entirely an *invited* guest?

But before concluding that Heidegger is concerned only with what the guest means for "us," and remains unconcerned with the guest himself, before concluding, that is, that Heidegger too resolutely refuses to engage the guest, it should be remembered that our need for "bold forgetting" remains related to the fact that we are also the ones forgotten, the ones no longer greeted. *We* are the foreigners, who, no longer invited, are in need of journeying, in need of being-invited, in need of hospitality. The foreigner, the stranger, as is the case in the *Sophist*, is the one who poses for us the question of our non-being, our strangeness. What we learn from the foreigner is his foreignness, that being foreign is proper for us too. If it appears contradictory that we are to learn from the foreigner by *not* mixing, then this perhaps is the impossible structure of the laws of hospitality or "guest-friendship." The foreigner, to be foreign, must remain other, yet this foreignness is not a kind of absolute otherness, but rather subject to a certain regulation, lawfulness, policing.

The foreigner, granted the status of a "who," is therefore in a way less foreign than the foreign itself. With the foreigner there is the demand for a kind of speaking to one another. For the encounter with the foreign to *affect* "us," we must permit questions to come to us from the foreigner, questions that make us ourselves into the foreigners in question. In this sense, however uncanny, however risky it sounds, another name for "hospitality" is "colony." Both of these words name the relation to the guest, but with the latter it is clear that "we" are the foreigner who is the "colonial guest" in the foreign land. And it would not even be a matter of dividing "hospitality" from "colony" on the basis that in the latter case the foreigner *has not* invited us as guest, for what law of hospitality would *depend* upon invitation? Are the founders of a colony essentially different from guests to whom the laws of

hospitality are owed? Just as those founding, *as* guests, themselves owe to those for whom they are foreigners. But for both also, there may be the need for the courage of forgetting, for forgetting that which remains unforgettable.

Demigods, gods, and beyond

If the poet, then, is the one who "tells the truth" for the first time, then the truth that the poet remembers to tell includes the necessity of bold forgetting. Poetizing means responding to a call, that is, already experiencing the foreign, experiencing that which is foreign "for us." The "us" at stake here need not only be a question of "the Germans" or of "the West." The "foreign" is what comes to us from out of a future that is "not yet" and, as such, essentially involves a "beyond." It is a matter of what is beyond humanity in its being-present. The poet, and the poet's poem, *stand between* humanity (or the people) and this beyond.

Is the poet then the sovereign who stands above the people and in an essential relation to the gods of sovereignty?[90] Heidegger states explicitly that the poet stands between humans and gods, that the poet *is* this "between," that the poet is a demigod. Furthermore, the rivers, as nothing symbolic or allegorical, *are* the poets, the demigods. Thus Hölderlin, who poetizes the rivers, in fact poetizes the poet as the demigod, as the between of gods and humans. Is this not the self-assertion of the poet as sovereign, the very essence of the conjunction, as Lacoue-Labarthe calls it, of the theologico-political and the theologico-poetical?

Again, it is necessary to answer "yes" to this question, yet this does not exhaust the resources of the text, which remains veiled and equivocal. For the poet, the river, is not *only* the demigod, for what is said in Hölderlin's hymnal poetry, according to Heidegger, is that which, *beyond* the gods, determines the gods themselves and, in so determining the gods, in so poetizing the holy, simultaneously brings the dwelling of humans into its essence.[91] What stands between the gods and humans is what, beyond the gods, therefore determines the gods and the dwelling of humans. How can what lies between be what is *beyond*

[90] Bernasconi argues that this is the case, to the extent that Heidegger's *rhetoric* at times succeeds in forgetting the impossible structure that Heidegger himself draws out of Hölderlin: "Heidegger's rhetoric is not free from remarks of that tenor, but they arise to the extent that he forgets the paradoxical temporality of the constitution of the people. It is not the poet who, with the thinker, founds a people simply. It needs a people to prove the poet to be a poet in the operative sense and to prove the thinker a thinker. It is in the coming community of a people that the community of the poet and thinker will have been established." Bernasconi, "'Poet of Poets. Poet of the Germans'," *Heidegger in Question*, p. 148.

[91] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* pp. 138–9.

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and, as what is beyond, determine that which it falls between? What is at stake in this doubleness of poetizing—to be between, to be beyond—is that which remains to be thought.

The clue toward understanding this doubleness, if it can be understood, lies not in Heidegger's account of poetizing as such, so much as in the substance of the reading of the poem itself. Hölderlin's Ister is not any river, but *that* river in which the foreign is already present as a guest at its source, that river in whose flowing there constantly speaks the dialogue between one's own and the foreign.[92] The Ister is that river that is foreign at its origin, that is engaged from the beginning in the backwards-and-forwards dialogue with that which is unsettling, with that which cannot be appropriated. "The river must remain in the realm of its source, in such a way that it flows toward it from out of the foreign."[93] Heidegger is referring to the opening of the third strophe of the Ister hymn: *"Der scheinet aber fast / Rükwärts zu gehen und / Ich mein, er müsse kommen / Von Osten"* ("He appears, however, almost / To go backwards and / I presume he must come / From the East"). This appearance of *almost* going backwards, of almost flowing back *to* the source, of the foreign at the source, is what means that the Ister is enigmatic, *rätselhaft*. The river is the *rätselhaft* river proper, that is, the river that at its source maintains a relation to its foreign, its outside. It is the river, therefore, that, as originarily excentric, involves *Raten*, counsel as taking-into-care. Thus Hölderlin writes that the rivers, which run in the dry, are *"Zur Sprache seyn"* ("To be to language").

The Ister then, especially at its source, is like the *polis*—it is *in Wirbeln*.[94] The Ister, at its *source*, is the pole, the swirl. The "Ister" and the *"polis"* name the same. With both it is a matter of what founds, where founding does not mean laying the first stone nor proclaiming the inaugural moment, but rather "preparing the ground for the hearth of the house of history."[95] In other words, the poem is not the proclamation as a technical instrument, just as the *polis* is not established public-space. Rather, the river—the poem, the *polis*—is that which opens the possibility for a place-together that is to come.

The poem says, *"Ein Zeichen braucht es"* ("A sign is needed"). A sign is needed, Hölderlin says somewhat cryptically, such that sun and moon may be borne in mind. Needed, then, for the journeying through the day and through the night, through the coming fire and the night that precedes it, through the clarity of the

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 142.
[94] *Ibid.*, p. 143.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

dawn and through concealment. These are to be borne in mind (*Gemüt*), that is, preserved and retained (*bewahrt und behalten*) by the sign; thus the sign is to be mindful (*vermutet*) of these, filled by the forbearance, the long-mindedness (*Langmut*), that would keep in mind the passing of days and nights.[96] The sign has a mind—this is Heidegger's reading of these lines—and, having a mind, keeping the "world" in mind, enduring the world in its mind, thus being itself filled with mindful courage (*Mut*), the "sign" here names the poet. The "sign" *is* the demigod, that which stands between human beings (the people) and the gods in bearing (*trägt*) the "world" in mind. The poet, as the between, is the bearer, the carrier, that is, the *Gemüt* with *Mut*, the mindful courage to point. The poem points and in pointing first lets appear that which is *to be* shown, that which, therefore, *almost* appears. A sign is *needed*, and this is the need for the founding of what remains, a founding that *happens* only from out of the appearance of the foreign at the source.

The poet is the mediating sign between mortals and the divine and, as such, carries them in preparing for founding. Is this not once again the essence of the theologico-political as theologico-poetical? And is this feeling not reinforced by Heidegger's talk of the "pain" of belonging to this between, the pain that belongs to being able to show, the pain of standing and sustaining? Heidegger seems to engage a rhetoric of painful endurance here, a holy pathos perhaps. There seems to be a relation at some level between the pain of the poet who *carries* the relation of mortals and gods, to the way in which, in Schmitt, the movement, that is to say, the leader, carries the people and the state. Would this not be why the poet is both *between* mortals and gods, and yet *beyond* the gods? In both cases, Heidegger and Schmitt, is it not the case that what is suspicious in such a rhetoric is the feeling that Heidegger himself diagnosed in his interpretation of the Böhlendorff letter: that is to say, the suspicion that "bearing" or "carrying" means "taking their delimiting and instituting [*Einfassen und Einrichten*] to be the fire itself"?[97] The poet and the movement have the strength to inaugurate and to hold firm to what is instituted, to *bear* and *carry*, and thus to *endure*, as a holy pathos, the *fire* that is now coming. Delimiting and instituting, that is, holding fast in standing, when taken for the fire itself, inevitably becomes the *strength* for enduring the pain of standing. Is this not "our" very danger according to Heidegger's Hölderlin?

In spite of such suspicions, it remains necessary to pursue what Heidegger says concerning this "beyond" of the poet. As beyond the gods, the poet is other than mortals and gods. A sign is needed becomes "an other must be." The need: a sign/an other. This need is not "our" need, or not our need alone. It is the need of

[96] *Ibid.*, pp. 149–50.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

the gods also. Being the other and the sign for the gods too is what places the poet both *between* gods and mortals—the sign that points out to gods and mortals what is lacking in each—and *beyond* gods and mortals—the other that distributes to gods and mortals what is to be communicated to each. The poet is between because the poet shows the otherness of us and the otherness of the gods. The poet does not "carry" gods and mortals in the sense of being the substance that binds, but rather is the sign that *parts* gods and mortals from each other and, in parting, grants the possibility of *emparting* and *partaking*:

> This other is needed to "partake in feeling" [*"theilnehmend fühlt"*] in the name of the gods. Partaking in feeling consists in his bearing sun and moon, the heavenly, in mind [*im Gemüt trägt*] and distributing this share of the heavenly to humans [*und diesen Anteil am Himmlischen den Menschen zuteilt*], and so, standing between gods and humans, sharing the holy [*das Heilige teilt*], yet without ever splitting it apart [*zerteilen*] or fragmenting it. Such communicating [*Mitteilen*] occurs by this other pointing toward the holy in naming it, so that in such showing he himself *is* the sign that the heavenly need.[98]

Poetizing is redistributing the parts. It lies beyond the gods because, beyond the sovereign gods of the people and the law, beyond the laws of hospitality even, lies part-ability. Part-ability means keeping apart, that which grants the possibility of borders and limits, but equally always the possibility of a new distribution of borders and limits. That the gods and mortals are apart, that the gods and mortals *might* communicate (*mitteilen*), are equally determined from out of what grants parting—the between is parting itself as such.

The gods too need a sign. And they too have this need because they are without feeling, they do not partake in feeling, they must be brought anew to the possibility of feeling themselves warm, as the Ister poem puts it. Does this not mean that the gods—the sovereign gods of the people and the law, for instance—are always separated, at a distance, always enduring the cold of sovereignty, and therefore always in need of being re-related, of being brought out of a loss of relation, out of the becoming-technical of sovereignty? For *us*, mortals, the poet refers us to what is foreign in ourselves, to our ex-centric existence, thus perhaps to the anxiety of unsettled existence. For the gods, what is granted is the relation to mortals themselves, a relation that *for them,* the gods, is the possibility of a joy.[99] The poet is less the one who lifts mortals toward the gods, less, that is, the one who grants the possibility for sovereignty, as much as the one who "builds the stairs for the descent

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[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 155–6.

[99] *Ibid.*, p. 157. Thus the rivers, the poets, are what perhaps separates anxiety and joy, so that there is joy, but not for us. Joy is the joy that the gods have in the opening of their relation to mortals (the relation of Venus to the musician-poet Tannhäuser comes to mind). As the demigods, the poets and rivers are the distributors and partitioners of anxiety and joy. Cf., Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001), p. 310.

of the heavenly."[100] The poem *is* the staircase, a technical instrument for the descent of the divine. Where there are stairs for descent, where the gods can *step back down*, there opens the place for the possibility of dwelling, there opens the possibility of the *polis*. There is no indication here that mortals rise up, or that gods and mortals meet each other halfway. Somehow we are being asked to think not the arrival of the gods, nor the withdrawal of the gods, but the *descent* of the divine.

Perhaps in the mysteriousness of this image lies the explanation for Heidegger's conclusion—derived from the line of the poem: *"Ist der betrübt"* ("He is saddened")—that "mourning [*Trauer*] pervades [*durchstimmt*, thoroughly determines] the Ister, the properly homely river of the poet [*den eigentlich heimatlichen Strom des Dichters*], that is, it pervades the poet himself in his poetic essence."[101] The "pain" of the poet, then, is not a sign that Heidegger engages a sacrificial logic, the self-destruction of the mediating one. Rather, founding, the founding of that which remains, comes from, is *prepared* by, part-ability as such. The descent of the heavenly refers not to the idea that, after the gods, sovereignty can be brought down to or claimed by the people. Sovereignty does not come home to the people. Rather, the descent of the gods only makes clearer the "beyond" from which gods and mortals are determined, a beyond that is not sovereign in any usual sense, and which means that the future can *only* be founded as a poetizing-preparing outside the realm of gods. Mourning is for the end of sovereignty.

In his concluding remark, his *Schlußbemerkung*, Heidegger reiterates that the river is the poet and the poet is the river. He reiterates also that the river, the poet, is the open realm of the between, between gods and humans. And he reiterates further that this open is open in the direction of the holy that prevails *beyond* gods and humans.[102] This open is what distributes the difference of gods and mortals, and gives each their proper qualities. The open opens beyond this distribution. In a sense, Heidegger is saying the same as Adorno's "open thinking points beyond itself." Adorno would not call the placeless place beyond gods and humans the "holy." But if we attend strictly to Heidegger's "beyond," to the insistence that this is *not* the gods but beyond them, then the name is less important than the thought.

When the gods descends on the stairs built in the poem, then there is no longer a "measure" possible that comes from the gods. "Is there a measure on earth?" Hölderlin answers, "There is none." Heidegger counters the thought that this answer indicates hopelessness or despair. There is no ground for being-together, for

[100] Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* p. 158.
[101] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 165–6.

there is no substitute for divine sovereignty. Yet if this absence of measure is a fact, the essence of facticity even, then poetizing is nothing other than the relation to this fact. We are left not with a poetic law, but with poetizing the impossibility of law, the impossible possibility of founding. If there is no measure, if we cannot rely on our own authority, if no measure can be any longer forced, posited or seized (*Setzen und Erraffen*), then all that remains is bearing and suffering (*ertragen und erleiden*) the absence of measure.[103] Bearing and suffering, if they maintain any relation to pain, or to mourning, do so only as "holy mourning," that is, only as a mourning that *also* thinks into what is to come. There remains the possibility that what is non-actual is yet acting, that in being-apart another way of being-together could begin to decide and impart itself.

Is such an other possibility still a matter of democracy? If the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of the law is no longer the ground of being-together, if these can no longer *find* any ground, if we can no longer determine the people according to the measures of blood, soil, etc., then, in the founding of what remains, what remains of democracy?[104] Can it be a matter of democracy when it is no longer the sovereignty and measure of the *demos*, the people, along with the sovereignty and measure of *kratos*, rule? Can the mourning for the theologico-political end with the thought—which is Jean-Luc Nancy's—that the loss of the "truth" of the theologico-political is the opening, in interminable mourning, of (another, democratic) *sense*?[105] Can there be democracy that bears and suffers but never settles?

Yet founding remains. Perhaps it is not a question of founding *that which* remains, but of the remaining of founding, of founding that is always journeying, always open to invention, in want of preparation, even in its impossibility. There is

103 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

104 Derrida asks precisely this question in *The Politics of Friendship* (London & New York: Verso, 1997), p. 104: "Is there another thought of calculation and of number [another measure], another way of apprehending the universality of the singular which, without dooming politics to the incalculable [to the measureless], would still justify the old name of democracy? Would it still make sense to speak of democracy when it would no longer be a question (no longer in question as to what is essential or constitutive) of country, nation, even of State or citizen—in other words, *if at least one still keeps to the accepted use of this word*, when it would no longer be a political question?"

105 Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 91: "In taking our leave of the theologicopolitical, we have not *lost* something, and we have not entered into a politics of mourning and melancholia that, easily enough, can be transformed into a mourning for the political. What we persistently retain, in the form of this interminable mourning (in its extreme form, as reactionary politics, and in its mild form, as administrative rationality), is doubtless the loss of a truth—but this is the opening of a sense. This is, at least, the sense whose sense we still have to discover. The political task and responsibility are to understand 'democracy' in some way other than through a negative theology of the political (as the unnameable, ungroundable instances of justice and law)."

no end of founding. And the end of sovereignty does not mean the same thing as the end of decision. The end of sovereignty is perhaps rather the opening of the possibility of decision. If democracy is not or no longer an "idea," could it be a decision, a decision fully aware of its impossibility? Democracy would be a decision to which we are called, called *now*, a calling not to found a constitution, but rather a calling to an experience, an experience of what remains foreign in "our" being-together with the foreign. Democracy is never present.[106] Or: present democracy is never *convincing*. This experience of democracy as an experience of the foreign would not thereby render decisions *easy*, for the very foreignness of the foreign means that it can never be a question of simply "including" the foreign. Nor can it be a question of leaving the foreigner alone in their foreignness. But there would be no experience without passage to what is foreign. Nor does this mean that, as an *experience*, democracy is not a call to "action," for there is no action, nothing is *done*, without another kind of border-crossing. It is a question of an arche-democracy that prepares, that calls to decision *and* to action, but that gives the rule for neither. But when, finally, Heidegger speaks of the possibility of being suddenly affected (*plötzlich betroffen*) by the poetizing of the poet, it is clear that what is at stake is a matter of experience. What is this experience, other than the experience that experience is always to come, that we remain, awaiting experience, that the experience of being-together, of discovering or inventing who "we" are, is always calling to "us," *dictating* to "us" from the distance of the future?

[106] Cf., Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, p. 306: "Is it possible, in assuming a certain faithful memory of democratic reason and reason *tout court*—I would even say, the Enlightenment of a certain *Aufklärung* (thus leaving open the abyss which is again opening today under these words)—not to found, there it is no longer a matter of *founding*, but to open out to the future, or rather, to the 'come,' of a certain democracy?" Derrida immediately continues: "For democracy remains to come; this is its essence in so far as it remains: not only will it remain indefinitely perfectible, hence always insufficient and future, but, belonging to the time of the promise, it will always remain, in each of its future times, to come: even when there is democracy, it never exists, it is never present, it remains the theme of a non-presentable concept."

CONCLUSION

A question about the political was raised at the end of the first chapter through a citation from Alexander García Düttmann. His question in "The Violence of Destruction" is posed *to* "deconstruction," and posed through, among other things, a reading of Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence." Deconstruction counters "finite positing," positing exposed to finitude, with an "infinite deposing," an endless undoing of positing. Yet this countering is not truly an opposition, for deconstruction is nothing other than the thought of an "excess" that makes impossible any opposition or decision *between* infinite deposing and finite positing.[1] And this is first of all because that which makes positing *possible*, the "excess" of *différance*, is what at the same time makes it strictly impossible. García Düttmann seems to be pointing to a kind of risk in the relation of deconstruction to the political. Whereas Derrida wants to think deconstruction *beyond* the "destructions" of Benjamin and Heidegger, might it not be the case, he asks, that Benjamin and Heidegger pursue the "violence" of destruction further than deconstruction, by thinking "the pure deposing of finite positing"? Is there not a problem for deconstruction in relation to the political, the problem that the endlessness and non-deconstructibility of deconstruction "itself" means that "the interruption of deconstruction is still thought in the first instance as an enabling"? And, if the remaining "task" for deconstruction is to *think* its own interruption—and deconstruction insists on the imperative of this interruption—does this not *return* deconstruction to the pure depositions of Benjamin and Heidegger?[2]

What followed in the remaining chapters in a sense emerged directly out of this question, and never moved beyond its terms. Yet the question was also a kind of impassable limit to what was pursued. The reading of Heidegger undertaken here in many ways draws his thought into a greater proximity with deconstruction, pursuing those threads that suspend and interrupt the common presuppositions and conclusions about Heidegger's "politics." In the reading of *Antigone*, for instance, what was drawn from the text were those presentable signs that Heidegger was gesturing toward a thought of the political beyond the figuration of

[1] Alexander García Düttmann, "The Violence of Destruction," in David S. Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 182.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

sovereignty and relation. And Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin was pursued for those signs that would confirm this suspension of sovereignty and relation.

The "poem"—like the *polis*, or the river, or Antigone herself—is not to be understood "metaphysically," not to be understood according to the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, and therefore not to be understood as a *figure* of the political. These signs—poem, river, *polis*, Antigone—are not what Heidegger posits finitely, but as such neither do they "represent" an injunction to infinite deposing. Neither the poem nor the *polis* nor the tragedy confirm that deposing, deconstructing is the endless, infinite task. They are signs, *traces* of figures, of a need, a distress, that are incapable of confirming that which they call for, precisely because what they call for is something that is "not yet." Yet when Heidegger refers to Antigone as the purest poem, can this not be heard as an affirmation that she is the sign of the possibility of an endlessly deposing decision? And when Heidegger speaks of the poem as beyond the mortal and the divine, it is possible to hear this not as an "ontological hypostasis" of the figure of the poet, but rather as a confirmation that the sign that points toward what is yet to arrive does not *know* that to which it points.

In short, there are resources in Heidegger for approaching the political that anticipate the directions followed by thinkers such as Jean-Luc Nancy and Giorgio Agamben. While these figures cannot simply be assimilated to deconstruction, they nevertheless attempt to expose and depose the political insofar as it has been grasped according to an onto-theological tradition, and this brings their work within the orbit of what is called deconstruction. They are each engaged in work that begins to think the political not simply from *within* the discourse of philosophy, but from out of the possibility that the political never merely occupies its proper place within the distribution of *logoi*. Central to this re-tracing of the political is the attempt to think through the aporia of sovereignty, and to reconfigure, beyond figuration or substance, the "we," the "tie," the "in common," that is, "relation" as such. The presence of Nancy and Agamben in the preceding chapters, as also of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jacques Ranciere, suggests that Heidegger's thought bears upon theirs in relation to the political, and that this is perhaps so beyond what these authors themselves indicate.

But this presence *also* reflects the possibility that these thinkers reach a kind of limit of thought in relation to the political. Both Nancy and Agamben, for example, make clear that it is necessary to think the political beyond the aporia of sovereignty, that only by finally leaving behind every figure of the political can an other politics be thought. Yet at the same moment they place into doubt the very

possibility of escaping sovereignty or of offering some kind of new politics.[3] Along with the need for escaping and rethinking the paradoxes of sovereignty comes the need for rethinking "relation," that is, the "with" that makes possible the political as such, as something *other than* the substance of being-together (with each other/in language). Thus Nancy has produced many texts offering varying twists and turns toward such a new grasp of relation-without-community, and Agamben goes so far as to state that what is necessary is "an attempt to think the politico-social *factum* no longer in the form of a relation."[4] But, as García Düttmann asks, can "relation" be thought in any way other than in some sense as "being-*together*"? How can the political do without some thought of relation as being-together; yet does not *any* grounding of politics in being-together imply the return of sovereignty? Can there be a "finite thought" of relation as the ground of an other politics without risking the "reabsorption" of sovereign transcendence?[5] Nancy and Agamben both *call* for a new thinking of the political—a return of the political to first philosophy—that they struggle themselves to produce, and one sign of this struggle is their equivocality about the future of sovereignty and relation.

Are not Agamben and Nancy engaged in the attempt to think the interruption of deconstruction as the passage to another thought of the political? Nancy would perhaps be rather circumspect about such a proposition, yet it must at least be clear that his project has for several years been to effect a translation from the "results" of deconstruction to a kind of "positive" project in relation to the political, directed toward the possibility of finding or inventing new terms for approaching the political. Agamben more explicitly repeats García Düttmann's question posed to deconstruction. Agamben describes deconstruction as a thought of the law of textual tradition as "being in force without significance," following Gershom Scholem's description of the status of law in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. Agamben describes the danger of deconstruction as the possibility that it will condemn itself to "infinite negotiations with the doorkeeper" of the law, the doorkeeper who "shelters the Nothing." Despite deconstruction having shown that the door of the

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[3] Nancy insists that sovereignty, or rather Sovereignty, has 'exhausted its resources," yet immediately suggests that "being-in-common" may "have to make itself sovereign in a new way." Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 90–1; cf., Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford. Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 25. Agamben is more insistent that sovereignty is what must be abandoned, yet even at the moment this is written, he adds, "or, at least, to be thought all over again." Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Politics," *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 112.

[4] Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 60.

[5] Cf., García Düttmann, "Never Before, Always Already: Notes on Agamben and the Category of Relation," *Angelaki* 6, 3 (2001), p. 4; cf., García Düttmann, "Immanences, Transcendences," *Paragraph* 16 (1993), pp. 190–1.

Law is "absolutely impassable," deconstruction does not want to "enter into the door of the Law," yet it has not "permitted it to be closed either."[6] And this is the ground for Agamben's differentiation of his own task from that of deconstruction. This task is to move beyond merely "recognizing" the "insuperable form of law as being in force without significance," that is, beyond the impossible aporia of infinite deposing and finite positing, and toward what lies in the aftermath of this aporia.[7] For Agamben, this means thinking *beyond* an idea of the sovereign exception grounded in "bare life"—that is, it necessarily involves a deconstruction of the thought of "life" (as occupying one side of the "border" with death)—yet that onto which this thought opens remains enigmatic. A door that is finally closed ceases to be a door.

Jacques Derrida himself asks more or less the same question as Gaicía Düttmann, the question of what could be called the aporia of interruption. If deconstruction begins with an imperative to endlessly deconstruct, to endlessly deconstruct the things themselves, then what is in question is a kind of duty. Duty, responsibility, judgment, as Derrida frequently insists, are only possible on the basis of an *excess* of duty, responsibility or judgment. Duty must never be simply the application of a rule, determinable on the basis of knowledge. Duty, to be responsible, must exceed the order of rules and calculation, yet who would call a decision *without* rule responsible?

> It is necessary, therefore, that the decision and responsibility for it be taken, interrupting the relation to any *presentable* determination but still maintaining a presentable relation to the interruption and to what it interrupts. Is that possible? Is it possible once the interruption always resembles the mark of a borderly edge, the mark of a threshold not to be trespassed?[8]

Something must be interrupted and something must be maintained. What must be interrupted is the relation to "any *presentable* determination," that is, to any positing that would determine *which* decision to make, *which* path should be taken in a decision. What must be *maintained* is "a presentable relation" *to* the interruption, that is, the interruption itself must be figurable, available for presentation. The question of the possibility of this double injunction is the question of the possibility of *thinking* the interruption (in García Düttmann's terms). Can an "interrupti n" be presented without it becoming that which determines a decision, without therefore ceasing *to be* an interruption?

[6] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 54.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 59.
[8] Jacques Derrida, *Aporias* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 17.

Interruption, then, is an aporia in the sense that only on the basis of a certain non-passage, of reaching the limit of an interrupting border, is it possible to *move* at all, and to discover in that possibility for movement that there *was* no border. Thus the question of the possibility of this double injunction (interrupt/maintain) is the question of a door that cannot or will not be opened, at the same time as thinking a door that is no longer or never was *there* (in Agamben's terms). The door that does not open and the border that disappears are the two, undecidable "sides" of deconstruction identified by García Düttmann, that is, finite positing and infinite deposing:

> A plural logic of the aporia thus takes shape. It appears to be paradoxical enough so that the partitioning [*partage*] among multiple figures of aporia does not oppose figures to each other, but instead installs the haunting of the one in the other. In one case, the nonpassage resembles an impermeability; it would stem from the opaque existence of an uncrossable border: a door that does not open or that only opens according to an unlocatable condition, according to the inaccessible secret of some shibboleth. Such is the case for all closed borders (exemplarily during war). In another case, the nonpassage, the impasse or aporia, stems from the fact that there is no limit. There is not yet or there is no longer a border to cross, no opposition between two sides: the limit is too porous, permeable, and indeterminate.[9]

Does Derrida move beyond Heidegger here? When reading *Antigone*, it will be recalled, Heidegger refers to the necessity of taking the risk of distinguishing a being unhomely that is inappropriate from a being unhomely that is proper. Antigone herself is the risk of this decision, a decision that does not place her in the home, even if it involves a remembrance of the hearth. Thus it is not a decision between being at home and being not at home, not a decision between one's own and the foreign. But Derrida of course would conclude that Heidegger remains too surely within the logic of the "proper." In Derrida's account of the aporia of decision "there is no longer a home [*chez-soi*] and a not-home [*chez l'autre*]."[10] The problems of sovereignty and relation are, essentially, problems of borders and the positing of borders. Borders are posited and, to be borders, must remain in place. But the aporia erases the border that would separate home and not-home, and this being-without-borders—being before a "door" that is *both* closed and not there—is what means that aporia is interminable, *without end*.

There is perhaps a decisive difference between Derrida and Heidegger. For Heidegger, it will be recalled, Antigone and the poet are figured as bearing, carrying, enduring. They endure being held out into the nothing, the not yet, that which they anticipate. That is their decision and their risk, their response to a call. But for Derrida, the aporia that means the door is both closed and not there means

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 20–1.

not only that the aporia must be endured, but *at the same time* that it can "*never simply be endured as such.*"[11] Whereas Heidegger engages a rhetoric of endurance as suffering and bearing, for Derrida the aporia is precisely the necessity *and impossibility* of endurance.

Yet it also needs to be recalled that Heidegger concludes with Hölderlin's statement of the absence of a measure on earth, *and yet*, in spite of this absence, 1. idegger also speaks of a *demand* for a transformation of thought and experience. This demand corresponds to the bearing and suffering of what is poetized, *and yet* this endurance is *also* the possibility of *suddenly* being struck, of being struck by what has *scarcely been thought*. This, clearly enough, is not the same thing as the *impossibility* of enduring, even rather its necessity, yet included in Heidegger's endurance is *both* the demand for a transformation and the possibility for the barely-thought to strike us. But is it possible to speak of a demand, or of the possibility of being struck by thought, even what is *barely* thought, without being within the realm of the "measure" and the measurable?

The difference, then, cannot be reduced to that between the insistence on enduring and the *doubled* insistence on enduring and its impossibility. It is closer to a matter of the difference between an impossible, necessary enduring (Derrida), and an enduring that is *itself* something other than *only* enduring, an enduring that is more than it factually is while nothing other than it actually is (Heidegger). What is the significance of this difference for the question of the political? Perhaps it is that Heidegger risks a different kind of affirmation than does Derrida. This is not the difference between affirmation and non-affirmation—Heidegger and Derrida are equally insistent on the "positivity" of their thought. But when Derrida speaks of the necessity and impossibility of enduring the aporia, he is affirming nothing other than the structure of the aporia, affirming nothing other than the impossible structure that may be conclusively erected on the ground of the work of deconstruction.

But while this "structure" has a definite if impossible temporality (hence it takes the form of being "quasi-transcendental," as Derrida frequently puts it), it is without a definite historicity. When Heidegger speaks about an enduring, a suffering and bearing, however, the thought itself seems to affirm not only a structure of historicity, but a certain relation to or interpretation of history. What could this mean, given that Heidegger certainly forbids any reading of his work as "historical"? Yet there appears in Heidegger not only a thought concerning history, but a sense of a certain need to *mark* the relation of that thought to the time of its being-thought. Does not Derrida work to eliminate this entanglement with the

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

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historical from his thought, wishing to avoid the risk that, interrupting deconstruction, it will fall back into a "philosophy of history" (García Düttmann citing Benjamin)?[12] After all, the risks of such a philosophy of history could not be clearer than in Heidegger's case, where the very thought of enduring, bearing, and carrying can so easily be interpreted as confirming the most suspicious politico-historical philosophy.

If this, once again, is too concrete a formulation to hold up to close scrutiny, it is nevertheless the case that one obvious difference between Agamben and Nancy on the one hand, and Derrida on the other hand, is their preparedness to speak about "today." And in being so prepared, and in their characterization of the nature of "today," they appear to be in closer proximity to Heidegger than to Derrida. Pronouncements concerning today are found rarely in Derrida, and where they are found, they often appear almost as digressions, that is, *interruptions* of deconstruction in order to enable certain concrete statements, that is, to engage in a philosophy of history. Is this not the case when Derrida, for instance, interrupts the deconstruction of Karl Marx in order to enumerate his (Derrida's) account of the ten plagues of the "new world order," an interruption and a list of facts that *enables* Derrida to praxically introduce his "New International"?[13]

This is not a matter of arguing that Derrida is unconcerned with his times, with the state of "today," nor that the work he *chooses* to do, the books he *chooses* to write, the deconstructions he *chooses* to carry out, are not themselves clearly enough expressions of a certain relation to "our present situation." Nevertheless, there remains the possibility that for Heidegger, as for Nancy and Agamben, a different risk is taken. What perhaps returns Nancy and Agamben to Heidegger, and makes Heidegger something different for them than he is for Derrida, is the following thought: that a need or a distress of thought that can be discovered today is what, today, *must* get thinking going, must set it on its way to *another* thinking. While Derrida formulates the impossible conditions for the arrival of an other, while Derrida to responds to a call, he does not *call for* this arrival. Derrida suspends any kind of proclamation or poetizing, refuses to herald or confirm what has not yet arrived.

[12] García Düttmann, "The Violence of Destruction," in Ferris (ed.), *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, p. 184: "Perhaps the task of a deconstructive thought is thus determined by the urgency of thinking its 'own' interruption (an interruption implicated in the consistency of deconstruction) without thereby falling back into a philosophy of history."

[13] Cf., Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York & London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 80–4.

This cannot be in any way a *criticism* of Derrida or deconstruction, because the instruments for such a critique would themselves lie in an indeterminate future. Furthermore, the call, however certainly it is proclaimed, is what by definition cannot yet be confirmed, and therefore to undertake *to* call is to risk saying nothing. The risk taken by Heidegger, as by Nancy and Agamben, is the risk of discovering that what they found out and proclaimed about "today" and therefore about "tomorrow" was only their invention. Yet is it not the case that what "must be affirmed" is the fact that the political does not *only* refer us to the aporias of sovereignty and relation? Is not "the political," if there is such a thing, immediately intertwined with a question about "today"? The political thing itself is not only the "we," the "border," positing and position, sovereignty and relation, but also the facticity and historicity of *today*. The sense of "today" is what must *also* be thought, measured as profoundly as possible and beyond all measure. This does not necessarily imply that "today's problems" should be the first item on some political agenda, nor does it imply a metaphysics of presence. Rather, it affirms that the question of the political contains an imperative regarding its point of departure, and that this beginning always involves a "now" that has vanished or retreated, *and* a "now" that is still coming, that cannot be known, and yet that *might* be intimated.

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