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Heidegger and the Question of the Political

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HEIDEGGER AND THE QUESTION OF THE POLITICAL

by

Miguel de Beistegui

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
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VITA

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INTRODUCTION

Politik, politisch, along with the complex of philosophems that are usually aligned with such terms-- freedom, power, class, law, praxis, etc.--are words that Heidegger hardly ever uses. Das Wesen des politischen, Was ist das, die Politik? are the titles of books Heidegger never wrote. Why? Perhaps for the same reasons that make him highly suspicious of words such as "ethics," "logic," or "physics":

Even such names as "logic," "ethics," and "physics" begin to flourish only when original thinking comes to an end. During the time of their greatness the Greeks thought without such headings.¹

Like these words, then, the word "politics" would need to be avoided, for such names are the result and the work of a metaphysical thinking the very existence of which marks a certain distance from originary and authentic thinking. Such words lead to an understanding of philosophy as science and anthropology. As such, they inevitably lead

¹. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 195-96.

to a concealment and an oblivion of the Sache selbst, viz. the question of Being. Insofar as they obliterate the Sache they are to be submitted to the Destruktion or the Abbau Heidegger speaks of in Being and Time. Politics would most need deconstruction. The use of the word itself would need to be "avoided" in philosophy.

Hence no political philosophy, no politology or politische Wissenschaft in Heidegger's work. Does this mean, then, that the question concerning politics is totally absent from the Heideggerian text? Does this mean that Heidegger had no "interest" in the question of politics? It has often been thought so. But then: what needs to be thought of Heidegger's decisively political and politically decisive engagement in nazism? What about the political in Heidegger, which is to say: what about Heidegger's politics; but also: what about the political dimension of Heidegger's thinking?

If there are no texts by Heidegger on the issue of politics, the question of how this issue can even be addressed properly has to be raised. Is it even legitimate to attempt to raise the question from a Heideggerian perspective? To this objection the following answer can be brought forward: first of all, if it is indeed true that there are no texts explicitly devoted to the question of politics--if, in other words, there is no "political" philosophy in Heidegger--, there are valuable

and decisive indications of political implications disseminated throughout Heidegger's texts; but, most of all, perhaps a way of thinking the question of politics in a radical and essential manner can be retrieved from the Heideggerian text.

In order to properly locate textually the question concerning politics, a reading of "The Question Concerning Technology" is imperative. This text constitutes the horizon within which the question can be formulated in the most adequate way. The question concerning technology is to be addressed in terms of essence. Now, the essence of technology is, according to Heidegger, "nothing technological,"² for technology is a mode of bringing-forth [Hervorbringen], of poiesis. As such, it is grounded in revealing [Entbergen]: its essence is grounded in the essence of truth. Hence technology is not mere instrumentality, a mere means to scientific or practical ends.

The word "technology" is rooted in the Greek techne. Techne, in Greek, is the name for what we understand today by technique or technology, viz. the activities and the skills (the "know-how") of a craftsman or a producer. But techne also names the arts of the mind

². "Die Frage nach der Technik." in Vorträge und Aufsätze (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1954); trans. by William Lovitt: "The Question Concerning Technology," in Basic Writings, p. 287.

and the fine arts. In both cases, the central activity involved is the bringing-forth, the poiesis of something. But does this allow for the conclusion that the essential characteristic of techne as the origin of modern technology lies indeed in production or manufacturing? This would perhaps be the case if Heidegger had not retrieved from the Greek techne another determination that makes it totally impossible for us to situate the essence of technology in production, and that is techne as episteme. Techne would be another name for episteme, both words defining knowing in the widest sense. But to know for the Greeks does not mean to gather a certain amount of knowledge in what should ideally become a "universal knowing." Rather, to know means "to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it."³ Hence techne is not only a way of producing, of making or manipulating something. It is also and above all a way of opening up a space--whether for an understanding of something, the making of a Zuhandene or the creating of an artwork. As an opening up, techne is essentially a revealing and hence a mode of truth as aletheia.

Thus if technology is essentially techne, then it too is a mode of aletheuein, of revealing. But technology does not reveal beings the way Greek poiesis did. The bringing-forth of technology is of a different kind:

³. Ibid., p. 294.

The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon [Stellen], in the sense of a challenging-forth [Herausfordern]. Such challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing.⁴

But for this setting-upon to take place a specific kind of unconcealment is required: beings have to appear as that which can be unlocked, transformed, stored up, etc. In other words, beings have to stand as that which can constantly be called upon. Heidegger calls such a standing Bestand, "standing-reserve". This word designates "nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the revealing that challenges."⁵ And Heidegger draws an immediate and decisive consequence: "Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object." What is decisive in technology is that the subject/object opposition is overcome. Specifically, the opposition is drawn to its most extreme possibilities. Beings no longer stand before us, are no longer objects or Gegen-stände. Rather, they appear as raw material, as standing-reserve, i.e., as that which can be called upon

⁴. Ibid., p. 297-98.

⁵. Ibid., 298.

or used at any time and without reserve. Man himself is no longer a subject facing a world envisaged as object--he has become the great exploiter of nature.

But, says Heidegger, "man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the real shows itself or withdraws."⁶ Does this mean that man too belongs within the standing-reserve? If man, in exploiting the energies of nature, merely responds to the demand of a kind of Unverborgenheit, then he too must belong to the standing-reserve. But this belonging to, or rather within the standing-reserve does not make of man a Bestand. For man is the being who orders nature, even though the unconcealment, within which the ordering essentially unfolds, is not the work of man. In ordering and exploiting nature man merely responds to the call of unconcealment:

When man, investigating, observing, pursues nature as an area of his own conceiving, he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve.⁷

This way of Unverborgenheit which compells man to order the self-revealing as standing-reserve Heidegger calls Ge-stell.

⁶. Ibid., 299.

⁷. Ibid., 300.

Physis, nature, designated in Ancient Greece the whole of being. As such, it included the physical world as well as human activities, whether practical or epistemic. Among these activities, the bios politikos held a major part. Now, if the political life is as essential today as it was in Ancient Greece, and if the Ge-stell does indeed govern the whole of beings, then politics too must be ruled by technology. Ge-stell governs "objectified nature, culture maintained in motion, ruled politics" (my italics).⁸ To think the question concerning politics today would amount to thinking the way in which politics is ruled by technology. And just as Heidegger inquires into the question of the essence of technology, so, in wanting to raise the question concerning politics, we would have to inquire into the question of the essence of politics. Such an essence can be named the political: in moving from the plural substantive (politics) to the nominalized adjective (the political) one points to the essence of politics, i.e., to something that would allow "politics" and yet would differ from it. The very displacement from a problematic of "politics"--which inevitably leads to a kind of "politology" or "political philosophy"--to a problematic of the political indicates a distance separating the

⁸. "Ueberwindung der Metaphysik," in Vorträge und Aufsätze.

conditions of possibility for a Heideggerian understanding of the polis or the "community" from the traditional attempts to ground the polis in either reason, freedom, the will, etc. However valuable and useful such attempts may be, they do not concern the essence of politics. A Heideggerian approach to the political is inevitably linked to a deconstructionist approach to the politics of the subject, and to think the political according to its essence forces us into a thinking where the traditional notions of "freedom", "reason", "spirit", "subject" are no longer operative.

Hence to pose the question concerning politics in terms of essence perhaps forces one into admitting that, in the same way the essence of technology is nothing technological, so the essence of politics is nothing "political." The issue then becomes to know what the political consists in. Specifically, the issue is to know how the political can allow for politics, how the essence of politics can open the space for the political life, while itself remaining withdrawn from this very space-- how, in other words, the "presencing" of politics would always be linked to a certain "absencing": how the essence of politics is connected to the essence of truth as unconcealment.

And in asking about the political today, one must also ask what it means for politics to be under the sway

of technology. How can technology and politics, Ge-stell and the political, be thought together? What is the political horizon of our time? One can say with Hannah Arendt that this horizon or this togetherness is totalitarianism. But one can go further and assert that totalitarianism is not only the political horizon of our time, but also the most general horizon of our time, insofar as the politics of our century has gathered--and keeps on gathering--the most extreme possibilities of technology. Or, to put it differently: if technology indeed marks the completion and the closure of metaphysics, politics has marked throughout this century the most extreme realization and completion of metaphysics. Everything happens as though metaphysics had been realized in and as politics. Such a realization Heidegger would have failed to acknowledge--even though, of course, such an acknowledgment would have been impossible without Heidegger's thinking--, thereby perhaps rendering his political engagement possible. Here, perhaps, lies Heidegger's fault.

Hence politics today would perhaps most signify the end or the closure of metaphysics. Politics today would mark the closure of the political as such. So that one primarily needs to ask what this closure consists in, how it unfolds. One needs to think this closure, to ask whether it does not constitute the very essence of

politics, but an essence that would remain withdrawn from the "political game," allowing this game in the very movement of its retreat. In other words, it is a matter of asking whether, just as being is withdrawn and concealed in the understanding of the world as will to power, so likewise the essence of the political is withdrawn from politics, yet allows its very totalitarian presence. And if this retreat is what is proper (eigentlich) to the political, if, in other words, the political consists in this movement of Ziehen and Entziehen, then one might want to conclude that what has withdrawn never actually occurred, never really happened--was never an event. And yet, from its very sheltering (Verbergung), this would never cease to occur and to happen to us. This would occur and reach us from its unattainable Ort. This owning, this Ereignis would be constituted in a movement of disowning, of Enteignis. The retreat of the political would never "happen" as retreat, and yet nothing--no policy, no politics, no history--could happen without it. So that a certain presence would be made possible only through a certain absence or absencing. The Zug of the Ent-zug would be the tension or the strife of such a movement.

Truth as unconcealment would be at the very core of the problem. The political itself would be a mode of Unverbogenheit. Like the Ge-stell, which is both a Her-

stellen and a Dar-stellen, a producing and a presenting, the political would be a poiesis, a way of revealing. And the way in which beings are revealed today in politics can be called "totalitarianism," even though in the present context this word does not serve exclusively to designate the so-called politically "totalitarian" regimes. The very possibility of modern politics, i.e., of "totalitarianism" in a Heideggerian sense (and that is in a metaphysically determined sense), is based on the understanding of nature, including man, as Bestand. In the word "totalitarianism," then, one would need to understand, of course, the politically determined regimes--the emblematic figures of which are Nazism and Stalinism. Hence in speaking of the general horizon of our time as being stamped by these two "events," we wish to insist on the demand that the question of the political life, of the "being-in-common," of the community, be raised anew. In light of these events, one needs to ask: what does it mean to live in common after Auschwitz or the Gulag? What does it mean for men to live together after these events? But our understanding of totalitarianism is also an attempt to point beyond these human practices to something that exceeds human activity and that yet renders it possible as the "political" activity which it is. In other words, totalitarianism is to be thought as a mode of revealing in which man is considered as Bestand. So that

"totalitarianism" would also designate the way in which politics is being ruled today, even in political regimes that are not "totalitarian."

From a metaphysical perspective, then, there would be a certain belonging-together of the so-called totalitarian regimes and the so-called democracies. First, in the sense that very often democracies define themselves in mere opposition to totalitarian regimes, as though the two belonged together in their very opposition, as though democracy were the Other of totalitarianism. But most of all in the sense that the two belong together in a ground that Heidegger calls Bestand. One can indeed wonder whether our democracies are not submitted to forms of totalitarianism that would be more subtle, less evident and less painful, less directly and evidently violent, surely less murderous. One would then need to undertsand the notion of totalitarianism not so much in terms of the exercise of political power, but in terms of our everyday being-in-common, ruled by a technology that would define the community in terms of what Lyotard calls a "totality in search of its most performative unity."⁹ Such a totality is one within which man would no longer appear as the being standing into the open, relating himself to Being, but as Bestand, i.e., as a performing unity (as

⁹. J. F. Lyotard, La condition postmoderne (Paris: Minuit, 1979), p. 102-103.

animal laborans), as a reality which can be altered, destroyed or even created (in genetic manipulations for instance). And this may be what Heidegger points to when he writes:

As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve, and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of a precipitous fall, that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve (my italics).¹⁰

Heidegger is right in saying that the Ge-stell is "the supreme danger." Even more so, perhaps, than what he actually thought. For in reading these lines, how can one not think primarily of the way in which man has been--and still is--enclosed, ordered, enframed, in structures (camps, prisons, ghettos, etc.) which always signify the impossibility of man's existence? How can one not think of the way in which man, in those structures, is only considered as standing-reserve, whether as labor force, guinea-pig or raw material? It is only insofar as man reaches the point where he considers himself in the same way he has come to consider a river or a field, i.e., as standing-reserve, that inventing something like a gas chamber becomes possible. To envisage man as Bestand is already to prepare the way to the possibility of his own death or of the loss of his essence. Politics today,

¹⁰. "The Question Concerning Technology," p. 308.

insofar as it is grounded on an implicit understanding of beings as Bestand and of man as animal laborans, defines itself in terms of a working totality, in terms of performativity and of market value: it has been completed in the social-technological.

But where danger is, grows
The saving power also...

What Heidegger says about these lines by Hölderlin is most appropriate for the political. "To save, says Heidegger, is to fetch something home into its essence, in order to bring the essence for the first time into its genuine appearing."¹¹ And thus, in the same way "the essence of technology must harbor in itself the growth of the saving power," so the essence of politics, insofar as it harbors the supreme danger, must also harbor in itself the growth of the saving power. From a Heideggerian perspective, therefore, "to save" politics would be to retrieve its essence and to bring this essence into its genuine appearing.

Hence this text will be primarily concerned with a move into the essence. Specifically, it will be a matter of tracing out, patiently and carefully, the path through which Heidegger's thinking is engaged. Such path will eventually lead us into an understanding of the essence of

¹¹. Ibid.

politics as techne, and specifically as poetry in the sense of Dichtung. Paradoxically, perhaps, the question of the political will inevitably lead us into a reading of Hölderlin. At this point, it will also be a matter of radically calling into question Heidegger's enterprise, i.e., both the move to the so-called "essence" as such and the determination of the essence as poetry or myth. Specifically, it will be a matter of calling into question the very possibility of a univocal and poetic essence of the political, and of asking whether politics does not resist the move to the essence, whether politics can exist outside the plurality of words and deeds in which and as which it unfolds.

These few introductory remarks should suffice to show what constitutes the specificity of the work one is about to be engaged in, and to what extent such work differs from the plurality of "texts" (books, essays, articles, interviews) so far devoted to the question of politics in Heidegger. Generally speaking, there are almost no commentaries that consider the possibility of a political thinking in Heidegger seriously. Specifically, these commentaries are more engaged in an external critique of Heidegger's involvement in nazism (Heidegger's "politics") than in an internal thinking of how the question of the political would need to be phrased from a

Heideggerian perspective. Even though we believe that readings engaged in tracing out some of Heidegger's ideological reflexes can be illuminating and even necessary, even though Heidegger's politics can in no way be separated from his thinking in general, and specifically from his political thinking, we do not think that such readings will ever get to the heart of Heidegger's thinking and political engagement. Indeed, such readings remain decisively withdrawn and hence closed off from the inner logic of Heidegger's thought. Thus, even though, in the end, the pages that are to come will be very critical and questioning with regard to Heidegger's political thinking, they will nonetheless differ from the objections and the criticisms formulated by so many thinkers, whether of marxist inspiration-- Adorno,¹² Lukacs,¹³ Marcuse¹⁴ or Bourdieu¹⁵--or of any

¹². Adorno, Theodor W, Jargon der Eigentlichkeit, Zur deutschen Ideologie (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1964); "Martin Heidegger und die Politik," in Merkur (Stuttgart, Heft 10, n° 235, 1921).

¹³. Lukacs, G., Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Berlin, 1955.

¹⁴. Marcuse, Herbert, "Beiträge zur eine Phänomenologie des historischen Materialismus," in Philosophische Heft, I (1928), 45-68; "Heidegger's Politics: An Interview," in The Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal, n° 6 (Winter, 1977), 28-40.

¹⁵. Bourdieu, Pierre, "L'ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger," in Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, V-VI (1975), p. 109-156.

other philosophical inspiration--Löwith,¹⁶ Pöggeler,¹⁷ Schwan.¹⁸ In spite of their different orientations and purposes, none of these texts are actually involved in tracing out what we have come to call the question of the essence (in a Heideggerian sense) of politics.

However, there are a few exceptions to this general rule, the most remarkable of which is Lacoue-Labarthe, whose work we shall very often refer to and whose analyses will be of the greatest help. More recently, Derrida's De l'esprit¹⁹ also deals with the inner paths and textual itineraries of Heidegger's thought. As such, this text can also be very illuminating.

¹⁶. Löwith, Karl, "The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism," Wollin ed. NGC, 117-134; Heidegger: Denker in dürftiger Zeit (Göttingen: Vandenhock & Ruprecht, 1960).

¹⁷. Pöggeler Otto, Philosophie und Politik bei Heidegger (Freiburg-München: Alber Verlag, 1972).

¹⁸. Schwan A., Die Politische Philosophie im Denken Heideggers (Köln: Ordo Politicus, 1965).

¹⁹. J. Derrida, De l'esprit (Paris: Galilée, 1987).

CHAPTER ONE

Into the essence

The way into the essence is long and obscure. Almost like a descent into Hades. It is not explicitly inscribed in the Heideggerian text. Hence it needs to be traced out in what could be considered a winding textual itinerary. Or perhaps even more as a whirling, as a circling of circles where each determination of essence would re-unfold in a new determination.

(A)

The reasons for Heidegger's political engagement are usually found in what is considered his most political--i.e., politicized--text, viz. "The Rectoral Address."¹ The Address, then, might best express Heidegger's political "ideas," if not "philosophy". After the rectorate period, and that is also after the

¹. "The Self-Assertion of the German University: Address, Delivered on the Solemn Assumption of the Rectorate of the University Freiburg." English translation by Karsten Harries in Review of Metaphysics 38 (March 1985): 470-480. Henceforth RR.

frightening proclamations of 1933-34², Heidegger might have withdrawn from the political life and devoted himself exclusively to teaching. Yet on the contrary the years following the rectorate were for Heidegger a long Auseinandersetzung with National-Socialism, so much so that his withdrawal from all kinds of political activities were at the same time a radical (re)engagement into the question of the political.³ Thus the most explicitly political text ("The Rectoral Address") is perhaps not the most decisive one in terms of Heidegger's political thinking. The Address is perhaps not political at all, even though it is the actual locus of a truly political compromise and of the support of a very specific politics. For if--as Heidegger will insist after 1934--the political is tied to the Greek notion of polis, the polis, in turn, has nothing to do with the political, or rather with politics. This does not mean that there is a radical change in thematics and vocabulary between the 1933 text and the texts following. On the contrary. What is said in the Rectoral Address is maintained for the most part.

². Specifically the proclamation "To the memory of Albert Leo Schlageter" (May 26, 1933), the call to "The working service" (June 20, 1933), and the "Call to the plebiscit of November 12, 1933".

³. The credit for this insight should go to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, whose writings inspired the comments that follow. See La Fiction du politique (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1987) and specifically "La Transcendance finit dans la politique," in L'Imitation des modernes (Paris: Galilée, 1986).

The major themes and notions at work in the Address reappear in the later texts. And yet, there are a few slight but decisive changes, a few shifts in intonation and tone that constitute a decisive move away from what Heidegger himself would perhaps call the "fundamental tone" of the Address. In other words, there is a move away from the climate or the atmosphere of the Address, even though the concern for the same problematics remains operative.

What is this general climate? What are these main problematics? The climate is born out of the historical and political situation of Germany and by Heidegger's own philosophical situation. The time is a time of Not, of distress. Of a twofold distress. First, the distress points to the total collapse of what was once lived as the dream of a world hegemony: since the end of the First World War, not only was Germany weakened and to an extent humiliated politically, but it was also undergoing what was perhaps the worst and most extended crisis the West had yet undergone. The collapse was not only political, i.e., social and institutional, but also spiritual. Second,—and the two dimensions of the distress are of course related—Germany was undergoing its first serious crisis of the advanced industrial economy, i.e., of what Marx would call the Capital and of what Heidegger would call the world of technology.

This general collapse actually meant the non-existence of Germany and radically put into question the very possibility of the existence of a German people--a possibility that was perhaps the major stake of German thought and art in general throughout the Nineteenth Century. But it could also have meant--and this, of course, was Heidegger's view--that the German people did not yet correspond to their proper and for some reason concealed essence. Since the German people is the "philosophical people" par excellence,⁴--that is, the people whose essence lies in philosophy or in science⁵--it must answer to its essence. At this point, perhaps, Heidegger's thinking meets the actuality of his time: Heidegger actually becomes politically involved in the distress of his time. Heidegger engages himself in politics, for he sees in the outburst of National-Socialism the unique possibility and the desire to bring the German people before their essence.

⁴. Such a statement will always--from the early 30's to the Spiegel interview--remain at the level of assertion. It will never be questioned nor toned down. In the name of what, from what privileged standpoint can such a claim be made? And what is the point of making it? There is perhaps in Heidegger's naive and simplistic statement an ideological overdetermination which, from the very beginning, both enabled him to join a movement which itself asserted a certain German superiority and prevented him from thinking about the dangers of such an assertion.

⁵. We recall that in the speculative vocabulary, philosophy in its completion is science (Wissenschaft) and knowing (Wissen).

Heidegger's contribution to the ongoing movement is the contribution of science. His voice, like the unified and homogeneous voice of Germany, is led and sustained by science. It is the voice of the essence and the voice that wills the essence. Science must be the true Führer of Germany. Science must guide and enlighten the will of the people as well as the decisions of the politicians. Heidegger writes, as the most insistent and persistent message of the "Address": "...science must become the fundamental happening of our spiritual-popular existence [unseres geistig-volklichen Daseins]."⁶ Even though the forces of "earth and blood"--which duplicate the famous ideologem of Blut und Boden--are mentioned, even though, then, an open support of the Nazi ideology is inscribed in the text, the people are nonetheless determined as historical-spiritual and their essence is defined in terms of science or knowing.

Hence the decisive question, viz. the political question, i.e., the question through which the people as a whole are brought before their essence, is to know what the true ruling principle is. Who (or what) leads whom and toward what, i.e., in the name of what, is the issue. What and where is the hegemony, from where does the hegemony take its power, such is the question. Heidegger is quite clear:

⁶. RR. 474.

The assumption of the rectorate is the commitment to the spiritual leadership [Führung] of this institution of higher learning [hohe Schule]. The following of teachers and students awakens and grows strong only from a true and joint rootedness in the essence of the German university. This essence, however, gains clarity, rank, and power only when first of all and at all times the leaders are themselves led--led by that unyielding spiritual mission that forces the fate of the German people to bear the stamp of its history.⁷

In other words, the Führung of the university is itself led by a higher principle, the Führung of the Führung, viz. the spiritual mission. Heidegger himself, then, the leader of the university, is such only insofar as he accepts--and resolutely wills--to be led by the spiritual mission of the people. The Führer himself, Adolf Hitler, would be a true leader only insofar as he would most be led by the spiritual mission of the German people. From the very outset, then, a certain subordination of the political order is asserted. The political itself must be submitted to the essence of the German people, viz. the spiritual mission. But where is such a mission realized if not in the university, to the extent that the university is rooted in science? What the "Address" first asserts, then,--and it literally does so in the title--is the self-assertion--and that is also the auto-nomy--of the German university, along with its guiding or leading role in the political sphere. Self-, here, means independent

7. RR, 470.

of any political directives and according to the essence of science. Thereby one sees that the part of illusion in Heidegger's address is not to be neglected, for the university was never considered by the Nazis as an autonomous and politically leading power. Rather, the university (like all the other "cultural" and "spiritual" institutions of the State) was to be "politicized."

But what is the spiritual mission Heidegger speaks of? Heidegger himself formulates the question: "Do we know about this spiritual mission?"⁸ This question, perhaps, is the guiding question of the Address and constitutes the major thread into the question of the political. The answer is:

The self-assertion of the German university is the primordial, shared will to its essence. We understand the German university as the "high" school that, grounded in science, by means of science educates and disciplines the leaders and guardians of the fate of the German people. The will to the essence of the German university is the will to science as will to the historical mission of the German people as a people that knows itself in its state. Together, science and German fate must come to power in this will to essence.⁹

A few remarks about the "tone" of the passage first need to be made. The general tone or climate of this passage--and of the address as a whole--is clearly Nietzschean. "Will", "power", but also "decision" or

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Ibid., 471.

"battle" (Kampf) are words that appear throughout Heidegger's discourse and around which the truly political engagement circles. As we all know, the Nietzschean vocabulary inspired--or rather, was put to work by--the Nazi ideology. Even though these words did not harbour the same meaning for Heidegger as for the Nazis, the fact remains that the very use of such a vocabulary in the politically overdetermined situation signified both a support of the ideology at work and an indelible compromising of its major theses. It is not a mere accident, then, if Heidegger, soon after the rectorate period, will abandon the Nietzschean climate within which his philosophy was still caught, and engage himself in what he came to call his Auseinandersetzung with Nietzsche's thought. Nor is it an accident if the move away from Nietzsche also corresponded to an increasing dialogue with the "thinking poetry" of Hölderlin, the major stake of which, as will later be shown, was political.

But the question of the present moment is to know what the "spiritual mission" of the people consists in. Heidegger's answer is quite straightforward: The mission of the German people is science. That by which the German people is determined in its essence, that by which it becomes truly historical is science. The Auftrag of the German people, i.e., that by which it is guided or led,

commanded and destined is science. Wissenschaft, then, is that without which there can be no German people as such, no history and no politics. It is the very condition of possibility of the existence of Germany as Volk. Its essence. To be essentially what it is, the German people must will, must be devoted to and strive for nothing but science: "...science must become the fundamental happening of our spiritual existence as a people."¹⁰

But what is science? What about the "essence" of science? Once again, Heidegger's answer is straightforward: science is "knowing" or "philosophy": "All science is philosophy, whether it knows it and wills it--or not."¹¹ But such is the case only insofar as that which determines all sciences in their essence is the "beginning" of the West, and that is the "setting out" or the "breaking open" (Aufbruch) of Greek philosophy. Philosophy, science, is itself defined a few pages later as "the questioning holding of one's ground in the midst of the ever self-concealing of what is."¹² In the setting out of Greek philosophy, "for the first time, western man raises himself up from a popular base and, by virtue of his language, stands up to the totality of what is, which

¹⁰. Ibid., 474.

¹¹. Ibid., 472.

¹². Ibid., 474.

he questions and conceives as the being that it is."¹³

Science, in other words, is nothing but the radicalization of the existence of man in the world. It is nothing but the radicalization of what Being and Time calls the "ek-sistence" or the "transcendence" of Dasein. What the Rectoral Address does, then, is a mere re-assertion of one of Being and Time's fundamental theses. The Address is perfectly consistent with Heidegger's other texts--both with the preceding and the following ones¹⁴: in it, it is nothing but a matter of philosophy, of its role and its essence. But for the slightest twist, the Address could be considered as operating at the level of all the other "purely" philosophical texts. This twist lies in the fact that, unlike what is said in Sein und Zeit, the Dasein Heidegger speaks of here is related to a specific people, a people which, moreover, is

¹³. Ibid., 471-72.

¹⁴. In "What is Metaphysics?", for example, Heidegger writes: "Man--one being among others--"pursues science". In this "pursuit" nothing less transpires than the irruption [Einbruch, this time, and not Aufbruch] by one being called "man" into the whole of beings, indeed in such a way that in and through this irruption beings break open and show what they are and how they are." (Basic Writings, 96)

In "On the Essence of Truth", Heidegger writes: "Ek-sistence is...exposure to the disclosedness of beings as such... The ek-sistence of historical man begins at that moment when the first thinker takes a questioning stand with regard to the unconcealment of beings by asking: what are beings?... The primordial disclosure of being as a whole, the question concerning beings as such, and the beginning of western history are the same... (Ibid., 128-29)

metaphysically privileged over other people. The German people is the "metaphysical people" par excellence. But to say this is tantamount to saying, according to the essence of science that has been unfolded so far, that the German people is more radically ek-sistent than others, that it stands more radically before the totality of what is. This displacement--or perhaps only this placing--of fundamental ontology into the political is a decisive move that perhaps undermines and disrupts the very notion of fundamental ontology. For how can a Dasein ek-sist more radically on the basis of a common relation to beings and in the sharing of a specific language, and no longer on the basis of the elements that defined "resoluteness" in Being and Time? Is Heidegger's unquestioned Germano-logic-centrism that which primarily enabled his political engagement--or at least that which could not stop it?

The move from Being and Time to the Rectoral Address is not the move from a Dasein thought outside an historical and political framework to the historicizing and the politicizing of Dasein. The sections on "Temporality and Historicity" in Being and Time clearly thematize the historico-political dimension of Dasein and the possibility of an authentic Being-with-one-another:

... if fateful Dasein [Dasein is fateful insofar as it is free for its own death, i.e., insofar as it comports itself resolutely to its ownmost possibility], as Being-in-the-world, exists essentially in Being-with-Others, its historicizing is a

co-historizing [ein Mitgeschehen] and is determinative for it as destiny [Geschick]. This is how we designate the historizing of the community, of a people. Destiny is not something that puts itself together out of individual fates, any more than Being-with-one-another can be conceived as the occurring together of several subjects.

But the question, then, is to know how the destiny, the community or the people is constituted. The passage continues:

Our fates have already been guided in advance, in our Being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities. Only in communication [i.e. in language] and in struggling [i.e. in the struggle in the midst of beings] does the power of destiny become free.¹⁵

The key word here is "world", for the world is the space of the struggle in the midst of beings and the space within which a people comes to be through language. The world is the space of science or philosophy. So that the emergence of the political--the emergence of a destiny and a community or a people--is rooted in Dasein's fundamental attitude in front of beings, viz. science. In Being and Time already, then, the independence or the primacy of the metaphysical over the political was asserted.

But there was no primacy or privileging of Germany as a people. There were no allusions, such as there will be in Introduction to Metaphysics, to the German people as the "metaphysical people" or to Germany as the "center" or

¹⁵. SZ 384.

the "heart" of the West.

Where, then, does the Germano-logo-centrism come from? Why, in other words, does the spiritual mission--the will for science--fall upon the German people? Why, after the Greeks, do the Germans have to take up and represent the destiny of the West? Where does the privilege come from? There is, perhaps, not much that can be said about it. For nowhere can an explanation be found in Heidegger's texts. The question is perhaps an impossible one, primarily because it seems that the privilege of the German people--and that is primarily of the German language--was itself never an issue for Heidegger. The problem of the move from a philosophical or metaphysical privilege to the dedication to a certain politics was never an issue. But could it have been an issue? Is it not the very characteristic of the metaphysical to be overdetermined by the political? But then: do metaphysics and politics belong together, in a way that Heidegger would have not sufficiently acknowledged--viz. essentially? And yet, at the same time, who besides Heidegger would have pointed more adamantly to this belonging-together? And was not Heidegger unable to think--and that is to put into question--his political engagement precisely because of his own metaphysical convictions, preferences, commitments--presuppositions? Precisely because of his

subordination of the political to the philosophical? And then, would Heidegger's "case" be exemplary in that it would show how the political is always dominant, most of all, perhaps, when it is ignored or merely submitted to another order--the philosophical order?

So, once again, one is faced with the question of philosophy, of science and knowing. With the question of the "spiritual mission" which the Germans would need to take up to become a true people, an authentic community. What is the essence of knowing? To inquire into the essence of knowing is, according to Heidegger, to inquire into the original and hence decisive experience of knowing, and that is the Greek experience. Heidegger writes, in what is perhaps the central passage of the whole address:

Here we want to regain for our being [Dasein] two distinguishing properties of the original Greek essence of science.

Among the Greeks an old story went around that Prometheus had been the first philosopher. Aeschylus has this Prometheus utter a saying that expresses the essence of knowing.

techne d'anankès asthenestera makro (Prom. 514, ed. Wil.)

"Knowing, however, is far weaker than necessity." This is to say: all knowing about things has always already been delivered up to overpowering fate and fails before it.

Just because of this, knowing must develop its highest defiance; called forth by such defiance, all the power of the hiddenness of what is must first arise for knowing really to fail. Just in this way, what is opens itself in its unfathomable inalterability and lends knowing its truth.

Encountering this Greek saying about the creative impotence of knowing, one likes to find here all too readily the prototype of a knowing based purely on itself, while in fact such knowing has forgotten its own essence, this knowing is interpreted for us as the "theoretical" attitude--but what do the Greeks mean by theoria? One says: pure contemplation, which remains bound only to the thing in question and to all it is and demands. This contemplative behavior--and here one appeals to the Greeks--is said to be pursued for its own sake. But this appeal is mistaken. For one thing, "theory" is not pursued for its own sake, but only in the passion to remain close to and hard pressed by what is as such. But, for another, the Greeks struggled precisely to conceive and to enact this contemplative questioning as one, indeed as the highest mode of energeia, of man's "being-at-work." They were not concerned to assimilate practice to theory; quite the reverse: theory was to be understood as itself the highest realization [Verwirklichung] of genuine practice. For the Greeks science is not a "cultural good," but the innermost determining center of all that binds human being to people and state.¹⁶

By quoting the passage in its entirety one is able to show how the traditionally distinguished--if not merely opposed--notions of techne, praxis and theoria are thought together in Heidegger's text, in such a way that the political itself gets essentially defined through these notions.

The first crucial thing to note with regard to the passage is that "Science" or "knowing"--and that is "philosophy"--means techne. To define techne as knowing--and that is essentially as philosophy as a standing firmly in the midst of beings--is to take this notion away from its purely "technical" determinations. In techne, it is

¹⁶. RR, 472-73.

not a matter of actualizing skills with a view to the making of an artifact. It is rather a matter of theoria, which is itself defined as "the passion to remain close to and hard pressed by what is as such." Theoria too is taken away from its usual abstract and merely contemplative determinations. For man theoria is a mode of energeia, of being-at-work: in theoria something is actually realized or "put into work" (the word Heidegger uses is Verwirklichung). Praxis itself--the political notion par excellence--is being put into work in theoria. So that the political itself--the existence of a people and a state or a polis--is through and through "technical." Knowing or techne--i.e. the combat against the power of Being, the combat through which a relation to what is in general and a disclosedness of beings, as well as the opening up of possibilities for a historical Dasein are rendered possible--is itself praxical: it is the very condition of possibility or the essence of the political as such. To put it abruptly and in terms that are not specifically Heideggerian: the philosophical--or the metaphysical: Dasein's being-in-the-world--and the political are contemporaneous or co-originary.

(B)

At this point the reading of the Rectoral Address must be interrupted. But the investigation into the

intimate--and in a way abysmal--relation between techne and the political is only beginning. Indeed, one is now about to be engaged into another circle.

One may recall the general or traditional thesis concerning Heidegger's engagement in National-Socialism, as well as his rupture. After he resigned from the Rectorate, Heidegger might have withdrawn from political life: since he had come to politics through the university, it would have been natural that he also leave politics when he was no longer at the head of the university. Having left the front of the political stage, he might have devoted himself entirely to problems of "pure" philosophy.

But then what are we to think of the declaration he made to the two journalists from the Spiegel who were questioning him about his politics? The statement reads:

After I resigned from the Rectorate, I limited myself to my task as a professor. In the summer semester of 1934, I held a lecture course on "logic." The following semester, 1934-35, I held my first lecture course on Hölderlin [on the hymns "Germanien" and "der Rhein"]. In 1936 began the courses on Nietzsche. All those who could hear heard that what was at issue was a confrontation [Auseinandersetzung] with national-socialism.

During this period, Heidegger also delivered his course Introduction to Metaphysics (1935) (the culminating point of which is a discussion of the famous chorus from Sophocles' Antigone), the different versions of The Origin

of the Work of Art (1936), as well as the other Hölderlin lectures on "der Ister" and "Andenken."

Following these historical remarks, two set of questions need to be raised:

1. Is Heidegger's statement concerning his Auseinandersetzung with national-socialism to be taken seriously? In other words, do the texts and lectures following 1934 engage a debate--indeed a philosophical one--with national-socialism, and thus necessarily with the question of the political?
2. If so, how can this be related to the fact that all the lecture courses, from 1934 to the end of the war, focus on the question of art, and specifically on the question of poetry or Dichtung--whether in Sophocles or in Hölderlin? How, in other words, did the question of the political come to be formulated in connection with the question of art and poetry? How did the question of the poetic become the central question of--and here one must hear the double genitive--the political?

If the question concerning art were a question of aesthetics, as it has been in the whole history of philosophy; if, in other words, the question of art were a question concerning the "beautiful" and the imitation or mimesis of the beautiful--then surely it would have very little to do with the question of the political as it has been formulated so far. This does not mean that it would

have nothing to do with the question of the political as such. On the contrary. It would perhaps have very much to do with Nazism and with the way this movement, through the mouth of Hitler or Goebbels, considered politics as the highest form of art: as the true artwork.¹⁷ But Heidegger's thinking about art is precisely engaged in an attempt to free art from aesthetics. In art, the beautiful is not primarily what is at issue. The discourse about art is not primarily a discourse about the beautiful. At least if the beautiful is a matter of judgment, specifically of judgment of taste.

But what is art? And how can we talk about art? Art, in its essence, is techne. Techne does not mean--at least not primarily--"art". It does not designate any kind of making, whether poietic (craft) or artistic. Rather, techne--as shown in the Rectoral Address--means knowing. This determination will remain throughout Heidegger's publishing career. In "The Question Concerning Technology" (1954), for example, Heidegger writes:

From earliest times until Plato the word technè is linked with the word epistèmè. Both terms are words

¹⁷. See, for example, the pages devoted to the question of art in Mein Kampf, or the letter Goebbels wrote Wilhelm Furtwängler and that was published in the newspaper Lokal-Anzeiger on April 11, 1933; see also the article published in the Völkischer Beobachter (April, 24, 1936) entitled "Art as the Ground for the Creative Power in Politics."

for knowing in the widest sense. They mean to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be an expert in it.¹⁸

And closer to the Rectoral Address, in a politically decisive text, viz. in Introduction to Metaphysics, he writes: "Technè--which denotes neither art (Kunst) nor technology (Technik) but a 'knowing' ('Wissen')."¹⁹ Or again, in the same text: "Technè means neither art nor skill, to say nothing of technique in the modern sense. We translate technè by 'knowing.'²⁰

But what is "knowing"? What is "knowledge"? The first part of the Introduction provides a preliminary sketch: knowledge, says Heidegger in a somewhat enigmatic way, is that in which "the norms and hierarchies are set," that "in which and from which a people comprehends and fulfills its Dasein in the historical-spiritual world (in der geschichtlich-geistigen Welt)."²¹ A little further:

But to know means: to be able to stand in the truth. Truth is the manifestness of beings. To know is accordingly the ability to stand [stehen] in the manifestness of beings, to endure it [bestehen]. Merely to have information, however abundant, is not to know...for to know means to be able to learn... Ability to learn presupposes ability to question. To question is the willing-to-know

¹⁸. Basic Writings, p. 294.

¹⁹. Einführung in die Metaphysik (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1987), p. 13. Henceforth EM.

²⁰. EM, 122.

²¹. Ibid., 8.

analyzed above: the resoluteness [Ent-schlossenheit] to be able to stand in the openness of beings.²²

If we now wish to gather the different determinations of knowing in order to delineate its essence, we can say that knowing is a mode of existing in--of standing out unto--unconcealment in that it is precisely defined as the ability to stand in the open of what is manifested, and in such a way as to determine the historical-spiritual Dasein of a people. Once again, then, the very possibility of the political is being ordered to the emergence of knowing or philosophy, i.e., to the ability "to stand in the openness of beings."

But how does such knowing essentially unfold? What does it mean, "to stand in the openness of beings"? In Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger decides to trace out this unfolding in the great Greek beginning, and specifically in the first chorus from Sophocles' Antigone. This (viz. the recourse to Greek poetry) is the crucial move. The Introduction initiates the political way into poetry. There is a decisive move, for from the Introduction onward, there will be a privilege--a political privilege--of the "artistic" and specifically of the poetic over the "forces of work" and the "forces of combat," also of "blood and earth"--the more directly "political" forces. Why such a move? Why such a

²². Ibid., 16-17.

privilege? Again, the answer is a matter of essence. The move is a move toward the essence of knowing or technè; the privilege of the poetic is a privilege of essence. Beginning with the Introduction, the word technè will progressively and decisively be reoriented in the direction of art.

Technè, then, also--and more and more--means "art". Why? First of all because, as a mode of aletheuein or unconcealing, it is necessarily a mode of poiein, which Heidegger translates as herstellen (producing) or hervor-bringen (bringing-forth). Second--and this point depends on the first one--because, as a mode of standing amid beings in the way of mastery or domination, technè is necessary to the poiesis or making of the pieces of equipment and artifacts. But if making or producing is a mode of knowing, the highest mode of technè is, according to the Greeks, poetry, i.e., the producing or bringing-forth of something through language.

In his reading of Sophocles' Antigone, Heidegger is concerned with tracing out the originary and essential meaning of knowing in the Greek world. Hence Heidegger is engaged in a historical (geschichtlich) reading, i.e., a reading which itself can be decisive for the opening of our own future: "Only the most radical historical knowledge can make us aware of our extraordinary tasks and preserve us from a new wave of mere restoration and

uncreative imitation."²³ A "radical historical" knowledge is a knowledge which reaches the very root of history as the origin that marks the essential unfolding of knowledge. Thus a radical knowledge is a knowledge situated in the "destinal" outburst marked by the great Greek beginning. Only in standing in the originary destiny can there be a future for the German Dasein. It is in this sense that one needs to understand Heidegger's statement according to which only the radical historical knowing can "make us aware of our extraordinary tasks." This sentence constitutes perhaps the whole of Heidegger's truly political vision as well as his historical ambition for Germany as Volk. The destiny of the German Dasein can only be opened up from the Greek destiny understood as Geschick. On this particular point, then, there is no difference from the Rectoral Address. The difference lies perhaps in the fact that now (in 1935), in order to free "our [i.e., "we" the German people] extraordinary tasks," Heidegger resorts to the analysis of Greek historical knowledge, i.e., of technè and of its most unconcealing form: poiesis--poetry:

...we shall now consult a thinking poetry [ein denkerisches Denken] of the Greeks and particularly that poetry in which the Being and (the corresponding) Dasein of the Greeks was in the truest sense created:

²³. EM 96.

the tragedy.²⁴

The tragedy Heidegger focuses on is Sophocles' Antigone. Specifically, Heidegger's analysis bears on the first chorus.²⁵ The chorus, according to Heidegger, provides an answer to the question "who is man?" and not to the metaphysical question, viz. "what is man?" The question, then, is not metaphysical but historical--and that is always, for Heidegger, political.

What does the chorus say?

It starts off by evoking the deinon, which Heidegger translates by das Unheimliche, the uncanny. Polla ta deina becomes: vielfältig das Unheimliche, manifold the uncanny, which can also be translated--but none of these substitutes are quite satisfying--as the strange, the dis-quieting, the extra-ordinary, the dis-orienting, the monstrous, etc. Heidegger then moves on to define the deinon as the terrible (das Furchtbare), in the sense--and here Heidegger plays with the semantic field of walten (to rule, to dominate, to be violent to)--of "the overpowering power [das überwältigende Walten] which compels panic fear, true anxiety as well as the collected, silent awe that vibrates in itself."²⁶ So

²⁴. EM, 112.

²⁵. See Appendix for full quotation of Heidegger's translation of the chorus.

²⁶. Ibid., 114-15.

that--and this is where the overpowering or the essential violence of power is contained--the Unheimliche is to be understood as "that which casts us out of the 'homely,' [das Heimische] the customary, familiar, secure."²⁷

The Unheimliche thus defined (or re-defined), i.e., this overpowering [Überwältigung] or originary violence [Gewalttätigkeit] is nothing other than what "What is Metaphysics?" depicted as the incommensurability of Being or nothing. In relation to such uncanniness, man is determined as to deinetaton, das Unheimlicheres, the strangest or most uncanny. Such is "the basic trait of the human essence," and not some "particular attribute of man, as though he were also something else."²⁸ Such is man's basic trait, precisely insofar as the tragic saying about man does not speak of man but of Dasein, and that is in such a way as to encompass "the extreme limits and abrupt abysses of his being."²⁹

Now if man, in his essence--and the essence of man, in this context, is indeed the non-human or the human under erasure--is das Unheimlicheres, the reason is twofold.

First of all,--and here the Introduction is in

²⁷. Ibid., 115-116.

²⁸. Ibid.

²⁹. Ibid., 114.

perfect accordance with what is said about Dasein's transcendence beyond beings in "What is Metaphysics?"--man "departs from, flees from the limits which at first and for the most part are customary and familiar to him."³⁰ Hence man can be defined as "the violent one," i.e., as the one who "surpasses" the limits of the familiar, and "indeed precisely in the direction of the uncanny in the sense of the overpowering." In other words, the violence of the strangest of all is perpetrated against the strangeness of Being and, as a result, originates a polemos, a Kampf--a struggle: "We shall fully appreciate this phenomenon of strangeness only if we experience the power of appearance and the struggle with it as an essential part of Dasein."

Second, insofar as man is "the violent one," he perpetrates violence against the overpowering--i.e., against being or nothing--, he "gathers" it and "lets it into the open," into manifestness, into appearance. In other words, man is the being--indeed an extraordinary one--which lets being (nothing) be. Man is the being by which that which essentially withdraws and resists presentation is brought to the fore and presented. In and through man as Da-sein, Being is there.

Consequently, insofar as man is defined as the uncanny, insofar as the paths he opens up amid beings are

³⁰. Ibid., 116.

stamped by exile, are a-poria. it is not surprising that "the point at which all these paths meet," the "ground and place of man's Dasein"--in other words, what the Greeks called the polis and which tends to designate "the there, wherein and as which the Dasein is as historical"³¹--is itself defined as a-polis, i.e., as the place which would not provide man with the quietness or the way (poros) by which he would comfortably dwell in the midst of beings. The true polis is "the place of history, in which, out of which, and for which history happens [Geschichte geschieht]." ³² Now that which happens according to the truly historical destiny is Being. And to free a place for Being, to give Being its 'there' implies to let man essentially unfold as das Unheimlicheres.

What does this essential unfolding consist in? How does Being come to manifest itself in the uncanny? Such questions, i.e., such historical questions--and not historiographical, anthropological or ethnological questions--are answered in the chorus from Antigone. For in this tragedy it is a matter of "a poetic project of man's Being, drawn from its extreme possibilities and

³¹. Ibid., 117.

³². The question of the polis--and that is, of course, the question of the political--will become increasingly important in Heidegger's texts. Both in the Parmenides lecture course (WS 1942-43) and in the "der Ister" lecture course (SS 1942) Heidegger devotes extended analyses to the question. We shall return to this question further on.

limits."³³ And these are the possibilities and the limits evoked in the chorus, inasmuch as they constitute the world and the place of man as Dasein.

What are those possibilities and limits? There is the overpowering power of the sea, violent and wild, with which man collides. There is the earth in its undestroyable ruling, which man transforms and shapes, thereby revealing his own violence. There are the living creatures which live in the sea and on the earth and which suffer the overpowering power of nature, whereas man "casts his snares and nets," "snatches the living creatures out of their order, shuts them up in his pens and enclosures."³⁴

Hence the sea, the earth and the sky define the world within which man essentially unfolds as the deinotaton. Thus it is not a matter of describing "nature" as we usually understand it; nor is it a matter of tracing out the "evolution" of man in such nature. Rather, it is a matter of the world from which man essentially unfolds as what it is, viz. as Dasein.

Likewise, when the chorus comes to characterize man, it is not a matter of enumerating the qualities and the faculties of this being, but of grasping it in its most extreme possibilities. It is not by accident, then,

³³. EM 119.

³⁴. Ibid., 118.

that language, understanding, Stimmung, passion and building are mentioned as belonging essentially to man and as being inherently violent. All these characterizations are not "faculties" that man would possess and that he would use so as to break out into beings. Man does not possess such powers. Rather, such powers possess man: in and through them, man happens as who he is--as a historical being. Hence these powers belong essentially and in the strictest sense to man, and yet man is most remote from his essence when he believes he possesses or has invented these powers: "How could man ever have invented the power which pervades [durchwaltet] him, which alone enables him to be a man?"³⁵

In the Durchwältigung, then, man's being is at issue. Why? What characterizes this Durchwältigung? In what sense is it different than the Umwältigung proper to the overpowering power man suffers and with which he collides? Durch-walten literally means to rule through, to per-vade. In the Umwältigung, man is dominated in such a way that the overpowering power encircles man in an environing world, in an Umwelt, and so both "oppresses" [bedrängt] him and "inflames" [befeuert] him. The Durchwältigung, on the other hand, goes and runs through man, and so reveals him as who he is. Indeed, man comes to be who he is in the Durchwältigung, i.e., in the

³⁵. Ibid., 120..

violence of language and of poetic saying, in the violence of thought and in the violence of the building or founding of the polis. In other words, man finds himself only in the violence of this Durchwältigung, which is itself essentially an opening up by which beings are uncovered as such. In the Durchwältigung, then, the manifestness of beings in the open and of the place proper to the Being of man is at issue. Only in the ruling which pervades man and carries him in this very pervading can man--or Dasein--find the 'there' of his Being. This 'there' is defined as an essential belonging together of poetic saying--the primal form of poiesis--of thinking and of the founding of polis. The three dimensions are rooted in the Durchwältigung.

In comparison with the Rectoral Address, there is a certain displacement of the field proper to the political. This displacement is itself a political move--a move away from the 1933 engagement. Indeed, the discourse about the political--about what Heidegger calls the polis--is now completely void of both the Nietzschean vocabulary ("will," "power," "decision," etc.) and the Jüngerian vocabulary (particularly the thematic of the worker), both of which were very much at play in the Address. The forces of "knowing" are no longer mentioned alongside the "working" and the "military" forces. The political is now totally and exclusively ordered to

knowing, to technè. At this point, technè--and that is Dasein's Being-in-the-world--is defined in terms of three essential elements: poetry, thought, polis. The three seem to be co-originary. Unlike what has been suggested earlier, the possibility of the polis does not seem to be grounded primarily and essentially in poetry. Poetry is mentioned alongside thinking and the polis, and even if the three are essentially thought together, poetry is not explicitly said to be the essence of the polis. Yet the polis is revealed in its essence through a poetic saying which is said to be a "thinking poetry." Hence poetry, thinking and the political seem to be inextricably bound together. Yet so far nothing has been said about the nature of the bond.

It is at this point in the analysis of Sophocles' poetic saying, i.e., in the last stanza which, according to Heidegger, "brings everything that has been said so far in its inner unity," that Heidegger's analysis of technè as Wissen is completed. Thus everything happens as if the whole of the poetic saying would converge on this "machination," this machanoen which Heidegger interprets as technè. If the passage did not focus on the question of art, it would merely repeat what was said in "The Rectoral Address":

Knowledge is the ability to put into work [das Ins-Werk-setzen-können] the Being of any particular being. The Greeks called art in the true sense and the work

of art technè, because art is what most immediately brings being (i.e. the being that stands there in itself) to stand, stabilizes it in something present (the work). The work of art is a work not primarily because it is wrought [gewirkt], made, but because it brings about [er-wirkt] Being in a being. Here, to bring about means to bring into the work; and in the work, the emerging power, physis, comes to shine. It is through the work of art as being Being [das seiende-Sein] that everything else that appears and is to be found is first confirmed and made accessible, explicable, and understandable as being or not being.

Because art in a pre-eminent sense brings Being to stand and to shine in the work as a being, it may be regarded as the pure and simple ability to put to work [Ins-Werken-setzen-können], as technè. The putting-into-work is an opening that brings Being about in the being. This superior, actualizing opening [erwirkende Eröffnen] and keeping open is knowledge. The passion of knowledge is questioning. Art is knowledge and therefore technè.³⁶

As Lacoue-Labarthe brilliantly points out,³⁷ the decisive (i.e. the politically decisive) shift from the Rectoral Address to the Introduction--and that is the shift to the question of art--is accomplished in the tenuous and yet crucial move from the problematic of the "Being at work" [am Werk sein] to the problematic of the "putting into work." It is in this slight and yet decisive shift that the question of art first appears. Lacoue-Labarthe writes:

If, as certain texts of 1933 might suggest,-- particularly "The Call to the Service of Work" (or any particular passage of the Address)--Heidegger's

³⁶. Ibid., 122.

³⁷. Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, L'imitation des Modernes (Paris: Galilée, 1986), p. 191.

"political" discourse was ever supported by an ontology of work and of the Worker, such ontology has now disappeared without a trace.³⁸

The move to the question of art would then primarily be a political move, i.e., a move away from a "politicized" discourse into a problematic through which the question of the political would be engaged anew.

What is crucial in the passage quoted from Heidegger is that everything comes to focus on the question of the "work," specifically of the "putting [or bringing] (in)to (the) work." The passage anticipates in a very condensed way what will be unfolded in "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935/36). There, the question of art takes another decisive turn--a turn which will eventually bring Heidegger to his very political reading of Hölderlin.

(C)

Once again, the question is a question of essence. Of another essence. Also of another circle. A circle rendered even more complex by the fact that "The Origin" is itself presented as a circle, more specifically as a circling within the circle.

The analyses to follow will henceforth be engaged in tracing out as economically as possible the main lines

³⁸. Ibid.

of "The Origin." The hinge on which the whole of "The Origin" turns is the essential connection between art and truth. The fundamental and decisive conclusion of the text is that art is das Sich-ins-Werk-Setzen der Wahrheit, i.e., truth's putting itself to work, into the work-- truth's putting itself to work in putting itself into the work of art.

But how? How does truth happen in art? How is art a happening of truth? Heidegger takes the "example" (but is it really an example?) of a pair of peasant shoes, specifically of the shoes as depicted in Van Gogh's paintings. The paintings depict a piece of equipment, viz. a pair of shoes. How does the piece of equipment manifest its equipmental character? How does it stand in its use? Heidegger insists that the shoes are peasant shoes. What the paintings would reveal, then, would be a piece of equipment in a very specific use, in a very precise environment. Indeed, the shoes as depicted by Van Gogh point to the "earth" on which they tread daily. They also disclose the "world" of the peasant woman, viz. the world of labour, of the walks across the fields, but also of impending birth, of the necessity to withstand want, of threatening death. As Heidegger puts it:

This equipment belongs to the earth and is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its

resting-within-itself [Insichruhen].³⁹

In other words, the shoes do not simply "belong" to world and earth in the artwork, like any other thing would. Rather, the shoes allow world and earth to be there for the peasant woman.

Heidegger now reflects on what has happened in the course of the description of the pair of shoes. In describing the shoes, one did not go to the shoes but one brought the shoes toward oneself by means of a painting. In so doing, one revealed the truth of the pair of shoes. The artwork is that which enabled us to know what shoes are "in truth." But in this process, it is not only the essence of equipment that has come to light. The essence of art itself is also manifested. Art revealed itself in its disclosive power. Art itself is a happening of truth. Specifically, art is truth's putting itself (in)to (the) work.

But what is truth? Truth in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is rethought as aletheia, as the happening of clearing and concealing which first makes it possible for beings to come to presence. "The Origin" is thus to be thought in the wake of the rigorous determinations of truth developed in "On the Essence of Truth." Art is not

³⁹. "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes" in Holzwege (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950), p. 23. Henceforth HW.

truth itself but a happening of truth. It is only one of the ways in which truth--as the strife or the polemos of clearing and unconcealing--happens. But how does it happen? How does truth's putting itself into the work happen?

In art truth happens as the strife (Streit) between world and earth. In other words, in art the (essential) strife between clearing and concealing happens as the strife between world and earth. It is important to note at this point that the strife that is essential to truth is different from the strife proper to art. The strife between clearing and concealing happens in art only insofar as the work of art brings the strife between world and earth into play. How does the strife in art occur?

In order for the work to show itself as it is in itself--i.e. in its "pure self-subsistence" [reines Insichstehen]--and not in relation to something else (as in the case of a piece of equipment), the work has to open up a world:

Where does a work belong? The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work is present in, and only in, such opening up.⁴⁰

The world is that which first lets beings be, lets them come to presence: "By the opening up of a world, all

⁴⁰. HW 30.

things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits."⁴¹ In the opening up of a world, men themselves find their place and can stand in the midst of beings as an historical Dasein. The world opened up by the work of art is a happening that never ceases to happen, an Ereignis--i.e. the very possibility of a history and a destiny: the possibility of the political as such. This is perhaps most clear in the description Heidegger gives of the Greek temple, in which the world continues to "world":

It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. The all-governing expanse of this open relational context is the world of this historical people. Only from and in this expanse does the people first return to itself for the fulfillment of its vocation.⁴²

The description of the temple continues, yet in a new paragraph:

Standing there, the building rests on the rocky ground....Standing there, the building holds its ground against the storm raging above it...

After the description of the world, Heidegger moves to the earth. As though, in the movement of his description,

⁴¹. Ibid.

⁴². Ibid., 31.

Heidegger wanted to show that world and earth belong together, that they cannot be mentioned separately, that they call and respond to each other, that they are both equally rooted in the work, in the temple.

The earth the Greeks called physis, which Heidegger translates as Aufgehen, emergence. Earth is "that to which, in the course of emergence [i.e. in the process of physis] everything emergent is as such brought back and sheltered."⁴³ The earth is that which shelters or harbours [birgt] things in such a way as to secure and conceal them at the same time. As such, earth resists disclosedness, it withdraws from openness or unconcealment.

How is the work of art related to world and earth? In each case, the relation is reciprocal. As regards world, the artwork stands within the world, and yet the world is opened up by the artwork. Heidegger expresses this connection in terms of an Aufstellung, of a setting-up: the artwork is set up within the world, and yet the artwork itself sets up a world by a gathering (Versammlung) of different relations (Bezüge) in which man gets the shape (Gestalt) of his destiny. Likewise, as regards earth, the artwork is set forth (hergestellt), produced from earth by virtue of its being made out of some earthly material. But in being set forth from earth,

⁴³. Ibid.

the work of art is being set back into earth in such a way as to set forth earth.

Hence the setting up of world and the setting forth of earth belong together in the work of art. Their unity constitutes the Insichstehen of the work of art. But what kind of unity is this? How do world and earth belong together? They belong together in opposition or essential strife, i.e., in polemos:

...the relation between world and earth does not wither away into the empty unity of opposites unconcerned with one another. The world, in resting upon the earth, strives to surmount it. As self-opening, it cannot endure anything closed. The earth, however, as sheltering and concealing, tends always to draw the world into itself and keep it there. The opposition of world and earth is a strife.⁴⁴

Insofar as world is that which is opened up, that within which beings can come to presence, it is striving with the sheltering and the withdrawal proper to earth. Likewise, earth, as Zurückbergen, strives to shelter and withhold world within itself. Neither world nor earth can give the other up without giving itself up. Strife strives for strife, and it is only in strife that world and earth are revealed as such.

Truth, then, happens in the work of art as the strife of world and earth. The work of art is a being that is brought forth or produced so as to establish

⁴⁴. HW 37.

truth as the strife of world and earth. But the work of art is not first brought forth so as to then establish or set truth. Rather, in being brought forth, the work of art becomes the setting for truth and is itself set into truth. Hence the bringing-forth [Hervorbringen] of the work and the setting [Stellen] of truth are actually the same. To name this sameness--which is nothing other than the very essence of art--and the complex of determinations attached to it, Heidegger uses the word Gestalt, which anticipates the word Heidegger will later use to define the essence of art and technology, viz. Gestell. The Gestalt--the meaning of which is lost if translated without reserve as shape or figure--gathers all the determinations of "The Origin." In such a word one has to hear the result of the setting [Stellen] of truth in the work--a setting which includes the play of Aufstellen (setting up a world/being set up in a world) and Herstellen (setting forth earth/being set forth out of earth). The Stellen or the reciprocal play of the Aufstellen and the Herstellen in the work of art is said to be a Feststellen, a setting firm.

Now in the Addendum to "The Origin of the Work of Art" the Stellen is interpreted as thesis--as Hervorbringen--, which is itself a mode of poiesis.⁴⁵ So

⁴⁵. "We must think of 'to set' [stellen] in the sense of thesis...The Greek 'putting' [Setzen] means placing, as for instance, letting a statue be set up. It means

that, in the end, the bringing-forth of the work or the setting of truth as strife in the Gestalt is poiesis in the originary sense. That poiesis that is equated with the thesis or the Stellen Heidegger calls Dichtung--poetry (in an originary sense). Technè, then, or what Heidegger calls Wissen, is essentially poiesis, Dichtung, poetry--i.e. a setting of truth into a bringing-forth:

The word technè denotes a mode of knowing. To know means to have seen, in the widest sense of seeing, which means to apprehend what is present, as such. For Greek thought the nature of knowing consists in aletheia, that is, in the uncovering of beings. It supports and guides all comportment towards beings. Technè, as knowledge experienced in the Greek manner, is a bringing forth of beings in that it brings forth present beings as such beings out of concealedness and specifically into the unconcealedness of their appearance.⁴⁶

The shift toward an "artistic" understanding of technè is now confirmed, for technè is now essentially defined as Hervorbringen, and that is as poiesis, as poetry in the originary sense--as a happening of truth. Truth happens in art as poetry: "All art, as letting the advent of the truth of beings happen, is as such essentially poetry [Dichtung]" (HW 59). The political too, then, insofar as it is essentially submitted to knowledge, would primarily

laying, laying down an oblation. Placing and laying have the sense of bringing here into the unconcealed, bringing forth into what is present, that is, letting or causing to lie forth."

⁴⁶. HW 47-48.

be a matter of poetry.

But what about this Dichtung? To what extent is it a question of poetry in such poiesis? To say that all art is essentially Dichtung is not tantamount to attributing "poetry" (Poesie) as an artform a privilege that would result from an "artistic" axiology in which poetry would hold the highest position. Rather, it means that art, insofar as it is considered in its essence, and that is insofar as it essentially unfolds as art, is poetry in the originary sense. All art, whether pictorial, sculptural, architectural, etc., is poetry, poiesis, a bringing-forth of the work of truth.

Yet Heidegger insists that the linguistic form of Dichtung, viz. Poesie, has a certain privilege among the arts. But again, this privilege has nothing to do with artistic "taste"; it is not an aesthetic judgment. The privilege is a privilege of essence. For language as such is essentially and originarily poetic: language is what first opens up the clearing, so that "where there is no language, as in the being of stone, plant and animals, there is also no openness of what is."⁴⁷ Where there is no language, where there is not the gift (the es gibt) of language, there is also no openness for beings, no world: no happening of being, no Ereignis. Being 'gives' itself as the gift of language, as and in the being (but is it a

⁴⁷. HW 60.

being?) by which the whole of beings is opened up. All arts, and that is technè as a whole, are ordered to the primary and originary emerging of language as Dichtung. All arts take place, are brought forth in the space opened up by language.

It is in that sense that one has to understand Heidegger when he writes in the "Letter on Humanism" that "language is the house of Being," or when he takes up the line by Hölderlin which reads "poetically man dwells." Man dwells poetically insofar as he finds the Da- of his historical Da-sein in Dichtung. It is of the utmost importance to emphasize the fact that the whole discussion of "The Origin of the Work of Art" culminates in an analysis of art in its essence--i.e. poetry--in connection with the possibility of history and destiny. The ultimate stake of "The Origin" is identical with the stake of the analysis of the chorus from Antigone in Introduction to Metaphysics and with the stake of the Rectoral Address: in each case, it is a matter of defining the essence of techne as knowing, and that is as the way in which beings as a whole are disclosed to a historical Dasein.

But the essence of knowing has now taken a new turn. Everything that was credited to the sole knowing and to its "will" and "power" in the "political" discourse of 1933 is now, in 1935, attributed to poetry and art, to art as poetry. But the project remains quite the same.

It is still a matter of giving a people the possibility of setting up a world and of initiating a history from the opening up of beings as a whole in language:

Whenever art happens--that is, whenever there is a beginning--a thrust enters history, history either begins or starts over again...History is the transporting of a people into its appointed task as entrance into that people's endowment (HW 64).

Art, poetry, is now what Heidegger used to call in 1933 the spiritual-historical existence of a people. Art is historicity or historicality itself, and that is the very possibility of the political, if the polis is indeed "the historical place, the there in which, out of which, and for which history happens"⁴⁸: "Art is history in the essential sense that it grounds history" (HW 64).

But where does this grounding power come from?

Where does the political power of poetry come from?

Insofar as language-- and that is the saying (das Sagen) in its poetic project, i.e., in its capacity to say world and earth in their strife--is what first opens up a world and a destiny for a historical Dasein, the possibility of that people's essence and acting is grounded in language. In other words, poetry can be said to be supremely and essentially historical or political in that in the space it opens up language speaks itself originarily. Art, Being and History (the political)

⁴⁸. EM 117.

belong together. The history of art is also the history of Being, that is the history of thought--whether metaphysical or pre-metaphysical. Hence Heidegger can write:

Always when beings as a whole demand, as beings themselves, a grounding in openness, art attains to its historical essence as foundation. This foundation happened in the West for the first time in Greece. What was in the future to be called Being was set into work, setting the standard. Beings as a whole thus opened up were then transformed into beings in the sense of God's creation. This happened in the Middle Ages. This kind of being was again transformed at the beginning and in the course of the modern age. Beings became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation. At each time a new and essential world arose. At each time the openness of beings had to be established in beings themselves, by the setting-firm [Fest-stellen] of truth in figure [Gestalt]. At each time there happened unconcealedness of what is. Unconcealedness sets itself into work, a setting which is accomplished by art (HW 62-63).

It is perhaps in this passage that the necessary link between art, truth as aletheia and history is most explicitly inscribed. History--and by history one has to understand the emergence of a relation to beings as a whole such that the entire domain of man's dwelling on earth, viz. his Gods, his thinkers, his rulers, his science, in short his polis, is determined by such a relation--emerges when art happens, when truth puts itself (in)to (the) work.

In 1933 Heidegger dreamt of such a new beginning. But this world lacked the only thing that could provide it

with such a beginning (such an Anfang) and constitute it as a true world, viz. an art, a Dichtung, a Sprache. Not that such an art did not exist. But the poet whose saying continues to stand as the future of the Germans was never quite recognized. It was never actually considered as Germany's truly historical and political power.

Hölderlin--and these are the last words of "The Origin of the Work of Art," words that indeed concentrate the whole of Heidegger's political ambition for Germany--is the poet "whose work still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood." These closing words open up the necessity of a reading of Hölderlin in which Heidegger will be engaged for some twenty years. This reading will confirm the movement sketched out so far, viz. a withdrawal from the political--that is from the political life--into the essence of the political, specifically into the poetic saying of Hölderlin as the poet of the Germans.

(D)

But before engaging oneself in the reading of the pieces on Hölderlin, it is necessary to consider the texts in which the political is most explicitly related to its essence, viz. to truth and art. In Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger only devoted a page to the question

of the polis, without relating it explicitly to the essence of technè and truth. We recall that in the 1935 text we were only able to point to what seemed to be an inextricable bond between the polis and technè as the happening of truth in poetry. But the nature of the link remained unclarified, because the essence of technè was itself being clarified. And through the reading of "The Origin of the Work of Art," the essence of knowing or technè was revealed as poetry, as Dichtung. How, then, do technè, truth and the polis belong together?

In at least two different texts of the same period, one of which constitutes a re-reading of the chorus from Antigone in connection with Hölderlin (which in itself says very much about the political discourse Heidegger is trying to articulate), Heidegger devotes analyses to the question of the polis, and that is to the question of the essence of the political. These texts are the lecture courses gathered under the title Hölderlin's Hymne "der Ister" (SS 1942) and Parmenides (WS 1942/43).

The polis too is a happening of truth, essentially. But technè and the polis belong together as happenings of truth. The polis is not a happening of truth alongside other unconnected modes of happening of truth. Technè and polis are grounded in truth as aletheia. Or, to put it in German terms--but this translation is a translation back into the Greek world,

back into the essence of what is meant by polis, technè, aletheia--, Wissen and polis (and much would need to be said about the untranslatability of this word) are grounded in truth as Unverbogenheit. The translation of the Greek into German is the very problem of the political. For "the political" is itself a translation--indeed an historical translation--of its essence, viz. the polis. In the move from the Greek polis to the City or the modern State, and hence to the discourse about "the political," what gets lost and forgotten is the polis itself. What is lost or forgotten, in other words, is the fundamental experience through which the polis appeared as what it is--as a happening of truth as aletheia.

The political today would still be grounded in truth; it would still be a happening of truth. But truth itself is no longer experienced as unconcealment. Rather, it is experienced as technology, as a mode of technè (of knowing) that has no longer anything to do with the essence of technè, viz. poetry. To name the essence of technology as well as the essence of technè, Heidegger will use the word Ge-stell, a word that points both to the essence and to that which remains most remote from the essence.

How, then, does truth happen in the Greek polis?
And how does truth happen in the modern State?

In the 1942/43 lecture course on Hölderlin,

Heidegger writes:

The polis does not let itself be "politically" determined. Hence the polis...is not a "political" concept.⁴⁹

The polis, and that is the essence of the political, is itself nothing "political." But what is it, then? It primarily refers to an activity, to a verb, specifically to the verb pelein, which Heidegger translates as regen, to arise, to emerge.⁵⁰

The word pelein is old and means: to arise, to come forth, to find and observe one's place and one's abode. Pelein is, in Homer and Hesiod, the current word for einai, which we translate by "being" [...] Pelein: to spring up and come forth [auf- und hervorkommen] out of oneself, and thus to become present [anwesen] (GA 53, 88-89).

Hence pelein means to come to presence, to come forth into the open of the clearing and there to find one's place in the midst of beings. The polis, then, becomes the place or the there--the Da---of historical Da-sein. But man can have a polis--can become historical--only to the extent that he can experience the pelein of beings, i.e., only insofar as he can relate himself to the truth of beings.

⁴⁹. Martin Heidegger, Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister," Gesamtausgabe 53 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1984), p. 99. Henceforth GA 53.

⁵⁰. Heidegger's translation of the first two lines of the chorus from Antigone reads:
Vielfältig das Unheimliche, nichts doch
über den Menschen hinaus Unheimlicheres ragend sich regt.

Man is said to have the polis as the place of his historical essence only insofar as he is the only being the mode of Being of which lies in its relation to beings as beings, and that is to the truth of Being:

Man is put in the place of his historical abode, in the polis, because he and he alone can relate himself to beings as beings, to beings in their unconcealment and concealment... (GA 53, 108)

The polis is now explicitly defined as the pivot or the whirl around which everything revolves. It is defined as the place within which the unconcealment of beings can take place. In other words, it is defined as the place of the happening of the truth of beings. And hence also as the place of technè. Technè as knowing, and that is Dasein's mode of Being in the midst of beings, always occurs from within the polis. So the polis and technè or philosophy belong together. The polis is always grounded on the relation of a people to the truth of beings. The polis is essentially "technical," and that is essentially poetic: the essence of the political is nothing political. The polis is the place in which technè can unfold in its essence and a people be gathered in this essence and hence become historical.

In §6 of the Parmenides,⁵¹ which, to a certain

⁵¹. Martin Heidegger, Parmenides, Gesamtausgabe 54 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982). Henceforth GA 54.

extent, constitutes a reading of Plato's Republic. Heidegger tries to show how intertwined the notions of polis, mythos (and that is Dichtung or Sage) and aletheia are. Heidegger's "political" discourse has now come to focus on Plato, specifically on the necessary connection between the Republic as a discourse about the polis and the mythoi that are told at the beginning of book VII--often considered as the most important book of the whole dialogue--and at the very end of the dialogue itself. With respect to the very strategic occurrences of these 'myths,' the question is: How is it that, in its most decisive moments, a discourse about the polis must turn to myths? What about the mythic in the political? Everything happens as though the very essence of the polis could unfold only in and through mythoi, in and through poetic sayings.

Before he even considers the essential belonging together of aletheia, mythos and polis, Heidegger sets out to sketch the privileged link between aletheia as Unverborgenheit and the mythos as Sagen. Mythos alone--and that is precisely not logos in the sense of "discourse"--can say the "origin," viz. truth as aletheia. Why? Because the mythos is the original or originary saying, the saying of the beginning (anfänglicher Sagen) that corresponds to the origin (Ursprung). The logos proper to philosophy, on the other hand, insofar as it is

metaphysical, would already be somewhat remote from the origin. For metaphysics and its history are precisely the move by which truth as aletheia is progressively "translated" as "correctness," and that is as that which is opposed to "falsehood" (das Falsche). Philosophical discourse is precisely the mark of "the transformation of the essence of truth" (der Wesenswandel der Wahrheit), and that is the shift from truth understood as aletheia, as a complex play of concealment and unconcealment, to truth understood as the rectitude of the gaze. The difference between thought and poetry (Denken und Dichten) on the one hand, and metaphysics on the other hand lies in this shift.

Such a shift is most clearly enacted in Plato. Thus, if there is to be a resurgence of the origin in what constitutes the initial gesture of metaphysics, and that is in the determination of truth as that which is most unconcealed, as that which can shine forth in the midst of beings--in other words as idea or eidos, as the 'looks' (Aussehen) of a being: as absolute presence--, then such resurgence will not occur through the rigour of philosophical discourse but rather through the thinking substance of the mythos.

One now understands how mythos and aletheia, Sagen and Unverbogenheit essentially belong together. One might also understand why, at the very end of metaphysics, in a

time of distress, nothing can be expected from "philosophy" and why Dichtung alone--specifically Hölderlin's Dichtung--can show us the way to the origin. But if the belonging together of mythos and aletheia now seems established, the connection with the polis remains unclarified. What, then, about the connection between aletheia, mythos and polis?

First, there is in Plato's text a connection that could be considered as external. As we suggested earlier, the mythos from which Heidegger retrieves Plato's doctrine of truth is to be found in one of the central books of the Politeia, specifically at the very beginning of book VII. Now the dialogue as a whole is oriented towards a discussion of the polis. Why, then a mythos about aletheia in book VII and a muthos partly about lethe in book X? How are we to articulate the connection between the Politeia as a whole and the myths about aletheia and lethe?

Second, if there is to be an essential connection between aletheia, mythos and polis in the Greek world, one might presume that the notions of polis and mythos will undergo the same radical re-determining the notion of aletheia undergoes in the Heideggerian text. Hence the essential connection would not be thought in terms of what we understand today by truth (i.e. correctness), myth (i.e. a mere tale, a fictitious story) and the political

(i.e. that which is related to the modern state). The modern conception of the state is as remote from the Greek polis as the modern conception of truth is remote from the Greek aletheia:

The difference between the modern state, the Roman res publica and the Greek polis is, with respect to its essence, the same as the difference between the modern essence of truth, the Roman rectitudo and the Greek aletheia (GA 54, 132).

The two points we have sketched out are closely intertwined in Heidegger's analysis of the polis in Plato's Politeia. Although Heidegger's reading bears primarily on Plato, he extends his conclusions about the polis to the whole of the Greek experience of the political. And such extension, as will later be shown, raises serious questions.⁵²

The connection Heidegger draws between the polis and aletheia seems to be a mere assertion, a thesis that he would need not bother arguing. Heidegger writes:

...the essence of the Greek polis is grounded in the essence of aletheia. This connection between aletheia and polis must also be presumed, and not necessarily grasped, on the basis of a simple consideration. For if truth as unconcealment determines all beings in their presencing [Anwesenheit] (and for the Greeks this means in their Being), then the polis too, and it above all, must stand through aletheia in the sphere of this determination... (GA 54, 132)

⁵². See chapter 3.

So far, the connection between aletheia and the polis is merely posited: the connection must be presumed, the polis too must stand, etc. But it remains unclear why the connection must be presumed. Now Heidegger provides a short explanation at the very end of the sentence quoted above, but this explanation will get unfolded in the following paragraph. The understanding of the connection is primarily based on the understanding of the polis:

...if however the polis means this: that in which the humanity of the Greeks has the center [die Mittel] of its Being.

Hence the essential belonging together of the polis and aletheia depends on the understanding one has of what the Greek experience of the polis was. It is here defined in terms of spatiality, in terms of whereness and not of whatness. There is at play a certain displacement of the way in which to conceive the polis. For the polis no longer answers the question "what is man?" Man is no longer "a political animal." Rather, the polis answers the question that bears on the whereness of man. Where is man? Where is man's Being? In the polis. The polis is the Da- of Dasein. Man stands in the polis as in the center of his Being.

The polis becomes the place within which which man is related to beings in their unconcealment, the place within which he dwells as a historical being. The polis

appears in its essential connection with the truth of

Being:

What is the polis? When we bring an essential insight into the Greek experience of the essence of Being and truth--an essential insight that illuminates everything--then the word itself gives us the right indication. Polis is the polos, the pivot, the place around which, in a peculiar way, revolves everything which appeared to the Greeks in beings. The pivot is the place towards which every being turned so that it shows in the region of this place what application and involvement it has with Being.

As this place, the pivot lets the being in its Being appear accordingly in the whole of its involvement. The pivot neither makes nor creates the being in its Being, but as the pivot it is the site of the unconcealedness of beings in the whole. The polis is the essence of the place, so we speak of the regional place of the historical dwelling of Greek humanity. Because the polis always lets the whole of beings come forward in the unconcealedness of its involvement in some way or another, the polis is essentially related to the Being of beings. Between polis and Being an original relation rules (GA 54, 132-33).

From the outset, it is crucial to note that the polis is defined in terms of its "original relation" to Being, and not in terms of the web of interconnections and interactions between the members of the polis. Such interactions would be primarily guided by a founding relation of the community to Being. In that regard, there is a continuity between the 1942/43 lecture course and the Rectoral address: the authentic leader of the community is the one who is himself led by the guidance of an essential and original relation to Being. It is only insofar as beings as a whole are governed by the same relation to

Being that a polis can exist as a relational and praxical totality. Without an original and founding relation to Being, there can be no political or praxical life. Hence the polis is not primarily the result of a communitarian gathering, of a social contract or a revolution. Rather, the polis is primarily the space within which the truth of beings can occur.⁵³

In the paragraph that immediately follows, Heidegger proceeds to bind together even more decisively the polis and Being. Just as the opposite or counter-essence (Gegenwesen) of truth, i.e. lethè, belongs essentially to truth as aletheia, so the polis unfolds as its counter-essence and non-essence (Un-wesen), viz. as a-polis and hypsipolis. In binding the polis with aletheia in such a way, Heidegger introduces--or rather reintroduces--the major determinations of the polis thematized in section IV of Introduction to Metaphysics along with the determinations of truth thematized in "On

⁵³. To admit an essential and original relation between the polis and Being is already to admit that what was once posited as the privileged relation of Being to time is now, to say the least, put into question, if not radically disrupted. For if the polis, as "the essence of the place," is indeed the horizon within which truth as unconcealment occurs originally, then the question of time appears as merely derivative. In the last chapter, we shall attempt to show how the question of the political can also be considered, in more promising terms, from the project of fundamental ontology, specifically from the ecstatic structure of Dasein. In such an attempt, it will be a matter of putting the emphasis on the connection between time and community.

the Essence of Truth" and in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Heidegger writes:

Now if, as the word indicates, the strife essence belongs to aletheia, and if the strife [das Streithafte] appears also in the opposite of the Verstellen⁵⁴ and the forgetting [Vergessen], then all extreme counter-essence and hence all non-essence of the unconcealed and of beings, i.e., nonbeing [das Unseiende] in the manifoldness of its counter-essence, must rule in the polis as the place of the essence of man. Here, the original ground for each phenomenon, which Jacob Burckhardt first presented in the fullness of its scope and manifoldness, is concealed: it is the frightening, the horrible, the disastrous that belong to the Greek polis. This is the ascent and the fall of man in the historical place of his essence--hypsipolis, apolis--: by far exceeding the place, deprived of the place is how Sophocles (Antigone) names man. It is not a coincidence if this word defines man in the Greek tragedy. For the possibility and the necessity of the "tragedy" itself springs from the sole ground of the strife essence of aletheia (GA 54, 133-34).

Thus man is defined as apolis, as being without a place. Yet this apolis belongs together with the polis. The two belong together in their very opposition. The place of man cannot be thought separately from his being thrown out of the place into the monstrous, the unresting. This constant and necessary dis-placement, dis-locating, this thrownness into the unfamiliar is precisely the place of man. Thus we see how the major themes of "On the Essence of Truth" (truth as strife) and Introduction to

⁵⁴. Verstellen: "disarranging, putting one thing in the place of another, hence obstructing, disguising, counterfeiting" (John Sallis, Delimitations--Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics [Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986], p. 183.

Metaphysics (the Walten and the Überwältigung of the Unheimliche) are now intertwined in a political problematic. Indeed, just as the strife appears as the essential trait of truth in "On the Essence of Truth," so, here, the polis is its counter-essence and non-essence. The polis is itself the place of the ruling (Walten) of this extreme tension between essence and counter-essence, being and non-being, concealment and unconcealment. It is the place of the essential strife between the overpowering power of physis, which throws man out of a place, and the "technical" mode of Being of man, by which man finds a place in the midst of physis.

But what is perhaps most important and radically new in this passage is the essential connection that is explicitly drawn between Greek tragedy--and that is Greek poetry--, the polis and aletheia. What is at stake in what Heidegger says is the essential belonging together of truth, of language as poetry and of the political. This belonging together is rooted in a primal experience of truth. The experience of truth of an historical people commands both a specific relation to language and a specific relation to the polis. If the essence of truth is experienced as aletheia, then the relation to the political, and that is also to the discourse about the political, will be totally different from the essence of truth experienced as Ge-stell. Hence it is not a

coincidence, as Heidegger points out, if the essence of the political emerges in Ancient Greece through tragedy. There is a certain "necessity" attached to the very existence of tragedy in Ancient Greece: tragedy is the discourse, or rather the saying that is best able to recapture the ground from which the polis essentially unfolds, viz. aletheia. Like the polis understood as the essence of the place of man, and that is also as its counter-essence, tragedy itself "springs from the sole ground of the strifeless essence of aletheia." Philosophy, on the other hand, would be unable to say the essence of the political, for it is itself the result of the shift or the change--the Wandlung--of the essence of truth.

Heidegger does not say more about Greek tragedy in its connection with truth and the polis. Yet the indications he gives constitute a decisive continuation of the discussion of Introduction to Metaphysics, in the sense that they emphasize a connection that remained somewhat unclarified in 1935. Moreover, these indications also serve to prepare the way to Heidegger's reading or re-reading of Plato's Republic.

The Republic is often considered Plato's most important dialogue, the dialogue that would most reveal Plato's "philosophy." Plato also marks the beginning of philosophy, and that is, for Heidegger, the decisive transformation in the essence of truth. What, then, about

the rise of metaphysics in its relation to the political? How is it that philosophy emerges and becomes an explicit stake in a discourse about the polis? What needs to be thought of the co-emergence of the philosophical and the political?

The Republic could be said to be (still) "Greek" to the extent that it would be grounded in some way in that which defines the very essence of Greekhood, and that is the experience of truth as aletheia. And yet, if that text also marks the beginning of philosophy, it is also a decisive move away from such an experience. Hence the Republic would remain in a way undecided between philosophy and non-philosophy. In the very elaboration of the beginning of metaphysics, the trace of non-philosophy would be retained, in a most concealed way. Similarly, in what is presented as a "philosophical" discourse--as a logos--about the polis, the Greek experience of the polis would still be at play. The connection between aletheia and the polis would still be operative, not in the logos of the text but rather in the mythoi told at certain strategic moments of the dialogue. In the mythoi or the mythic the essence of truth and hence of the polis would be recaptured.

Such is the project in which Heidegger is engaged: to show how the mythic dimension in the Republic still retains the essential Greek experience of the polis.

Specifically. Heidegger is engaged in showing how a mythos in which the essence of truth as aletheia is virtually presupposed occupies the very center of the Politeia, thus governing the logic of the entire political discourse.

According to Heidegger, the "allegory" of the cave--the myth that is perhaps most referred to and most commented upon in philosophy--is itself to be related to the closing myth of the dialogue, viz. the myth of Er. The two myths belong together, for what is at stake in both of them is the essence of aletheia in its essential strife with its counter-essence. The dialogue as a whole would be contained in the space of the two reciprocally responding myths, so that the question of the political would itself be attached to the myths about aletheia and lethe. The discourse about the polis would unfold in the space delimited by the myths about truth.

The polis would unfold in the space broached by the strife between lethe and aletheia. The polis arises, man becomes historical when he comports himself to this extreme tension and takes it up in its very violence, actually conforming himself (sich fügend) to its order (Fug)⁵⁵. Such a free conformity, such a voluntary and

⁵⁵. 'Order' is only one possible translation of the German Fug which, as Manheim points out in a note of his translation of Introduction to Metaphysics, "does not occur in modern literary German" (p. 160). The meaning of the word in Heidegger's vocabulary is actually threefold: it is understood first as "joint and framework (Fuge und Gefüge); second as decree, dispensation, a directive that

active submission. Heidegger calls Fügsamkeit, which is the German for dikaioσύνη. This word, Heidegger says, means "the emergence (das Aufgehen) of the essence of man in the order and his standing within the order, dike" (137). Dike, which is usually translated as "justice," is indeed the explicit stake of the Politeia. From the very start, the opening discussion between Socrates and Cephalus bears upon "justice." But this word which, for us Romans and Christians, is a juridical and political notion, actually points, according to Heidegger, to that which constitutes the essence of the polis, viz. the strife joint between lethe and aletheia in which man is to dwell. Once again, Heidegger attempts to trace a notion that is constitutive of our juridical and political modernity back to its essential origin--an origin which is not itself political. Rather, it points to an experience of truth as aletheia that remains most remote from us:

To interpret dike out of modern justice and Roman iustitia is as impossible as to interpret the polis out of the Modern State or the Roman res publica. Dike as the order that orders man in the relations [Verhältnisse] of his comportment finds its essence out of its bearing [Bezug] to aletheia, but in no way is dike determined by and through its relation to the polis (142-43).

Rather, it is dike, and specifically dike in its

the overpowering imposes on its reign; finally, as the governing structure (das fügende Gefüge) which compels adaptation (Einfügung) and compliance (Sichfügen)" (Introduction to Metaphysics, 123).

relation to techne that determines the polis. Heidegger is more explicit about such a connection in his commentary on the chorus from Antigone in Introduction to Metaphysics. In this passage, dike is considered in its essential and originary relation to technè. The violence that man uses against the overpowering power of physis is techne. Man is the being with technè, i.e., the being which, by means of this essence, is the strangest and most violent among beings. But the violence proper to the overpowering power of physis or Being is called dikè. The two forms of deinon are in opposition or strife, and the polis is the place of such strife. The strife recalls the play of strifes described in "The Origin of the Work of Art." Like the work of art, the polis is a happening of truth. In the polis, man bursts forth against dikè through technè: man sets himself against physis, and in setting himself against it brings it forth, discloses it in a world, in his world: in the polis. In turn, physis as dikè is the overpowering that disposes (verfügt) of all technè. In spite of technè, man can never master physis, for physis is both the power that always exceeds the power of man, the power that unsettles man and throws him away from his place, and the power that is self-concealing and self-sheltering, the power that emerges only in withdrawing. But it is crucial to note that man as such happens in the strife between technè and dikè. In such

strife, man essentially happens as political. The political as such, and that is primarily the polis, emerges from out of the conflict between technè and dikè. The polis is the place in which and as which the strife between technè and dikè occurs.

Heidegger is now in a position to gather in a most condensed passage all the determinations related to the essence of the polis:

Because the polis is the where as which and in which the order (Fug) is unconcealed and concealed [sich entbirgt und verbirgt], because the polis is the way in which the unconcealing and concealing of the ordering takes place, so that in this taking place the historical man specifically comes to its essence and non-essence, such is the reason why we call the polis, in which the Being of man in its relation to beings as a whole is being gathered, the essence of the place of historical man (141-42).

The passage indicates the complex of determinations in which the polis is caught. Indeed the polis, in its whereness, is essentially related to the way in which dike occurs as a strife between concealment and unconcealment. Only in this strife can man come to his essence, which is to say, because of the very structure of the strife, to his non-essence. What is at stake in such a relation is precisely the possibility of historicity, the possibility of the political as such, if what is meant by polis is the place within which man can unfold according to his essence, and that is according to his essential relation to Being as aletheia. Because of the strifely character

of aletheia on which the polis is grounded, the polis reveals itself in its counter-essence, and that is essentially in its dis-placing and placelessness (hypsipolis, apolis): in his relation to beings as a whole, man finds his place in being thrown out of a place, in being without a place. The proper place of man is always his own negation or counter-essence. The essence of the place is a certain placelessness, a certain retreat from the place--a retreat that indeed constitutes the place from its very dis-placement. The essence of the polis is always concealed but also sheltered and secured in its non-essence. In the polis, man is essentially related to the truth of beings as aletheia. For the man of the Greek polis, the polis is nothing but the place within which the totality of beings can emerge according to their self-secluding and self-sheltering essence. The saying which fits such experience of the polis is the mythos--whether in the form of tragedy (Sophocles) or dialogue (Plato). With Plato, the Greek world comes to its completion: through a conception of truth as idea or eidos, the essence of truth is progressively preparing the way to truth as homoiosis. Simultaneously, the philosophical discourse is taking over the more concealed and veiling mode of saying--the mythos--which is more akin to the essence of truth. As a consequence of such transformation, the experience of the political becomes a

matter of "justice" and management of public affairs, and the discourse about the polis is no longer to be found in poetry as Dichtung but in a mode of discourse named "philosophy."

Here we are, then, back to our opening and guiding hypothesis: the essence of the political is its very retreat. For if the polis appears only in and as its counter-essence, if, in other words, the polis is always also a-polis, its presence being also its unavoidable absencing, then the political is always withdrawn, withheld, secured--essentially. To say that the essence of the political is essentially withdrawn is to say that the political as such is articulated as withdrawal. Hence the "essence" of the political is not something that would need to be recaptured or recovered in the depths of time lost: it is not something that once took place as a unique event and then faded away, disappeared into the depths of history. Rather, the essence of the political, as essence, never ceased to govern the political. The essence is a happening, an Ereignis that never ceases to happen, even today, perhaps most of all today. And we have to wonder whether the political would not resemble the words of language Heidegger speaks of in the Parmenides volume:

We ought not think that the words of language initially possess pure fundamental meanings, and that with the passage of time the latter get lost and

become deformed. The fundamental and root meaning remains quite concealed and appears only in what one calls the 'derivative' (31).

With respect to the political, the 'derivative' could be politics, even though the derivative has become the dominant and the all pervasive. But like the meaning of words, the political did not get effaced in the course of time, through use or misuse. Rather, the essence of the political would always already be effaced, concealed, apparent only in politics, only in what is grounded in the essence of truth as Ge-stell.

Because our time is most remote from the essence of truth as its counter-essence; because technology governs the way in which beings as a whole become manifest for us--and that is as beings merely present, merely ready-to-hand, and not as beings that come out of concealment--, the political too remains most remote from its essence, and that is from its counter-essence. And it is insofar as the political today is most remote from the polis that, just as Heidegger speaks of the "end" or the "closure" of metaphysics, so we can speak of the closure of the political. But to speak of the end or the closure of the political is not to acknowledge a terminal point (today? tomorrow? or was it yesterday?) at which the political would cease. Rather, it is a matter of acknowledging how, together with the philosophical, the political is now gathered in its most extreme

possibilities. It is a matter of acknowledging how the total and global presence of beings, and that is the negation of the essentially withdrawing and concealing dimension of Being is at the same time the very condition of possibility for the overwhelming and totalitarian presence of the political. The 'State,' according to Heidegger, is the ultimate, i.e., the completed form of the political. The state is the political form that fits the necessity for man to rule over beings as a whole. It is the form that corresponds to the epoch of technology. In the midst of beings, man is fully aware of himself and of his absolute and total ascendancy over beings. And the State is the place within which man can comport himself with beings and with men according to technology as a mode of truth. With technology, the political has become "unquestionable" (fraglose). To the unquestionableness of the political in its modern form Heidegger opposes the Fragwürdigkeit (that which is question worthy, that which is called into question), the fragility of the Greek polis. The political today belongs together with the totalitarian tendency of technology. As Heidegger puts it: "The unquestionableness of the 'political' and its totality belong together."⁵⁶ But this unquestionability or indisputability of the political whole, of the total politics and the political totality is not the result, as

⁵⁶. GA 53, 118.

"naive minds" (naive Gemüter) could figure, of the "fortuitous will of dictators."⁵⁷ Rather, it is the result of the history of the essence of truth. Hence the total penetration of the political--and that is its totalitarian presence--is not the deed of Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin. It is not a question of names and individuals. Rather, it is a question of destiny, of Geschick: the 'decision' (which is not a matter of free will) was made long ago; the fear and trembling which animated our Century could be heard long before the actual events. The events were long since destined, not as a fate or a fatality, but as a metaphysically extreme possibility. And the political today marks perhaps the most extreme possibility of metaphysics, the possibility in which and as which metaphysics exhausts itself. The political today will have perhaps marked an end with airs of funerary mask, of terror, of fire and ashes.

⁵⁷. Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

Hölderlin and the Future of Germany

Hölderlin, der Dichter,
dessen Werk zu bestehen den
Deutschen noch bevorsteht...
Martin Heidegger, Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes.

The previous chapter brings us to the question of poetry (Dichtung) as the central question of the political. Poetry is not the expression of the political, it is not the way in which the political expresses itself, reaches out of itself in words. Such would be the case if poetry were essentially concerned with "expressing" something--whether feelings, lived experiences or inner realities. Such would be the case, then, if the political were to exist first in itself and then in words. Rather, the political arises in and through language as poetry. The words of poetry are not that in which the political is translated, but that in which it emerges as such. To say that the political as such emerges in language (essentially determined as poetry) is to draw an essential and necessary connection between the two dimensions, the belonging together of which, as we have seen, lies in

truth as unconcealment.

(A)

But what is the essence of poetry, if poetry is such as to let the political emerge as such? To answer this question, it is necessary, according to Heidegger, to turn to the poet whose poetry poeticizes the essence of poetry. Such a poet is Hölderlin¹. To poeticize (dichten) is to show, to render something manifest in a specific saying. In that sense, poetry is most akin to the language of the Gods as Hölderlin understands it:

... und Winke sind
Von Alters her die Sprache der Götter²

Poetry is not the "expression" or the "translation" of the language of the Gods into "human" language. In poetry, it is not a matter of interpreting and of bringing into language an esoteric "message" of the Gods. Rather, it is a matter of "echoing" in the people the signs that come from the Gods.³ It is important to emphasize the fact

¹. Thus I shall henceforth be engaged in a close reading of Heidegger's pieces on Hölderlin, specifically of Hölderlin's Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein" (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), Gesamtausgabe 39. Henceforth GA 39.

². Friedrich Hölderlin, "Rousseau," lines 39-40.

³. See Martin Heidegger, Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "der Rhein" (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), 32: "Poetry is the echoing of those

that Heidegger uses the word "echo" to point to the specific activity of the poet, for if the word "echo" indeed carries a sense of derivation or secondarity in comparison to the more originary and primary sense of the showing of the Gods, it nonetheless escapes the merely mimetic dimension that would be present in words such as "copy", "image", "expression", "translation", etc. The showing of the poet is such as to let the Dasein of a people be in the dimension of the signs of the Gods. It is a showing by which the Gods become manifest in their showing dimension. In the showing of the poet, what is brought about is the very showing of the Gods as showing. But such Winken is essentially different from a mere Zeichen, a mere showing that would consist in pointing to something or bringing someone's attention to something. Such Winken is not obvious. The words in poetry are not "signs" or signifiers that refer to a signified that would itself lie somewhere, secured and self-sufficient. Words are rather essentially active and productive, poietic: in the movement of their Winken something becomes manifest. More: Something is actually instituted.

But what is instituted? The answer is: Being. Or rather: Being in the historical existence of a people. Since Being is that which always already is, that which

signs in the people (das Weiterwinken dieser Winke in das Volk)."

remains, the saying of the poet can only institute Being in a specific language, can put it to work in language, in such a way as to institute it in the historical existence of a people. The existence of a people is actually instituted in and through language, in and through the poetic activity of the poet. Hence poetry is the "originary language of a people" [Ursprache eines Volkes].

But why poetry? Why poetry more than philosophy, for example? How is it that language, and more specifically poetry, is essentially related to man's historical and political Dasein? And if the essence of poetry indeed lies, as Heidegger suggests, in the fact that it exposes the Dasein of man to the whole of beings, the question remains to know how a "construction of language"⁴--what Hölderlin calls a "dialogue" (Gespräch)⁵--can actually take up such an original task. How can language in the form of poetry, and that is in the form of what is traditionally considered as a mode of pure discourse, actually institute Being, in such a way that the Dasein of a people would essentially be related to Being in this very institution?

Why, then, is the poetic privileged over any other

⁴. Martin Heidegger, GA 39, 59.

⁵. Viel hat erfahren der Mensch.
Der Himmlischen viele genannt,
Seit ein Gespräch wir sind
Und hören können voneinander.
Hölderlin--IV, 343.

kind of language? Because it is not a form of expression of language among other forms of language, but rather the very essence of language, and that is the very way in which language essentially unfolds as language. Poetry is the primary, originary mode of language. Language as we conceive of it in our average, ordinary understanding is nothing but a derivative mode of this primordial and more essential mode. Language as a mode of expression--whether in its ordinary and most common form, viz. in "idle talk", or in its more unusual and sophisticated form, viz. in philosophical discourse--is already a "fallen" mode of language, i.e., a mode that is already situated at a certain distance from the essence of language. Language in its essence is not expression. For to express something through words, it would first be necessary for man to possess language as something ready-to-hand. Now language in its essence is not something that can be possessed, and hence used or even manipulated. Such uselessness, or rather the impossibility of putting language to work in such a way that it would manifest the inner life of a subject is what is revealed in poetry as Dichtung. Poetry alone, as Heidegger puts it, accounts for the fact that "we do not possess language, but language possesses us, for better or for worse."⁶

But to say that language possesses us is

⁶. GA 39, 23.

tantamount to saying that we are always already caught up in language, thrown into language, in such a way that our essential relation to beings, and to the Being of beings, is always, from the very outset, a relation of language. Thus to think language in its essence is to think it in its necessary and primary relation to Being. In the act of poeticizing the poet takes up this essential relation to Being, brings it to language, to a specific language in which Being as such is instituted. In the poetizing act of the poet there is a specific instituting, a specific initiating of Being, and not only an "expression" of Being.

In a way, poetry says nothing but the fact that man is in language. In other words, the Being of man, the Sein of Dasein is held by language. Insofar as man is held by language, he is the there of Being. Language is the disclosedness of Being: in language the unconcealment of beings--i.e., the originary unconcealment along with its immediate and simultaneous covering-up--is completed. There is a world, i.e., there is manifestation or coming into being--in other words, there is Being--only insofar as there is language. The world can "world" for man only insofar as man dwells within language. Without language, man would be like an animal, "poor in world" (weltarm), or

like a plant, "without a world" (weltlos)⁷: His relation to the world would no longer be a relation to Being in its unconcealment. He would no longer be exposed to the whole of beings, to the violence and the strangeness of beings. Nor would he any longer be exposed to the threat of non-being, a threat that essentially belongs to Being. He would no longer take up, institute and shelter the overpowering power of physis. He would be without a history or a destiny:

Wherever language is not encountered, as in animals and plants, there is, in spite of life, no opening of Being and hence no Non-being [Nichtsein] and no emptiness of nothingness. Plants and animals stand below all of this, for they are ruled solely by blind desires and frantic flights. The world rules solely where language is encountered. Only where the world is encountered, and that is where language is encountered, the supreme danger also is encountered, the danger par excellence, i.e., the threat of non-being upon Being as such (GA 39, 62).

Through language, then, man becomes "the witness of Being." In language man supports Being and responds to Being. Man is, literally, responsive to and responsible of Being. Hence to be the witness of Being is to be active in the midst of the very strife character of Being. In such witnessing, it is a matter of taking up the unconcealment of beings, in such a way that Being

⁷. See Heidegger's winter semester 1929/30 lecture course (Gesamtausgabe 29/30, p. 276 ff.) and Introduction to Metaphysics (p. 34); see also Jacques Derrida's discussion of the issue in De l'Esprit--Heidegger et la Question (Paris: Galilée, 1987).

itself would be instituted in language, and would yet remain threatened by non-being in the very taking up of Being. In other words, in instituting Being, it is also a matter of instituting and keeping open the very threat of Being, and of dwelling within this threat. Such dwelling, as will later be seen, can be understood as supremely political.

The danger linked to poetry is twofold. On the one hand, there is a danger that belongs to the very essence of poetry as the taking up in language of Being in its relation to its counter-essence, viz. non-being. Such taking up--what Heidegger calls "the danger of the essence" (and one must hear the double genitive)--is the most difficult and delicate task. Such a danger, according to Heidegger, is expressed in Hölderlin's statement according to which "language is the most dangerous of all goods."⁸ But on the other hand, this activity of the poet, this instituting and initiating moment is doomed to fall (verfallen): sooner or later, it is doomed to being perverted, covered-up, obliterated in ordinary discourse. Hence there is a different type of danger, a danger which, from the very outset, threatens the essence of poetry. What is a matter of Anfang, of radical beginning in poetry is progressively but inevitably doomed to fall into the familiar and almost

⁸. Friedrich Hölderlin, Fragment 13, IV, 246.

trivial domain of ordinary discourse. Such falling belongs to the very essence of language, even though it constantly threatens the most powerful and disclosive dimension of language, viz. poetry. The counter-essence of language, viz. that which, from the beginning, undermines the essence of language, belongs essentially to language. From the very start, the uncanny or unfamiliar essence of language is always about to fall into its counter-essence, into its own negation:

But the poetic saying falls [verfällt], it becomes "prose", first in the true sense, and then in the bad sense, and finally becomes idle talk [Gerede]. The scientific conception of language and the philosophy of language start off from this daily use of language and hence from its fallen form, and thus consider "poetry" as an exception to the rule. Everything stands on its head (GA 39, 64).

For the most part we--and that is "we" Westerners--today--and that is at a time when the Gods have fled--live in fallen language. "We" today are perhaps most remote from the essence of language, and that is from the very possibility of an authentic history and an authentic destiny, if poetry is indeed the "primary language [Ursprache] of a people." We today would then be most endangered, most threatened by counter-essence.

But where danger is, grows
The saving power also.

Indeed, the "necessary domination" of the counter-

essence can in turn be thought of as an impulse to assert anew the essence of which the counter-essence is the (non-dialectical) contradiction. At the time when the Gods have fled and when the earth remains without any Gods, at the time, then, of what Hölderlin calls the Not, there is still a space for a saying that would indicate such distress and that would prepare the way for the coming of new Gods. Even at the most remote point of proximity from the origin and the essence of language lies the possibility of a radically new beginning. Even in the most fallen language lies the possibility of historicity, i.e., of a future that would be the destiny of a people. Such possibility, according to Heidegger, lies in the Dichtung of Hölderlin. Hence the very possibility of a future, the possibility of history and of actuality lies primarily in language as poetry. But to say this does not mean that poetry constitutes a program or a project for history, a program that would then need to be 'applied' to the 'concrete world', as though poetry were something abstract that would require its own translation into concrete terms. Rather, it means that poetry, insofar as it is Dichtung and not mere Poesie, essentially unfolds as Geschichte, and not as mere Historie. This, in turn, means that an essential connection is made between language as poetry and the very possibility of history and destiny:

The poetic is the fundamental joint [das Grundgefüge] of the historical Dasein, and that means: language as such constitutes the original essence [das ursprüngliche Wesen] of the historical Being of man. The essence of the Being of man cannot first be defined and then, afterwards and in addition, be granted with language. Rather, the original essence of his Being is language itself (GA 39, 67-68).

In poetry language as such happens. Language comes into being. Such happening is supremely historical, for it is also the happening of man in time, the coming into being of an historical Dasein. The coming into being of language is the beginning of the historical time proper to man. In the coming into being of language man comes, literally, to be: The Being of man, specifically the Being of a historical Dasein, occurs in language. The poet is the one who institutes Being, who brings it to language, to the language of a specific historical Dasein. In bringing Being to language, the poet places Being in the Dasein of a people. In inscribing Being in the language of a people, the poet actually opens up the very historicity of the people, the very space and time within which the people will become historical. In that sense, the saying of the poet is grounding. And the destiny--and that is also the grandeur--of the people will depend on whether it will remain within the sending of the poet's saying, or whether it will progressively close off what was once opened up by the poet, viz. the totality of

beings: the Gods. the earth. men. history.

Throughout, then, the question of history and the question of the political as essentially linked to history, will be a matter of language, specifically a matter of language as poetry, and of poetry as it essentially unfolds in Hölderlin's saying.

(B)

all essential and great
things could arise only
because man had a homeland
and because he was rooted in a tradition.
--Martin Heidegger, "Interview" with Der Spiegel.

The emergence of the political in poetry is always the emergence of a specific epoch of history, the beginning of a new historical (geschichtlich) time in a specific Dichtung. According to Introduction to Metaphysics, the essence of the Greek polis is determined in Sophocles' Antigone. But where is the essence of Germany--and that is, for Heidegger, of the West--determined? Who is the poet whose saying is such as to reveal the historical-political situation of the West as well as its destiny? The answer is: Hölderlin. Hölderlin is the poet through whom Heidegger addresses the question of the historical-political situation of Germany at the end of metaphysics.

Heidegger began to lecture on Hölderlin in the

Winter semester of 1934-35, right after he resigned from the Rectorate. Through an incessant reading of Hölderlin, from 1934 to the end of the war, Heidegger will be concerned with coming to grips with the historical-political reality of his time, and that is with what he will later call--all too carelessly and simplistically--the emergence of technology through "Americanism" and "Sovietism." But during that same period, Heidegger will also be concerned with thinking the historical and political situation in which Germany was caught. Specifically, he will be engaged in an Auseinandersetzung with his 1933-34 political involvement and statements as well as with Nazism as a whole. His writings of the time constitute a move away from politics into the question of the political, essentially defined as withdrawal. Heidegger will be concerned with thematizing the retreat of the political, that is both the withdrawal from politics and the retreat of the political (the political that essentially withdraws). Such a confrontation remains for the most part implicit (although it is sometimes made explicit) and operates at the level of Geschichtlichkeit. But it is also total, in the sense that it engages the totality of Heidegger's thinking.

In the Winter semester of 1934-35, Heidegger lectured on Hölderlin's hymns, "Germanien" and "der

Rhein".⁹ The context of this lecture course was politically very determined--if not overdetermined: Heidegger had just resigned from his Rectorate and the lecture course on two of Hölderlin's hymns seem to mark the break with all kinds of political engagement or responsibility. After 1934, everything happens as if Heidegger had definitively withdrawn from politics and had devoted himself to problems of "pure philosophy" and "poetry". Yet this withdrawal from politics is essentially linked to Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin. Furthermore, I believe Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin to be a way of reengaging the question of the political, in a way that puts not only his own engagement into question, but also the very way in which the political is being thought and lived, whether in America, in the Soviet Union or in Germany.¹⁰ Throughout, Heidegger's reading of

⁹. See appendix for full quotation of the hymns.

¹⁰. If, in Heidegger's view, America and the Soviet Union can indeed be thought together, it seems, on the other hand, that Germany (i.e. the essence of Germany) is conceived of as the only possible future of the West. To the extent that Germany, along with Ancient Greece, is the country of the "metaphysical language" as well as the "center of the West", it cannot be thought together with Americanism and Sovietism. The privilege of Germany will remain unquestioned in Heidegger, and much will need to be said about such a privilege (see chap. 3). Yet the Hölderlin lectures constitute an attempt to think the essence of the political outside the political framework of the Nazi period. Even though these lectures reassert in a way the privilege of Germany over any other "country"--and that is over any other language--, they do so in a way that radically undermines the metaphysics of National-Socialism.

Hölderlin will be truly--even though often allusively and cryptically--historical and political.

The 1934-35 lecture course opens up what we believe to be Heidegger's Auseinandersetzung with the political reality of his time. The choice of Hölderlin is not merely incidental. Indeed, for Heidegger Hölderlin is the national poet, i.e., the poet for whom the final stake of his Gedicht is the possibility of a history and a destiny for the German people. The very consideration of Hölderlin's poetry in such terms already calls into question the legitimacy of the Nazi regime: to pose the problem of the possibility of a destiny and an authentic or proper history that would be heralded in Hölderlin's poetry is already to deny the political reality of the time any kind of legitimacy. From the very outset, in the "Preliminary Remark" of the 1934-35 lecture course, Heidegger speaks of Hölderlin as "the poet who still confronts the Germans as a test to be stood" and whose work "still deprived of time and space has already exceeded our historizing/historical bustling activity [unser historisches Getue] and grounded the beginning of another history."¹¹ To speak in such terms is to submit, almost explicitly, the political reality of Hitler's Germany to a higher historical and destinal possibility, a possibility contained in a poet's saying. This is made

¹¹. GA 39, 1.

even more explicit in the following statement, where the "we" Heidegger uses seems to involve the totality of the German people, and hence where the "we" seems to be historical (geschichtlich):

We do not wish to conform Hölderlin to our time. On the contrary, we wish to submit ourselves as well as those to come to the poet's measure [Maß] (GA 39,4).

To bring the totality of a people's destiny under the saying of a single poet is perhaps "naive", "unrealistic" and "elitist"--although the matter will appear to be much more complicated than what such terms seem to indicate. But at the same time, it is also the manifestation of a thinking engaged in an attempt to think the political and the possibility of an authentic German history outside the ideological framework imposed by the Nazis. It is, for example, an attempt to think the relation between poetry and the possibility of history outside of the biological framework:

The writer Kolbenheyer says: "Poetry is a biological function necessary to the people." Little understanding is required to note that this also holds true for digestion, which is also a biological function necessary to the people.... When Spengler defines poetry as the expression of the soul proper to each culture, it also holds true for the making of bicycles and automobiles.... From the very start, such definition brings the concept of poetry to a domain that excludes the slightest possibility of grasping the essence. All of this is so hopelessly dull...(GA 39, 27)

Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin is engaged in an

attempt to grasp and articulate the historical dimension of the poet. This does not mean that Heidegger's approach to Hölderlin is "historical." On the contrary. It is not a matter of reading Hölderlin with a view to contributing to the history of literature and to Hölderlinian scholarship. Rather, it is a matter of indicating the historical dimension, and that is the essentially destinal dimension of Hölderlin's poetry. So that, in the end, it is not a matter of situating Hölderlin in his time, but of situating ourselves in the horizon of the radically new saying of the poet, a saying which, in its very founding, exceeds our time. In other words, to read Hölderlin seriously, i.e., to read Hölderlin as the poet of the future of Germany, one is required to undergo a radical transformation. In such a reading, one is no longer allowed to trace the poems back to Hölderlin's time, and to show how they "illustrate" that time. In other words, if one wishes to read Hölderlin seriously with Heidegger, one cannot read him as a romantic author. Rather, one is required to call into question the actuality of our time, in the name of the radically new measure that Hölderlin institutes. For us, readers of Hölderlin, it is a matter of thinking the new historical beginning initiated in Hölderlin's poetry. For the German people, it is a matter of "broaching its actuality."¹² Hence such reading is far

¹². GA 39, 213.

more than a reading that would be merely pleasurable or informative. What is at stake here is the future of Germany and of the West. The stake, then, is both historical and political. It is both a matter of identifying the time in which we live and of thinking whether this time is open to a future. What is our time? And what is the new "measure" that Hölderlin would institute?

The sixth section of the 1934-35 lecture course is devoted to these questions. The section is entitled: "The determination of the 'We' from the horizon of the question of time," and consists in a commentary of the line of Germanien which reads:

... none of us knows what is happening to him (V. 27)

The 'We' that is operative here corresponds, according to Heidegger, to the question "Who are we?" and not to the question "What are we?"¹³ The 'who' of man is privileged over his 'what', and the difference is temporal. What is essential is to know what time the 'We' refers to:

But the 'us' and the 'we' the poet speaks of here, are they the people of yesterday, the Germans of 1801? Or should those of 1934 also be included? Or does Hölderlin mean the Germans of 1980? Or even those who are without a year? What chronology is referred to

¹³. One recalls that the question of the 'who' of man also governed Heidegger's reading of the chorus from Antigone in Introduction to Metaphysics. The question is the same, but the time has changed.

here, and what is the time which is in poetry (GA 39, 49)?

Furthermore, the time of the 'we', and that is the time of a people, is essentially different from the time of the 'I', the individual time. Where does the difference lie? The title of *Sa*--"The measurable time of the individual and the original time of the people"--provides valuable indications. There is a certain dissymmetry in the title itself. On the one hand, the time of the individual would be measurable; it would be the time for which we would have a measure. On the other hand, the original time of the people is not said to be measurable. It is only said to be "original." Unlike the time of the individual, the time of the origin would be unmeasurable. Or rather, we would lack a measure to evaluate the time of the origin. Why? How does the original time flee from measurable time, from chronology?

In the original time of the people, something radically new, something "initial" (anfänglichlich) is instituted. Insofar as this time is radically new, it is the transgression and the negation of all the standards, the laws, the measures. The time of the origin is a time that originates. As such, it is its own law (Gesetz), its own positing (Setzung), its own measure (Maß). It is the founding of a new beginning, a founding that involves violence against its own time. This new beginning is such

as to escape all measure, all grasping: it only opens the abyss of its self-positing and institutes the violence of its law.

Such instituting is the privilege of the "creators" (die Schaffenden). They are primarily the poets,¹⁴ and then the thinkers and the State founders:

The historical Dasein of a people--its rise, its peak, its fall--originates in poetry. From the latter [arises] authentic knowing, in the sense of philosophy. And from these two, the actualization of the Dasein of a people as a people through the State--politics originates (GA 39, 51).

The creators "ground (gründen) the historical existence of a people," and this grounding constitutes its own justification (Begründung). The grounding act of the creator is self-grounding, and the measure or the justification of such grounding cannot be found outside the act itself. Such is the contradiction which the creators originate: Insofar as they are founders, they set new standards and new laws for the future; they broach a new beginning of history. And yet, such founding is always made at the cost of a transgression of a given time, of a violence produced against the standards and the laws of this time. So that the creator is always ahead of

¹⁴. Here "primarily" does not mean chronologically "first." We have just emphasized the fact that the time of the origin is precisely such as to transgress all chronological determinations and all measurable evaluations. Its primacy is rather to be understood in historical (in the sense of Geschichte) terms.

his time, exceeding it, outside his time, transgressing it:

But, if someone audaciously thrusts high above his own time, the today of which is calculable, if, like the poet, he is forced to thrust and to come into the free (das Freie), he must on the other hand become a stranger to those to whom he belongs in his lifetime. He never knows his people and is always a scandal to them. He questions true time for his own time, and each time places himself outside the time of the today (GA 39, 50).

Because of his very nature, the creator cannot be 'at home' in the time of his today. He is always beyond, ahead, in a time that opposes and negates the present time. Hence the situation of the creator is a situation of exile, of unfamiliarity, of Unheimlichkeit, even though his creation is precisely such as to found a new and more proper dwelling for the people to come. The very possibility of an authentic dwelling presupposes an absence of dwelling, a thrownness out of the familiar into the vertiginous abyss of the uncanny. In other words, the very possibility of a place in which a people's Dasein will become historical--i.e., the very possibility of a polis--presupposes an absence of place, a radical displacement. Hence, in his thrownness out of the time and the space of his epoch, in his essential Unheimlichkeit, the creator is also necessarily unheimisch, i.e., strange, uncanny, obscure: monstrous. A certain monstrosity is at play in each creator, for what is broached by the creators

is precisely such as to exceed and threaten all the standards and the measures with which we define "normality".

What is, then, Hölderlin's specific monstrosity? What is the abyss with which it confronts us and in front of which we are to stand if we wish to be with a future? What is the specific character of Hölderlin's creation? What must be the character of his founding if it is such as to reveal the essence and open the future of an entire nation?

The abyss that Hölderlin opens beneath our feet is the abyss proper to our time. The abyss is the absence of Gods. To stand before the abyss, to endure the vertigo that such a situation implies is the "grandeur" and the "mission" of the German historical Dasein. For to endure the flight of the Gods or the "distress" is not to renounce the possibility of a future. It is not to renounce the possibility of the divine. But it is to renounce the Gods that have fled. And this is by no means a "pessimistic" or "nihilistic" attitude. On the contrary:

The true renouncing, i.e., the renouncing that is carried and granted by a fundamental tone that authentically unfolds, is creative-generative (GA 39, 94).

To experience the absence of the Gods is already in a way to prepare oneself for the coming of new Gods. To wait

resolutely for the divine is to free the space for the coming of the Gods. Such waiting is what Hölderlin calls the "sacred mourning" (das Heilige Trauern), and it constitutes the fundamental tone (Grundstimmung) of the poem "Germanien". The mourning refers to the Gods that have fled, which does not mean that it consists in a "nostalgic attachment to the past." Rather, it is "a standing-fast-within-oneself (ein In-sich-fest-stehen) and a Bestehen of the 'there' and the here." (94) Hence the fundamental tone is not only specific to the poem, but it also stands as a fundamental attitude that the people's Dasein must take up in its 'there' and its 'here'. Rather, it stands in the poem as that in which "the time of the people" unfolds and the "world-destiny (Weltgeschick) of the earth of the homeland" is at issue. Whenever the earth is "prepared for the Gods," it is sacred. And the sacred earth is what Hölderlin calls the Vaterland. Ultimately, then, Hölderlin would provide the earth on which he dwells with a sacred dimension. In other words, it is a matter of turning Germany into a true Vaterland. It is a matter of politics--if politics is indeed the way to provide the polis with Gods.

What is the Vaterland? It is the Land der Väter, the land of the fathers, "the historical Being of a people" (120). Such Being, Heidegger says, "is poetically instituted, assembled by thought, placed in a knowing and

rooted in the activity of the State founder."¹⁵ Here the triad, the tryptic or the triangle of the creators is mentioned once again: the poets, the thinkers and the statesmen. Hence the Vaterland or the homeland (what could also be called the polis, if the Dasein at stake here were not the Dasein of the West at the end of metaphysics but the Ancient Greek Dasein), that which would ground the political in its essence, is the result of a threefold activity, the first of which alone is said to be truly "instituting". As has been already pointed out, the privilege or the primacy of poetry over the two other founding activities cannot be thought of as merely "chronological". Rather, it is to be thought as "logical", if what is meant thereby is that the Vaterland can be posited as such only in logos, only in language essentially determined as poetry. In other words, the very possibility of history, the Vaterland, the political in its essence can originate solely in and through language.

What is the Vaterland? What is the essence of Germanness? In the Letter on Humanism, Heidegger comments on the word Vaterland in Hölderlin's "Heimkunft" in the following way:

The word is thought here in an essential sense, not patriotically or nationalistically but in terms of the

¹⁵. GA 39, 120.

history of Being. The essence of the homeland, however, is also mentioned with the intention of thinking the homelessness of contemporary man from the essence of Being's history.... when Hölderlin writes "Homecoming" he is concerned that his countrymen find their essence. He does not at all seek that essence in an egoism of his nation. He sees it rather in the context of a belongingness to the destiny of the West [my italics].¹⁶

This passage is extremely dense and very illuminating with regard to the question of the political. In a way, it does not say precisely what the homeland consists in. Rather, it seems to repeat what has already been said with respect to the Greek polis in its relation to Being. Indeed, both the Greek polis and the homeland are to be thought according to their essence, and that is according to their relation to the history of Being. Both the polis and the homeland escape the traditional political determinations, that is, the Roman determinations: like the polis, the homeland is neither a natio nor a patria. And if man today is homeless, i.e., without a home or a homeland that would correspond to his essence, it is not because of a loss of national identity, because of wars of division or, on the contrary, because of factual reunifications of different people. Rather, it is because of the lack of an essential relation to Being. Heidegger insists on the essential difference between a level of discourse that would be merely ontic and historisch, on

¹⁶. "Letter on Humanism" in Basic Writings, 217.

the one hand. ontological and geschichtlich on the other hand. To a patriotic discourse that would sing of the homecoming in the horizon of a national egoism, and that would be grounded in a metaphysical, Roman and historical conception of the political, Heidegger wishes to oppose a discourse that would point to the essence of the homeland, i.e., a discourse that would be grounded in the historical-destinal dimension of Being. To a homeland conceived in terms of "a mere space delimited by external borders, a natural region, a place as the possible scene of such or such event that would take place",¹⁷ Heidegger opposes what he takes to be the essence of the homeland.

The question, now, is to know how the essential homelessness of our time can give way to a homecoming--how, in other words, there can be such a thing as a homeland.

What is this essence? When is there a homeland (Vaterland)? When, Heidegger says, "the earth" (die Erde)--i.e., "the earth of the homeland" (die heimatliche Erde)--is "prepared (erzogen) for the Gods."¹⁸ In other words, what is essential to the homeland, i.e., that without which there cannot be such a thing as an authentic history and a historical Dasein--that without which there would be no political life--, is the element of the

¹⁷. GA 39, 104.

¹⁸. Ibid.

divine. The opening of the earth to the power of the Gods is "the same" as the emergence of the homeland. In greeting within itself the coming of the Gods, the earth becomes "holy". But such holiness is not to be understood in Christian terms. In the holiness of the earth it is not a matter of peace and tranquility. The Gods do not bring saintliness and serenity to the people. On the contrary. In becoming holy, the earth becomes the space of the "storm" of the Gods, and is hence "torn open in its grounds and abysses [in ihren Gründen und Abgründen aufgerissen wird]." ¹⁹ To keep the rift open, to endure the earth in its abysmal openness, that is to "poetically dwell on this earth" ²⁰--such is the historical-political possibility and mission of the people:

The great turns of the time of the people always come from out of the abyss, and each time to the degree in which a people goes down into it, that is goes down into its earth and possesses a homeland (GA 39, 106).

But there is always the temptation to quiet the storm, to turn the uncanny and the monstrous into the familiar and the obvious. There is always the temptation to transform the homeland into a mere geo-political space, the tendency to forget the abyss on which the homeland is grounded.

But how can the homeland be grounded on an abyss?

¹⁹. Ibid., 105.

²⁰. Hölderlin, VI, 25.

How can an abyss ground at all? Is the abyss not precisely the absence of ground, the very impossibility of ground? Heidegger poses the following paradox:

.... The abyss [is] where the solidity and the specificity of all grounds disappear, and yet where everything constantly finds itself for the dawn of a new becoming (GA 39, 105-106)...

The contradiction which we, as an historical Dasein, are to take up and preserve as contradiction, can be formulated in the following way: the radical beginning or the "new becoming" initiated and instituted by the poet--in other words the basis or the launching of the possibility of a future and a history--, insofar as it is radical, cannot originate from causal determinations. In the temporality proper to the beginning--in historical (geschichtlich) temporality--it is not a matter of historiography. For the beginning initiated in the poet's saying is--by its very nature--such as to exceed the standards and the means which render Historie possible. In this very excess, poetry opens up the abyss from out of which it originates. In the very institution or grounding of the beginning, the abyss is broached. The grounding of the beginning reveals primarily its own and essential absence of ground.

What Heidegger says of the Anfang in history is most akin to what Hannah Arendt says of politics and of the radical beginnings in politics--even though, unlike

Arendt, by politics Heidegger does not primarily mean the occurrence and sharing of freedom in a common space.²¹ politics, then, exists or does not exist; its emergence at a certain time and space is inexplicable; it is the mark of a radical beginning. Moreover, politics originate here and there only to disappear without leaving any traces. For example, speaking of the Résistance, in the words of René Char, as a "lost treasure," Arendt writes:

The men of the European Resistance were neither the first nor the last to lose their treasure. The history of revolutions--from the summer of 1776 in Philadelphia and the summer of 1789 in Paris to the autumn of 1956 in Budapest--which politically spells out the innermost story of the modern age, could be told in parable form as the tale of an old-age treasure which, under the most varied circumstances, appears abruptly, unexpectedly, and disappears again, under different mysterious conditions, as though it were a fata morgana.²²

That which H. Arendt suggests could be told in a parable, in a mythos is taken more literally by Heidegger. For such mysterious emergence appears indeed through mythoi, through poetry--through Hölderlin's poetry, for example. What is most striking in Arendt's statement, with respect to Heidegger, is that it asserts the same radical--and

²¹. But even this is not obvious: it could be argued that the polis or the Vaterland in Heidegger is indeed the sharing of freedom in a common space, but that such space would first need to be made common through the sharing of a common relation to the forces of Being, a relation centered around the presence of common Gods.

²². Hannah Arendt, Between Past and Future (London: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 5.

hence uncanny, mysterious--power of the beginning.

It also asserts the same fragility of the beginning, the beginning's tendency to vanish into oblivion. Still interpreting the words of Char,²³ Arendt suggests that the "inheritance" is most often left without a "testament", i.e., without a tradition--"which selects and names, which hands down and preserves, which indicates where the treasures are and what their worth is."²⁴ In other words, most often, the time--or the future--opened up by the beginning is suddenly closed off. Whenever we do not move ourselves within the time broached by the radical beginning, whenever we do not "remember" the origin, history only becomes the "sempiternal change of the world and the biological cycle of living creatures in it."²⁵ "Remembrance"--which Arendt, in a most Hölderlinian (and Heideggerian) way, says is "one of the most important modes of thought"--is not only that without which there would be no past for a people, and hence no true political community, but also, paradoxically, that without which there can be no future. Without remembrance, there can be no will for a future. Still speaking of the Resistance, Arendt writes:

²³. Notre héritage n'est précédé d'aucun testament--
"our inheritance was not preceded by any testament."

²⁴. Between Past and future, p. 5.

²⁵. Ibid.

Thus the treasure was lost not because of historical circumstances and the adversity of reality but because no tradition had foreseen its appearance or its reality, because no testament had willed it for the future. The loss, at any rate, perhaps inevitable in terms of political reality, was consummated by oblivion, by a failure of memory...²⁶

The "treasure"--the origin or the forgotten beginning: the homeland--, according to Heidegger, would be heralded in poetry. But it would be of the responsibility of the historical Dasein to live under the power of such a beginning. A demand, a certain ethics, perhaps, would be at issue in keeping the origin alive, in remembering the past. No politics--no political programs or theories--would actually unfold from such remembrance, but a certain tradition could indeed unfold from it. Through remembrance, a political community would exist as such.

For the past, in the words of Faulkner, "is never dead, it is not even past." Likewise, for Heidegger, the ancient Gods--without which the earth would not be the homeland--are not merely gone. They are still 'there' in a way. They are in a way present--but in a mode of presence that remains decisively absent. They are not actually present, and yet they remain as the Gods which may no longer be called upon. They remain in the mode of a having been (Gewesenheit), which Heidegger

²⁶. Ibid., p. 6.

differentiates from the mere past (Vergangenheit). What Heidegger says of the having been is remarkably close to what Arendt says of the past. Heidegger writes:

What is past is irremediably closed off, impossible to bring back; it lies firmly in the past which, as language adequately says, is a space-time [Zeitraum], and a lumber room as it were, in which everything that has passed by, that has gone away is piled up.... What is past lies before the door of the present and can never come back in it nor enter it. The having been, however, continues to be, and we ourselves are this having been in the way in which, in placing it before us, in saving it, in bringing it forward or also in rejecting it and wanting to forget it, we let it come to stand within our Da-sein. The shadows of those that have been come to visit us again, come to us, are to come [sind zu-künftig] (GA 39, 108).

Arendt, in a commentary on a text by Kafka²⁷, writes:

... not only the future--"the wave of the future"--but also the past is seen as a force, and not, as in nearly all our metaphors, as a burden man has to

²⁷. The text--a parable--reads as follows:

He has two antagonists: the first presses him from behind, from the origin. The second blocks the road ahead. He gives battle to both. To be sure, the first supports him in his fight with the second, for he wants to push him forward, and in the same way the second supports him in his fight with the first, since he drives him back. But it is only theoretically so. For it is not only the two antagonists who are there, but he himself as well, and who really knows his intentions? His dream, though, is that some time in an unguarded moment--and this would require a night darker than any night has ever been yet--he will jump out of the fighting line and be promoted, on account of his experience in fighting, to the position of umpire over his antagonists in their fight with each other. The story is the last of a series of "Notes from the year 1920," under the title "HE." Translated from the German by Willa and Edwin Muir in The Great Wall of China, New York, 1946.

shoulder and of whose dead weight the living can or even must get rid of in their march into the future... This past, moreover, reaching all the way back into the origin, does not pull back but presses forward, and it is, contrary to what one would expect, the future which drives us back into the past.²⁸

What is most striking about these two texts is that they are engaged in a reworking of the traditional conception of history through a radical re-thinking of time. More specifically, both texts tend to literally dismantle the linear conception of history, in such a way that the notions of past and future no longer function as moments of a chronological sequence. In such a radical dismantling, the past--and what is meant by past is the origin or the beginning which is so decisive, abrupt and sudden, so abysmal, that most often the mere actuality of the time is not in a position to recognize it as what it is and hence to free the space for its own actuality--becomes that which remains ahead, that which is still decisive for our future, that which actually discloses the historical and political future.

In such time, which Heidegger calls "authentic", it is a matter of hearing the echo of the origin. It is a matter of recovering the "lost treasure"--the homeland: the very possibility of a history and a political community gathered in its essence--which was once instituted in Hölderlin's poetry and which is still

²⁸. Between Past and Future, p. 10-11.

preserved in it. Specifically, it is a matter of renouncing the ancient Gods, and in this very renunciation, of preparing the way for the coming of the new Gods. In other words, it is a matter of entering the fundamental tone. For the fundamental tone is that in which the homeland is preserved, that in which "the destiny of a people and the relation to its Gods is taken further and brought together in unity."²⁹ But such unity--the unity of the origin: the original or originary unity--is not a quiet, peaceful and strifeless unity. On the contrary:

The fundamental tone is original primarily because it does not artificially assemble the uttermost oppositions, the decided renouncement and the unconditional expectation, but lets them rather unitarily spring from the most original essence of temporality (GA 39, 117).

Such "original holding together" (ursprünglich Zusammenhang) is, according to Heidegger, what will later be called--specifically in the poem "der Rhein"-- "Innigkeit." It is of the utmost importance to grasp the true meaning of this word, for it will appear to be decisive for the understanding of the political. In this word the most active and original forces of Being in their connection with an historical Dasein are named. In order to unfold the meaning of the word, it is necessary to

²⁹. GA 39, 117.

refer to "der Rhein" and to Heidegger's commentary in §19 of the 1934-35 lecture course, even though the indications provided in § 10 are already decisive. Innigkeit ordinarily has a plurality of meanings: ardour, fervour, cordiality, sincerity, tenderness, all of which seem to be related to feelings, specifically to intimate feelings. Hence it also has the meaning of "intimacy". In his reading of Hölderlin, however, Heidegger is very cautious not to read in the word Innigkeit the determinations that define it in ordinary German:

Now a misunderstanding first needs to be avoided: 'Innigkeit' does not mean the mere 'inner life' [Innerlichkeit] of an emotion in the sense in which a 'lived experience' would be shut up in itself [im Sinne des Bei-sich-verschließens eines Erlebnisses]. Nor does it mean a particularly high level of 'feeling warmth' [Gefühlswärme]. Nor is Innigkeit a term appropriate to the 'beautiful soul' and to the way it is situated in the world. The word in Hölderlin has no flavour of dreamy or inactive sentimentality (GA 39, 117).

Hence all the traditional meanings are set aside, so as to gain a more originary access to what is at stake in the word. The word is actually opposed to its ordinary determinations. The passage continues:

Quite the contrary. It means primarily the supreme force of Dasein. Second: this force is asserted in its thorough confrontation with the most extreme contradictions of Being.

The Dasein which is spoken of here is the historical

Dasein of a people.³⁰ What is decisive in this passage is the essential connection drawn between "the supreme force" of a historical Dasein or a people and "the most extreme contradictions of Being." In other words, the decisiveness of the passage lies in the essential belonging together of a people as historical on the one hand and Being as contradiction on the other. The historicity or the very possibility for a people to have a history lies in the proper dwelling of the people within the essential unfolding of Being. The Innigkeit, then, is the very holding together of Being in its contradiction, the very holding together of what is most held or torn apart. Innigkeit inscribes the possibility for a people to gain access to its own history through an essential relation to the contradictory and strife-filled unity of Being. Hence Innigkeit is most akin to the gathering or the legein proper to Being. Innigkeit is a form of logos, a form of gathering that gathers in poetry the fundamental and originary polemos. Innigkeit is what the Ancient Greeks called harmonia, the harmony of the forces of Being

³⁰. Heidegger quotes the two following passages from Hölderlin, both of which essentially relate the Innigkeit to the Dasein of a people:

"...with the Ancients, where each of them, with their senses and their souls, belonged to the world which surrounded them, much more Innigkeit could be found in certain characters and relations, as in us Germans, for example." (Letter to his brother, Jan. 1, 1799: III, 366)

Still speaking of the Greeks:

"...das Innige Volk, vom Göttergeiste gerüstet."
(IV, 91, V. 90)

in their opposition. The most appropriate translation of Innigkeit would then perhaps be "harmony," if one could still hear the echo of the Greek harmonia.

The reference to the Greeks, and specifically to Heraclitus, is not, of course, an accident. Hölderlin's poetry is a constant reference to the world of Ancient Greece, not as an object of romanticism or of poetic inspiration, but as the origin that remains decisive for our future. Hence to say--as Heidegger does--that Hölderlin's understanding of Being is closest to Heraclitus' is not to acknowledge a mere transhistorical coincidence. Rather, it is to draw an essential connection between the dichtendes Denken of Heraclitus and the denkendes Dichten of Hölderlin. It is to point to Hölderlin's greatest proximity to the origin.

Like the harmonia Heraclitus speaks of³¹, the Innigkeit is not a "tensionless accordance, nor a concordance that would occur through a compensating withdrawal of the oppositions; rather, the opening of the authentic contradiction opens up the harmony, which means: provides the antagonistic powers with their respective

³¹. For example in Fragment 51: "They do not understand that--and how--what is for itself opposed to itself is in itself in accordance with itself: antagonistic harmony [palintoporos harmonie]. Or fragment 54: "The harmony which is not revealed is more powerful than the one which is revealed."

limits."³² In other words, the harmonia is the space of the essential unfolding of the originary polemos. Or--put in Hölderlinian terms--: the Innigkeit (harmony) is the space of the essential unfolding of the Feindseligkeit (enmity).³³

Heidegger expresses the activity proper to the Feindseligkeit in the following way:

In their opposition, it is not only one power that is posited against the other [in other words, in the vocabulary of "der Rhein," not only the "origin" (der Ursprung) against the "purely sprung up" (das

³². GA 39, 124-25.

³³. The German notion of Feindseligkeit enables us to think something that is not immediately present in the Greek notion of polemos. Seligkeit means beatitude or felicity. Thus it has a strong connotation of peace, of serenity and tranquility. Feind, on the other hand, means the enemy, the person to whom one is attached by a link of antagonism. The Feind-Seligkeit, the enmity, then, would name a relation which would bring together different elements even while holding them separate. In such a relation, each element would require the opposing antagonism to be what it is. The latin inimicus, from which the French inamical and inimitié, as well as the English enmity are derived, would perhaps be the closest translation. The in- of the inimicus or the en- of the enmity would name the impossibility of the tranquil friendship, the opposition to it. But it would also name, simultaneously, the belonging together of friendship with its opposition. The Feindseligkeit would then be most akin to the way Heidegger interprets the Greek philein. And yet, Hölderlin's Feindseligkeit, as well as his Innigkeit, say perhaps more than the Greek philein and polemos. Hölderlin's poetry is not the mere translation or equivalent of the Greek saying, but rather a dialogue with the origin--a dialogue the ultimate purpose of which is the possibility of a future for the Germans: "Hölderlin is not Greekhood but the future of the Germans." (GA 39, 255)

Reinentsprungene)³⁴; each power [the "birth", the "ray of light", the "need", the "breeding"] tries to take the other's power away from itself in a will to displace it and put itself before it, to hide it and conceal it. Thus the enmity is a reciprocal concealing [ein wechselweises Verbergen], the happening of a concealment that rules in itself (GA 39, 249).

The contradictory essence of enmity can be formulated thus: in a way, enmity is that which is most active and productive, that which is most actual--that in which the contradictory and most extreme forces of Being are articulated; and yet, at the same time, because of its very nature, enmity essentially withdraws from actuality. Like Heraclitus' physis, Hölderlin's Feindseligkeit "likes to hide." In the very unfolding of its contradictory forces, enmity essentially unfolds as concealment, as sheltering, as withdrawal. To be engaged in the originary fight of Being is to be engaged in its withdrawal. It is

³⁴. Heidegger is commentating the fourth stanza of "der Rhein." The stanza reads:

A mystery is the purely sprung up. Even
 Song may hardly unveil it.
 For as you began, so you will remain,
 And much as need can effect,
 And breeding, of still greater power
 Is capable birth
 And the ray of light
 That meets the new-born infant.
 But where is anyone
 To remain free
 His whole life long and his heart's desire
 To fulfil alone, thus,
 From propitious heights, like the Rhine,
 And from so wholly a womb
 So happily born, like him?

as their specific modes of truth or manifestation. The secret proper to Being--or, in Hölderlin's words, to Innigkeit--is most preserved in poetic language. But to say this is not enough. For poetry is the very institution of Being, the very way by which Being comes to be as what it essentially is, viz. as withdrawal. To reveal and institute Being in its essentially withdrawing dimension is the essence of poetry: "The unveiling of the secret is the only and proper task of poetry in general and as such."³⁸ Hölderlin is the poet who reveals the essence of poetry. He is the poet of the poets. As such, he does nothing but institute Being in language. And yet, he is also said to be "the future of the Germans." What is specific to Hölderlin, then, is his historical-destinal--his political--dimension: Hölderlin would be the true Führer of the Germans. His poetry would shelter the essence of Germanness. But at the same time, it would do nothing more than reveal the essential concealment of Being. How, then, can Hölderlin simultaneously be the poet of the poets and the future of Germany? How can he be the future of Germany--and that is the poet of the "homeland"--in the very instituting of Being? How, in other words, do the poetic and the political belong together?

The two belong together because they are

³⁸. Ibid.

essentially the same:

The "homeland" is Being itself, which fully bears and assembles the history of a people as a Dasein: the historicity of its history. The homeland is not an idea in itself, abstract and supratemporal. Rather, the poet sees the homeland historically in an original sense. The proof of this lies in the fact that from the outset the poet's fundamental metaphysical attention to the Being and the staying instituted by the poets, who thus resist the decline, is related to the "homeland"...The Being of the homeland, i.e., of the historical Dasein of the people, is experienced as the true and only Being from which the fundamental position can arise and gain its joint [Gefüge] in beings as a whole (GA 39, 121-22).

The homeland, and that is the very possibility of a history and a destiny--what we have come to call the essence of the political--is Being itself. This sameness implies that the homeland be "enclosed in the secret, essentially and forever."³⁹ The homeland is the very condition of possibility of historicity. And yet it is that which essentially withdraws. It is that which allows history and the political in its very withdrawal. Its actuality essentially unfolds as withdrawal. The homeland is what is most proper (das Eigenste) and most original--that which is closest. But the proper is also that which is most withdrawn and concealed--that which is furthest.

Hölderlin's "Homecoming"⁴⁰ is perhaps the poem that best expresses this paradox. The poem is the journey

³⁹. GA 39, 120.

⁴⁰. See Appendix for full quotation of the poem.

that brings Germany back to its essence. It is the long march to the origin and hence to that which, in a way, never ceased to be closest. In other words, the paradox lies in the fact that never before were "we"--and that is primarily the Germans--more remote from what is closest.

What you seek, it is close and is already coming to you.⁴¹

But this paradoxical structure belongs to the very essence of proximity:

The essence of proximity is manifest in that it brings close what is close in keeping it afar. The proximity to the origin is a mystery.⁴²

The return to the origin or the homeland is not merely a matter of recovering something forgotten or hidden. Rather, it requires that one engage oneself in the secret of the origin, and that is primarily in its essential withdrawal. Such is the task of the poet. The elegy "Heimkunft" is the return to the origin, and not merely the narrative of the journey. It is the journey by which Germany is made sacred, the journey by which Germany becomes the land for the coming of the new Gods. But in order to return to the homeland, to experience the origin

⁴¹. Friedrich Hölderlin, "Heimkunft--an die Verwandten," IV, v. 56.

⁴². Martin Heidegger, Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1971), 23. Henceforth EHD.

in its essence, the poet first needed to leave the soil of the Vaterland. The exile was necessary to grasp the origin in its essence. There can be no home or no familiarity (no Heim, Heimat, or Heimischkeit), and hence no unfolding of what is most proper to a historical Dasein, without the experience of exile (Unheim, Unheimischkeit):

The love of exile [Unheimischsein] with a view to finding oneself at home [Heimischwerdens] in what is proper is the essential law of destiny through which the poet is destined in the founding of the "homeland's" history.⁴³

Or perhaps even more explicitly:

The historicity of history has its essence in the return to the proper, a return which can be completed only in the form of a journey abroad [das Fremde]⁴⁴.⁴⁵

What Heidegger here calls the proper (das Eigene) is what Hölderlin also calls "the national" (das Nationelle), without which there would be no homeland. Both notions serve to name the major stake of Hölderlin's poetry. Also the major difficulty: "We learn nothing with more difficulty than the free use of the national...the

⁴³. Ibid., 83.

⁴⁴. As Heidegger emphasizes it, one should hear the experience of difference in das Fremde. The journey abroad is the experience of the uncanniness and unfamiliarity of the radically other, of the non-proper.

⁴⁵. EHD, 90.

free use of the proper is the most difficult."⁴⁶

What is most proper to the Germans? And how is it that that which is most proper is so difficult to use freely? In the same letter, Hölderlin writes: "I believe that it is precisely the clarity of representation that is originally as natural for us as the fire from heaven is for the Greeks."⁴⁷ The "clarity of representation" and the "fire from heaven" are the two elements by which a land can become sacred. Such was the Greek polis, which combined its natural and most proper element (the fire from heaven) with what was most foreign to it and most remote from it (the clarity of representation). The polis occurred as the space of poetry, of thinking and of art. As such, it rendered the encounter with the Gods possible. But the fire from heaven is that which is most foreign to the Germans. As long as the Germans have not experienced this uncanniness and strangeness, as long as they have not undergone the long journey, they will not exist as such. Their existence as a people involves their appropriating the un-proper, and in this very appropriation, their becoming themselves. Without such a double movement, there can be no future for the German people: "the absence

⁴⁶. Letter to Böhlendorf (Dec. 4, 1801)

⁴⁷. Ibid.

of destiny, the dysmoron is our weakness."⁴⁸ On the other hand, the clarity of representation is what is most proper to the Germans:

The ability to conceive, the art of the project, the construction of scaffoldings and enclosures, the placing of frames and compartments, the carving up and the regrouping--this carries [the Germans] along. Yet this natural trait of the Germans is really not what is proper to them before this ability to conceive is submitted to the test of conceiving the inconceivable...⁴⁹

The Germans, then, need to prepare the land for the coming of the Gods. It is primarily a matter of experiencing the fire from the Gods in letting oneself be thrown out of the familiar into the uncanny. It is a matter of letting oneself drift away into the monstrous, into the realm of the unfamiliar where the lightning of the Gods might strike. It is only in his travels to the south of France, where he is reminded of Ancient Greece, that Hölderlin can actually experience the fire from heaven:

Der Nordost wehet,
Der liebste unter den Winden
Mir, weil er feurigen Geist
Und gute Fahrt verheißet den Schiffern.⁵⁰

The "navigators" are, according to Heidegger, the poets on

⁴⁸. Friedrich Hölderlin, "Remarks" on the translation of Antigone, V, 258.

⁴⁹. EHD, 84.

⁵⁰. "Andenken," I, v. 1-4. See Appendix for translation of the poem.

their way to the far off country. And the north-east wind--the wind that blows in the direction of the south-west and that clears the skies so that everything shines in its full manifestness--is the promise of the encounter with the fire from heaven in the foreign country. If the poet can withstand the test of the burning fire, then he will be ready to return to the homeland and found a new historical beginning under the skies where the clarity of representation is sheltered.

Hence the proper or the essence is proper only insofar as it is confronted by and combined with the non-proper or the non-essence. The proper emerges as such only in being thrown out of itself, only in being expropriated in the non-proper. In a way the non-essence or the non-proper is more essential to the proper than the proper itself. The non-essence is more proper to the proper than the proper. That which is most remote and most uncanny--in other words the non-essence--is more essential to the essence than the essence itself. To be in the essence--in the homeland--is to be thrown out of the essence, without an essence. But the non-essence of the essence--and that is the essence of the essence--is almost always covered up, forgotten. From the very outset. The homeland, the origin, is always already withdrawn from itself. The origin (Ursprung) is a springing up (Entspringen). But in its springing up, the

origin closes itself off (sich verschließt): it manifests itself as that which it is not. Or rather: in what it shows of itself, it does not show itself. It conceals itself (sich verbirgt) and withdraws (sich entzieht) behind what is freed from it. For the most part, then, one is not situated in the dimension and the power of the origin:

...We are the forgotten--of destiny [Geschick]; hence we are no longer granted a fate [Schicksal] but we must wander among the events and fly loosely before our own essential origin.⁵¹

Or again:

...We never come spontaneously before the locked door that would bring us to the homeland; spontaneously, we wander here and there.⁵²

As has already been shown, the key to the door can only be found in poetic language, specifically in Hölderlin's poetry. For Hölderlin's poetry is the poetry that institutes the homeland in its essence (in its withdrawal), i.e., the poetry that frees the space for the coming of the Gods and that thus provides the Germans with the possibility of a destiny.

What is most decisive about Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin is that it forces the reader to radically

⁵¹. EHD, 89.

⁵². Ibid.

rethink history and the political. For if the essence of a people--and that is also its future--is heralded only in poetry and is articulated in a concealed manifestness, then the usual approaches to the historical and the political are radically undermined and interrupted. History and politics would no longer be a matter of concrete facts and decisions based on a linear understanding of time and on an understanding of fully manifest actuality. Nor would any "discourse" about history or politics gain an originary access to what is essential to--and decisive for--a given people at a given time. This does not mean that such discourses are idle talk. Nor does it mean that there is no historiographic truth:

There is a historiographic truth [historische Wahrheit]. But to conceive it as such, the ones who conceive it must themselves first be under the power of history [Geschichte] (GA 39, 197).

Thus, when Heidegger says that Hölderlin is "the poet of the future of the Germans", or when he says that we have to "open up the actuality"⁵³ of Hölderlin's poetry, one might suspect that the notions of "future" and "actuality" mean something other than what is usually meant by such words.

⁵³. GA 39, 197.

(C)

Only a god can still save us.
 The only possibility with which we are
 left is to prepare in thinking and
 poetry a disposition for the arrival
 or the absence of the god in our decline.

For me Hölderlin is the
 poet who points to the future,
 the poet who awaits the god...
 Martin Heidegger--"Interview" with Der Spiegel.

What kind of future is Heidegger speaking of?

What does it mean to free the actuality of a poetry? What
 needs to be done so that Hölderlin's poetry becomes
 actual? The question of the relation between Hölderlin's
 poetry and its actuality is of the utmost importance. It
 is even considered by Heidegger as "the task" and the
 "ultimate goal" of the 1934-35 lecture course. The
 prescriptive task, in which poetics and politics are most
 explicitly entangled, is defined in the following terms:

1. Hölderlin is the poet of the poet and of poetry.
 2. Hölderlin is also the poet of the Germans. 3.
 Because Hölderlin is all this in a concealed and
 difficult way, poet of the poets as poet of the
 Germans, he has not yet become the power in the
 history of our people. Because he is not yet that, he
must become it. To contribute to this is
 "politics" in the highest and most proper sense, to
 such an extent that whoever achieves something in this
 domain need not discourse about the political (*my*
italics) (GA 39, 194).

How can Hölderlin become the power in the history of the
 German people? What kind of politics would unfold from

such a demand? What does such a demand dictate? What is the urgency that lies at the heart of this demand? These questions, which naturally unfold from Heidegger's statement, will remain, for the most part, unanswered. Not because Heidegger would have failed to answer them, but because the very raising of these questions involves an understanding of time and actuality which Heidegger is precisely attempting to put into question. As we shall see, the question of knowing how and when Hölderlin's poetry could become actual, how and when a politics could unfold from it, will not appear as a question. Or rather, it will appear as an impossible question. At the point at which poetry and politics are most explicitly related, in what could be interpreted as a desire or a possibility to build a politics, the very ideas of "building" and of "politics" are disrupted.

Heidegger's analysis in §15 unfolds in two parts that gather in a very condensed way what has been said so far. Heidegger first shows that insofar as poetry institutes Being, it "is what is actual [das Wirkliche]." ⁵⁴ But what does it mean to "institute"? It means to bring to language that which is not yet actual, to bring it to the very heart of a Dasein's people and hence to ground this Dasein in history. But it also means to keep this grounding open, i.e., to keep the abysmal and

⁵⁴. GA 39, 217. My italics.

uncanny relation to Being open, in such a way that the people would gain a knowing of itself in this very gesture. It is the people's responsibility to keep such a relation open. There is perhaps a certain ethics at issue in maintaining alive what was originally opened up by the saying of the poet, viz. the very essence of the people.

Heidegger points to Sophocles' Antigone as an example of such opening. To be sure, this "example" is not merely innocent, since the "great Greek beginning"--and that is the origin of the West--is what is at issue. To what extent is "Antigone" grounding?

Sophocles' poem entitled "Antigone" is, as a poem, an instituting of the whole Greek Dasein, for the poem as the project (rooting and salvation) of Being grounds the Dasein of human beings on earth before the face of the Gods. Poetry as institution obtains the ground of the possibility for which man in general settles on earth in between earth and the Gods, i.e., becomes historical, that is, can become a people (GA 39, 216).

In other words, poetry opens up the space, the place or the site within which man can become historical, i.e., essentially unfold in the dimension of the historico-political. The political life is grounded on the emergence of its place, of its there,--on what the Greeks called the polis--which is itself opened up by the mythos or the Sage of the poet.

Second, Heidegger shows how Hölderlin is the "poet of the future German Being." There lies perhaps the essential difference between Hölderlin and the institution

of the Greek Dasein in Sophocles' poetry. For Hölderlin is both the poet that poeticizes the Germans and the poet whose saying remains to be taken up by his people. Unlike Sophocles' poetry, Hölderlin's Dichtung arises from the urgency felt before the flight of the gods. In contrast to the time of the Greeks, the time of Hölderlin is a time of distress and abandonment. Because the "today" or the "now" Hölderlin is involved in is different from the "today" of the Greeks, it cannot simply be for Germany's future a matter of a return to the Greek origin. Rather, it is essentially a matter of enduring the distress of the time in accepting to renounce the ancient gods. Only in the renouncement of what has passed can man hope to encounter new gods and hence institute a new historical beginning. But the renouncement does not guarantee the coming of the gods. Hölderlin's poetry is not messianic. To follow its power only means that we are put in a position in which a space can be freed for the coming of the gods. But the actual coming of the gods does not depend on man's will. No praxis, no politics can actually save us from distress. Only the gods can allow the emergence of a new historico-political site.

In a way, then, the future does not belong to us. The future is not ours. We cannot say "when" the gods will visit anew. To say that Hölderlin's poetry is still ahead of us, that it still belongs to the future of the

Germans is to say that it will perhaps always remain ahead of us. For there would be no date, no precise event that could actually correspond to Hölderlin's poetry:

For the "Now" of his poetry there is no calendar date. Neither is there any need for a date. For this called and self-calling "Now" is itself a date in an originary sense, that is--something given, a gift.⁵⁵

The "now" of the time that will save us does not call for a date. For it is itself a datum, a gift. It is something that gives itself, something that never ceases to give itself, to send and destine itself. It is, literally, a present--that is both something that never ceases to come and a gift, both something that comes to us, always already, in the way of a gift, and yet something that will perhaps never be ours. It is, as it were, the promise of a gift that always remains a promise. Hence an Ereignis. In the "now" of the poet, then, it is not a matter of defining a precise instant. Rather, it is a matter of seeing how both future and past are gathered in the present, in a kind of anterior future in which what is happening has long since been sent, and hence decided, and which thus opens up the future:

The "Now come" shines from out of the present to speak into the future. And yet it first speaks in what has already happened [in das schon Geschehene]. "Now"--

⁵⁵. GA 53, 8. Heidegger is commenting the first line of the hymn "der Ister", which reads: "Jetzt komme, Feuer!"

that means: something is already decided. And this precisely, that which has already occurred [was sich schon "ereignet" hat], alone sustains all the relations to what is coming. The "now" names an Ereignis.⁵⁶

The future is impending, and yet always postponed, for it is always already coming. The future is passivity, for it is already past. Hence, in the end, to be open to Hölderlin's poetry as that which remains ahead of us, as that which belongs to our future, does not mean that this poetry would need to be put to work or "actualized" in the outside world. For it is actual. From the very outset. And yet, at the same time, it cannot be said to produce any effects or dictate any commandments, for, as Heidegger puts it, the "knowing" within which it is caught "is useless and has no 'value', is worthless and cannot be simply accepted as a modality of the activities currently underway."⁵⁷ Hölderlin's poetry is actual in a non-actual way, i.e., in a way that resists the determination of actuality as the actualization of something 'abstract' or merely possible. The actuality of the poetry demands that we wait for the decisive hour, that we be open to the coming of the gods. Such waiting, however, is not passive or idle. It is not a move away from what is happening.

⁵⁶. Ibid., 9.

⁵⁷. Martin Heidegger, Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis), Gesamtausgabe 65 (Frankfurt a. M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), p. 396. Henceforth GA 65.

On the contrary. It is, according to Heidegger, the highest and most difficult ability by which to face history:

Warten-können, however, is not an inactive and blind letting-off and letting-happen of the events; it is not a closing one's eyes before the destruction [viz. the destruction of the West, and specifically of Germany]. Warten-können is the standing that has already leaped ahead to the indestructible, to the proximity of which the destruction belongs, like the valley to the mountain.⁵⁸

In such Warten-können, then, it is essentially a matter of letting what is be. To let something be, for Heidegger, means to let it unfold according to its essence. Here, then, it is a matter of letting the homeland be as what it is, and that is as Being. In other words, it is a matter of a letting be in the way of a letting Being be. Of a Gelassenheit as Seinsverlassenheit. Such letting be would exceed the all too simple categories of "pessimism" and "optimism" in terms of which the comportment of Gelassenheit would tend to be considered. As Heidegger puts it in the Beiträge, the ones involved in Gelassenheit--and that is the "future ones" [die Zukünftigen]--"know neither the dark 'resignation' which no longer wills, for it has no future, nor the noisy 'optimism' which in spite all assurances does not yet will

⁵⁸. GA 53, 68.

truthfully..."⁵⁹ In the openness to the future, it is not a matter of moods but of an essential relation to Being which determines the possibility of the new encounter with the Gods.

Such letting-be dictates no politics and no praxis. And yet "politics in the highest sense" is at issue--i.e., politics as the possibility of a polis: the space, the place or the site in which the new gods can be encountered.

⁵⁹. GA 65, 397.

CHAPTER THREE

AWAY FROM THE ESSENCE

(A)

In his attempt to link essentially the poetic to the political, in his effort to phrase the essence of the political in terms of poetry, Heidegger merely confirms a tendency that runs throughout the history of philosophy. The entire history of Western thinking seems to be sustained by the poetic "temptation"--unless it be a "demand"--of (and one must hear the double genitive) the political. In other words, the entire Western political discourse is a discourse about art, and specifically about poetry and myth. The specificity of Western political discourse would lie in its unavoidable reference to art. In this respect, the text that would mark the beginning of political thought would also be the text in which the question of poetics would emerge as such. The philosophical text that would first break into the question of politics would also be the text that would broach and delineate the basic concepts of what will later come to be called "poetics." Such a text Heidegger would

have himself identified in its originality, though not to criticize it, but to confirm and pursue its fundamental tendency.

In this description, one recognizes Plato's Republic. Indeed, it is in the Republic that a discourse about the essence of the polis first emerges and, strangely enough, in close connection with the question of the poets and of the mythoi or "stories" the poets should be allowed to relate in the polis. The scene of the Republic seems to have been paradigmatic for the entire history of political thought, to the extent that in the Republic the question of the poets and the poetic or the mythic appears in its full problematicity: the poets who tell false stories about the Gods and the heroes should be excluded from the polis, and yet the poetic or the mythic is essential to the constitution of the polis both in words and in deeds:

"Come, then, says Socrates, like men telling tales in a tale and at their leisure, let's educate the men in speech..."

"Shall we so easily let the children hear just any tales fashioned by just anyone and take into their souls opinions for the most part opposite to those we'll suppose they must have when they are grown up?"

"In no event will we permit it," says Adeimantus.

"First, as it seems, we must supervise the makers of tales; and if they make a final tale, it must be approved, but if it's not, it must be rejected. We'll persuade nurses and mothers to tell the approved tales to their children and to shape their souls with tales more than their bodies with hands. Many of those they

now tell must be thrown out."¹

Lacoue-Labarthe calls this scene "the primitive scene of philosophy," i.e., the political scene in which philosophy emerges in its essential relation with what Plato calls mythopoiesis.² This scene marks the way in which poetry comes to be decisive for the political, the way in which "true" poetry must ground the political and "false" poetry must be radically separated from the political order. The decisive thing, therefore, is not so much to trace poetry's effects in politics but rather to know how and why the political as such is affected by art or poetry. In other words, the question is: how is it that the political is driven towards the poetic? What about the poetic drive or Zug to the political?

Such a question, of course, can be addressed to the Platonic text. But it could also be addressed to Aristotle, whose Poetics may have very much to do with the political order, to Rousseau, Kant, Hölderlin, Schelling, a certain Hegel, Nietzsche or Wagner, all of whom, at a certain point, in one way or another, felt the necessity to appeal to art or poetry so as to disclose the essence of the political. Throughout, then, the reference to poetry and to its founding myths would have been

¹. Republic, 377a-377c.

². Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, L'Imitation des Modernes, p. 176.

unavoidable. Heidegger himself--he perhaps more than others, in the radicalization of the gesture--would have answered such a necessity.

To trace out the return of the myth in its long history, one would need to engage oneself in what could be called a genealogy of Western mytho-polito-logy. One would need to inquire into what seems to be the mythic necessity of the political, if by myth one indeed understands the story or the narrative (whether strictly poetic or "artistic" in any other way) that would constitute the political in its essence. The question would be: How is it that, in the very constitution of its essence, the political must have recourse to the mythic? This task as a whole would of course extend beyond the limits of this work. Yet it remains decisive and to a certain extent necessary with respect to Heidegger, if it is true that Heidegger's thinking will have been the last representation or enactment of the mytho-poetic scene, and so the mark of the end or the closure of the political as such.

For that which defines the political as such is indeed the myth. And Heidegger is right to say that "history [and that is also the political for Heidegger] is, if it is anything at all, mythology."³ To inquire into the political is primarily to inquire into the myth

³. EM, 119.

through which the political as such is founded. The myth--and that is the expression, the communication and the sharing of the myth--is the opening and founding gesture of the political. For the myth is essentially communitarian. It is that which brings a people together. Even more: it is that which defines the very existence of a people. It is not surprising, then, that the greatest effort of modernity to produce myths and to constitute a mythology occurred in Germany, from the end of the Seventeenth to the middle of the Twentieth Century, in a country and at a time where the truly political stake was precisely--and still is in a way--the question of the identification and the constitution of Germany as Volk and as Sprache. This crucial political problem came to focus on the question of language, and specifically on the question of poetry and mythology. The essential move at the end of the Seventeenth Century toward the great Greek beginning and toward the power of its mythology has played a decisive role in the delimitation of the horizon from which the political was envisioned and thought. In that respect, there is a certain continuity between "The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism" (attributed to Schelling, but written under the influence of Hölderlin in 1796), which calls for a "new mythology," and specifically

for a "rational mythology;"⁴ Wagner, for whom "the myth contains the common poetic power of a people;"⁵ Nietzsche (at least the Nietzsche of the Wagner period) or Heidegger, for whom the political remains decisively attached to the poetic or the mythic in an essential sense.

The myth, then, is that which lies at the very heart of the community. It is the narrative through which the community can be identified, articulated, communicated and hence perpetuated. In other words, the myth is that through which the community is revealed to itself.⁶ For, as Nancy puts it, the myth is "neither a dialogue nor a monologue, but the unique word of many who thus recognize each other, who communicate and are united [communient] in the myth."⁷ To that extent, communism, in its effort to

⁴. Schelling (?) writes: "Before the Ideas are made aesthetic, i.e., mythological, they are of no interest to the people; and vice versa, a mythology is shameful for the philosopher before it has been made rational." To Schelling and Hölderlin, one would need to add the founders as well as the other "members" of the Atheaneum, the most important of which are: August Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Caroline Michaëlis, Schleiermacher, Novalis, Tieck.

⁵. Quoted by Manfred Franck in Der kommende Gott (Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 1982), p. 229.

⁶. This general statement also applies to the more concrete and detailed works of sociologists such as Emile Durkheim, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Mircea Eliad, Marcel Détiénne, all of whom emphasize the social function of the myth.

⁷. Nancy, CD, p. 128.

appropriate the "true" or "objective" essence of man as social man and in its desire to center the life of the community around such essence would perhaps constitute one of the most rigorous enactments of the myth.

What is also essential to the myth is that it is meant to initiate a radical beginning. The mythic temptation always appears in times of distress and crisis, and the "new mythology" is always appealed to with a view to replacing the "old" and "dead" mythology, the no longer functioning mythos. The new myth will provide another historical beginning, it will found the community anew. And yet, in this very founding, it is always a matter of recapturing the lost or forgotten origin. It is always a matter of bridging the gap that separates us from the origin. For the knowing of the origin opens up the possibility of a future and asserts the power of the people. Here again, Heidegger will have allied himself with the logic of the myth, even though his reading of Hölderlin can be said to function at the very limit of myth. Indeed, the god which is spoken of in the mythos is perhaps never to come, and in a time of "distress" marked by the absence of gods, it can only be a matter of freeing the space for the hypothetical coming of a new god. But the very appeal to the god remains as the only political alternative ("Only a god can save us"): the new humanity can arise only out of a relation to the divine, and this

can be done only under the condition that the people be ordered to the founding saying of the poet. The scene remains fundamentally mytho-theo-teleological.

That which Heidegger would have failed to acknowledge, thus rendering his own political misadventure possible, would have been the political danger inherent to the myth. Specifically, Heidegger would have failed to acknowledge that his time was living the greatest and most destructive perversion of the myth in Nazism. What our time will have demonstrated and the general horizon from which it compells us to think would be the extreme radicalization--and also perversion--of the myth, whether of Reason and Socialism in most Communist countries, or of Man as Übermensch in Nazism.^a The latter will not have been totally foreign to Heidegger, even though the thinking of the mythos he was engaged in had nothing to do with the Nazi myth. But even though Heidegger remained withdrawn from such a myth, he never quite put himself in a position to criticize the essence of the political as art. On the contrary. His political move toward art in general, and specifically toward Hölderlin's poetry was indeed a radical move away from the metaphysics of the

^a. From the standpoint of the myth, which directs and governs, excludes and punishes, Nazism and, let us say, "Stalinism" are the same. The difference, of course, would lie in the fact that whereas with Nazism the end of the Reich also meant the end of the myth, the end of Stalinism did not mean the end of Communism as such.

Nazi myth. But it was at the same time a decisive move into the mythos as the essence of the political, a move into the "truly" or "authentically" mythic.

In that respect, Heidegger's political engagement in 1933 as well as his political problematics of the 30's and 40's compel one to think the combined closure of the mythic and the political. Heidegger's own political errancy forces one into the question of the myth in its connection with the political. Heidegger suggests that the saying of a new mythos or Dichtung discloses the space for the coming of new gods. But the real question one needs to ask is whether the main political task today is not to think the end of the myth and hence also of the political as it never ceased to be considered since Plato. In other words, against Heidegger, but also because of Heidegger, one needs to think what J. L. Nancy calls "the interrupted myth."⁹ One needs to think the end of the narrative that constituted the political in its essence. Hence also the end of the political as such.

Heidegger failed to acknowledge the myth of the myth, and that is also the myth of the political. Heidegger failed to acknowledge the myth of the politically founding saying. Or--to put it differently--he failed to acknowledge that as soon as the myth is

⁹. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Le mythe interrompu" in La communauté désœuvrée (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1986). Henceforth CD.

formulated, as soon as it becomes a stake as myth, it is already interrupted, already absent, already separated from its essence. The "myth", i.e., "the poeticity of the political and the politicality of the poetic,"¹⁰ in its formulation of myth as myth--is itself a myth, i.e., a poetizing and fictitious projection. Surely, this does not mean that Heidegger's conception of the myth can be reduced to fiction, for the mythos Heidegger is speaking of is essentially related to thinking, and that is precisely to the difference between poetry in the sense of fiction (what Heidegger would call Poesie) and thinking poetry (i.e. Dichtung). Nonetheless, the very appeal to the myth as the historical and political founding of a people is itself a myth in the sense of a fiction.

Indeed, to will to live under the power of the myth is already to express its death. To appeal to the myth as myth, to appeal to its necessity as myth is already to formulate the impossibility of its presence. As soon as the mythic becomes an object of thought and debate, as soon as it appears as a "solution" to a historico-political "crisis," it can no longer operate as myth. The power of the myth cannot be anticipated. It can only be looked at and thought once it is no longer operative. To that extent, the creation of a myth is itself a myth: the myth lives only in the affirmation of

¹⁰. Nancy, CD, p. 142.

its own death. In that sense, our modernity (or post-modernity) is nothing but the assertion of the impossible myth, the assertion of the absence of relation to the myth, in spite of the plurality of the appeals to the myth and to its initiating power. Today we are left with the will to the myth and with the impossibility of its achievement. But, as Nancy puts it:

...we are neither in the life nor in the invention nor in the word of the myth. As soon as we speak of "myths," of mythology, we mean this negation at least as much as the affirmation of something. That is the reason why our [mythological] scene and our discourse about the myth, the whole of our mythological thinking composes a myth: to speak about the myth has always been to speak about its absence. And the very word "myth" designates just as well the absence of that which it names (CD 132).

Hence the myth is a myth. Yet nothing was more "concrete," more monstrously concrete than, say, the Nazi myth. What is expressed in this tautological formulation ("the myth is a myth"), then, is the very essence of the myth. Indeed, the myth as the founding gesture of the political is itself a myth in the sense of a fiction. But this fiction--and that is the fantasmatic projection of the essence and the destiny of a people--is in turn actual. The myth is essentially paradoxical to the extent that its utterance is always the designation of the absence of that which it names, and yet it is in the name of such absence that actuality is transformed.

Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin does not escape this

logic: there is something fictitious (and something politically dangerous) about the way in which Heidegger sees in Hölderlin's poetry both the origin and the future, both the essence and the destiny of the German people. There is something politically dangerous (and also inadequate, as will later be shown) in the affirmation of the essence of the political as poetry, in the 'mythification' of the political. In his attempt to phrase the political in terms of a poetic essence, Heidegger may have provided the most radical thinking of the myth, even though the myth as such is hardly ever considered in the Heideggerian text. Heidegger's thinking is exemplary not so much because of the analyses of the mythic he would have provided, but rather because of the rigorous effort he made to bring the poetic and the political together.

What remains of the myth today is its own interruption. The proliferation of discourses about--and temptations of--the myth which invade our modernity is precisely the mark of the impossibility of a mythic humanity. The myth--the poetic and the political united--has lived its end. What remains of the myth is the desire for its actualization, and such a desire constitutes its very interruption. From Plato to Heidegger, that which defined the political in its foundation, and that is the poetic, is now interrupted. One is now left with the end

of the political. To live the end of the political is to acknowledge and assert the interruption of its myth. This implies both the acknowledgment of a fact and the assertion of a demand, viz. that the myth does not return so as to found the political anew. The myth is interrupted, and yet one must not cease to interrupt it.

For

...the very idea of the myth resumes perhaps by itself what could sometimes be called the total hallucination, sometimes the total imposture of the self-consciousness of a modern world that exhausted itself in the fabulous representation of its own power. In the idea of the myth is perhaps concentrated the whole of Western pretension to appropriate its own origin, or to steal its secret from it, so as to identify itself, finally, absolutely, around its own utterance and its own birth (CD 117).

And Nancy adds: "In that sense, we no longer have anything to do with the myth." One cannot oppose to the nazi myth (which according to Nancy reveals the essence of the myth) another myth, a new mythos or narrative that would initiate a new beginning. Unlike what Thomas Mann wrote to Kerenyi in 1941, the task is not to "take the myth away from intellectual Fascism so as to invert its function in a human sense."¹¹ Rather, the myth needs to be "interrupted". And one needs to think and live at the end of the myth.

¹¹. Quoted by J. L. Nancy in La Communauté Désœuvrée, p. 116.

(B)

What does all this imply? Can the political be thought separately from the mythic or the poetic? Or does it cease to be the political as soon as the myth is taken away from it? What remains of the political when the political has come to an end? How is the political articulated in its very interruption?

What, then, if the political were to be thought away from the poetic? What if the essential thing about the political today were precisely to think it without the myth? Is there anything, in the history of Western thinking, that would enable us to think the political order without ever appealing to the poetic? What if the polis or the community were not the place of a common mythos that would reveal the polis in its essence, but rather the space of the many (oi poloi), the space within which the other would be disclosed as other and not as the same? What if there were something in the political, 'something' for which there would perhaps be no adequate name, but that would nonetheless resist the mythic and hence totalizing tendency of the political?

If it is true that the history of "political" thought is indeed sustained by a tradition that runs from Plato to German Romanticism and Idealism, up to Heidegger,

there is also another tradition for which the artistico-poetic tendency to phrase the political is--if not absent--at least not central. Such a tradition would be represented by a range of thinkers--the most central figures being Aristotle, Kant, Arendt, Lyotard, all of whom would have put the political emphasis on man's ability to deliberate and judge in a world essentially shared by others.

Aristotle would perhaps be the major, or at least the initiating figure of such tradition. His writings about politics are well known and to a certain extent his concern could be said to have been more directly "political" than Plato's. Many of these writings are actually directed against Plato. It is very surprising, then, that Heidegger never turns to Aristotle when his analyses come to focus on the meaning of the Greek polis. Everything happens as though Heidegger were very careful to avoid confronting Aristotle. Whenever Heidegger takes up the issue of the polis--whether in the Rectoral Address, in Introduction to Metaphysics or in the Parmenides volume--he is faced with notions and problematics that constitute the very heart of Aristotle's meditation: praxis, poiesis, theoria, phronesis are words that Heidegger comments upon, yet without ever mentioning Aristotle.

In the Rectoral Address, for example, replying to

the question "What is theoria for the Greeks?." Heidegger writes:

One says: pure contemplation, which remains bound only to the thing in question and to all it is and demands. This contemplative behaviour--and here one appeals to the Greeks--is said to be pursued for its own sake. But this appeal is mistaken. For one thing, "theory" is not pursued for its own sake, but only in the passion to remain close to and hard pressed by what is as such. But, for another, the Greeks struggled precisely to conceive and to enact this contemplative questioning as one, indeed as the highest mode of *energeia*, of man's "being-at-work." They were not concerned to assimilate practice [Praxis] to theory; quite the reverse: theory was to be understood as itself the highest realization [Verwirklichung] of genuine practice. For the Greeks science is not a "cultural good," but the innermost determining center of the people-state Dasein.¹²

Now if the understanding of theoria as the "highest realization" of praxis is indeed operative in Plato's Republic, things seem to be quite different with respect to Aristotle. Indeed, from the very beginning of the Nicomachean Ethics, and mostly as a reaction against Plato, Aristotle is very cautious to draw the distinction between theoria and praxis on the one hand, praxis and poiesis on the other hand. One recalls that, in the Republic, Plato proposes to abolish the distinction between poiesis and praxis, so that the fundamental ambiguity and fragility of human affairs be done away with. In the City built in logos all citizens should

¹². Ed. Klostermann, 1983, pp. 11-12; eng. transl., pp. 472-73.

fulfill a very specific activity and correspond to a specific demand of the polis. They should be like craftsmen: one man, one job. The city itself, as a coherent totality, is conceived as a workshop in which each citizen is to fulfill a mean defined by the rigorously predefined ends of the polis. In reducing the organisation of the bios politikos to the one of a workshop, Plato wishes to avoid the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent to praxis. As Arendt puts it: "Exasperation with the threefold frustration of action [and that is praxis in Arendt's vocabulary]--the unpredictability of its outcome, the irreversibility of the process, and the anonymity of its authors--is almost as old as recorded history."¹³ As a matter of fact, it started off with Plato. But the univocity of poiesis is itself ruled by what Plato considers to be the highest form of univocity, and that is the univocity of theoretical life. Theoria is nothing but the unobstructed view of fully present and unambiguous Ideas. And since the activity of theoria is itself a praxis, indeed the highest form of praxis, there is a certain kinship between the activity of the philosopher, the activity of the statesman and the activity of the craftsman, although there are differences of level between the three. But the

¹³. Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 220.

important thing to know is that the statesman must necessarily be a philosopher, and that he must rule the polis as a craftsman. In the Republic, as Arendt puts it, "the philosopher-king applies the ideas as the craftsman applies his rules and standards; he 'makes' his City as the sculptor makes a statue."¹⁴ The ultimate purpose of such a reduction is to dismiss the role of doxa or opinion in the political life: it is to take the ambiguous and very often 'useless' essence of praxis away from the political order.

Now Aristotle's political thought is directed against such a view. Unlike what Plato says, Aristotle thinks that praxis differs essentially from both poiesis and theoria, and that doxa alone--the right doxa, viz. phronesis--is to rule the political life. And if one is to agree with Arendt, one will have to say that in deliberately setting "the insight [this is Arendt's translation of the Greek phronesis] of the statesman against the wisdom of the philosopher, Aristotle was probably following, as he did so often in his political writings, the public opinion of the Athenian polis."¹⁵ Such a statement, if it is true, would radically call into

¹⁴. Ibid., p. 227; Arendt is referring to the Republic 420.

¹⁵. Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture" in Between Past and Future (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), footnote n° 14.

question what Heidegger says about phronesis in the Parmenides volume. To the following statement in Plato's Republic: "Those who are not rescued by phronesis drink beyond any measure" (621 a), Heidegger provides this comment:

phronesis means here the insight of that in-seeing, which has a sight into what is authentically seeable and unconcealed. The seeing which is alluded to here is the seeing of the essential sight, i.e., of Philosophy. Phronesis means Philosophy and the word says: having an eye for the essential (GA 54, 178).

Now if this is indeed an adequate comment on Plato's understanding of phronesis, the clear distinction that Aristotle draws between phronesis and sophia in the sixth book of the Nicomachean Ethics would tend to put Heidegger's comment into question.¹⁶ Whereas theoria corresponds to the part of logos "by which we perceive the kinds of things whose principles cannot be other than they are," phronesis and praxis in general correspond to the part of logos "by which we investigate the kinds of things whose principles may be other than they are."¹⁷ The first part Aristotle calls "scientific" (epistemonikon); the second he calls "calculative" or "estimative" (logistikon).

¹⁶. Our comment only applies to the Ethics, for in the Metaphysics (book M) and On the Heavens phronesis is used in a very Platonist sense and is synonymous with science (episteme or gnosis).

¹⁷. Nicomachean Ethics, 1139 a 5-10.

The issue, however, is not to know whether Heidegger provided an adequate explanation of what phronesis 'really' meant for the Greeks. In other words, it is not a question of knowing whether Aristotle was 'closer' to what the Greeks 'really' thought about praxis. Rather, it is a matter of wondering why, in a discussion about the polis, and specifically about a notion as politically determined as the notion of phronesis, Heidegger exclusively turned to the Platonic text and deliberately avoided the confrontation with Aristotle whose political thought was so much opposed to Plato's. In other words, it is a matter of knowing whether Heidegger's philosophical choice is not also--and perhaps primarily--a political choice. Would the absence of reference to Aristotle's political text constitute a political rather than a philosophical lack?

How, then, does Aristotle's text resist Heidegger's analyses of the polis and of praxis? As we suggested earlier, the answer is to be found in Aristotle's effort to clearly distinguish between praxis, poiesis and theoria, so as to delineate a space that would be proper to praxis itself and hence to define the specificity of the political life. These distinctions are perhaps most clearly traced out in the fifth chapter ("Action") of Arendt's The Human Condition. To briefly recall her analysis: There are four major differences

between poiesis (or "work") and praxis (or "action"), one of which is a general distinction, the other three distinctions being more specific. Generally speaking, then, the process of working or producing is definite. It has a definite archè or beginning: the project of the product, and a definite telos or end: the completion of the product. It requires definite means and definite skills. Unlike the univocity of working, action is essentially ambiguous. It is ruled by principles that cannot be as definite and as rigorous as the rules governing poiesis or theoria, and it is always caught within a pre-existent set of relations with others. Hence it involves much "difference of opinion and uncertainty," and for this reason, its investigation cannot reach the exactness which "must be expected in other departments of philosophy."¹⁸ The three specific distinctions follow from this general determination. First, unlike working, the process of which can be started all over again in case of failure, the process of action is irreversible. Or, as Arendt puts it:

Whereas men have always been capable of destroying whatever was the product of human hands and have become capable today even of the potential destruction of what man did not make--the earth and earthly nature--men never have been and never will be able to undo or even to control reliably any of the processes they start through action (The Human Condition, 222-23).

¹⁸. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1094 b.

Second, whereas predictability rules the activity of working, the outcome of action is unpredictable: he who acts knows that he never quite knows what he is doing, that he can become 'guilty' of consequences he never intended or even foresaw--in short, that he is just as much the patient and the victim as he is the doer of his action. Finally, whereas working appears as an anonymous activity, i.e., as an activity through which the working agent merely appears as the representative of a working process, action reveals the agent as 'who' (and not 'what' he is) he is. Praxis discloses the life of the agent in its very 'whoness.'

Now that praxis has been distinguished from theoria and poiesis, it is a matter of bringing to light the very specificity of the bios politikos. What is praxis? And in what sense would the Aristotelian understanding of the political life call into question Heidegger's conception of the polis as the poetic space in which the disclosure of Being would occur? Once again, Arendt's analyses are most useful.¹⁹

¹⁹. In the context of this work, it is not a matter of Aristotelian exegesis. Much of what Arendt says with regard to Aristotle could be nuanced or even put into question. But Arendt's reading of Aristotle is of great help for whoever wants to think of the polis as a space within which the sharing of words and deeds would be privileged over a Platonist or Heideggerian conception. For us, then, it is a matter of thinking the polis in 'horizontal' terms--in terms of interaction and exchange--

According to Arendt, for the Greeks of the polis, praxis seems to have primarily designated the sharing of words and deeds in a common realm. It is the sharing of speech and action, and not the walls or the laws of the polis, that constituted the polis as such:

Of all the activities necessary and present in human communities, only two were deemed to be political and to constitute what Aristotle called the bios politikos, namely action (praxis) and speech (lexis), out of which rises the realm of human affairs (ta ton anthropou pragmata, as Plato used to call it) (The Human Condition, pp. 24-25).

Speech is therefore essential to the very constitution of the political life. But by speech one must not understand the mythos (what Heidegger would call the Dichtung) through which the essence of a people would be disclosed. On the contrary, speech was promoted as the manifestation of a plurality of opinions and as a means of exchange and persuasion. In a way, to belong to the polis was nothing more than to talk to each other. Such is the reason why Aristotle's 'definition' of man as zoon politikon can be understood only insofar as it is related to the other definition according to which man is a zoon logon ekhon. As Arendt puts it:

In his two most famous definitions, Aristotle only

more than in terms of a common relation to Being. We are engaged in a thinking that would attempt to privilege the plurality of opinions and actions over the univocity of a people gathered around its common mythos or Dichtung.

formulated the current opinion of the polis about man and the political way of life, and according to this opinion, everybody outside the polis--slaves and barbarians--was aneu logou, deprived, of course, not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other (The Human Condition, p. 27).

In the polis, then, individuals are related to other individuals through words and deeds, and such a relation discloses the citizens as 'who' they are. In this sense, "action" is essentially inter-action. The polis is the place in which the plurality of speakers and doers is disclosed. It is the place of the many (oi poloi). In other words, speech and action reveal the otherness and the distinctness of the other. In speech and action, 'I' appear to the other as 'who' I am, i.e., as the doer of such actions and the speaker of such words. It is of the utmost importance to emphasize the fact that Arendt defines this ability to act and speak as a "setting something into motion," as an ability to begin. In the activity of praxis, men (all men) are "newcomers" and "beginners." The power to begin belongs to the very nature of the human condition as vita activa. One recalls that Heidegger reserved the privilege of the beginning to the founders, and specifically to the poets of the polis, and not to men qua men. Action, origin and beginning--that is archè--are in the hands of the citizens themselves. The members of the polis do not appear as

such through the communion in the beginning initiated by the poet. Rather, each citizen, insofar as he speaks and acts, is himself a beginner. And so the polis is not the space disclosed by the mythos (or the Dichtung) of the poet on which the people as a whole would hinge. Rather, the polis is the space of the many disclosed through a web of words and deeds. Arendt writes:

The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world. With respect to this somebody who is unique it can be truly said that nobody was there before. If action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality, then speech corresponds to the fact of distinctness and is the actualization of the human condition of plurality, that is, of living as a distinct and unique being among equals (The Human Condition, p. 178).

Everything Arendt says here seems to radically oppose Heidegger's conception of the political. In Aristotle's view, what we have come to call the essence of the political is irremediably bound to a notion of plurality. The polis is essentially the sharing of a common concern for a common realm through communication. The polis is nothing but the space within which people are essentially with others and appear as such through action and speech. But the action is the action of one specific agent, and the speech is the speech of one specific speaker. As soon as the speech and the action become the speech and the

action of an entire people, then the citizens are no longer disclosed in their individuality and no longer appear as who they are. Again, such conception of the political life is most remote from Heidegger's discourse, whether in 1933-34, when the identity of the people was being sought in the geistige Führung, or later, when the 'whoness' of "Germany" was tailored to the Dichtung of Hölderlin. Never did Heidegger even consider the possibility of a political life that would depend on the sharing of a plurality of deeds and speeches. For action and speech are in constant contact with what Arendt calls the "web" of the acts and the words of other men. Each man is always already caught within this web of relationships, so that his actions and his words are always part of a larger scene and a larger text. The polis is like a web in which the acts and the words of men would be woven together. Action and speech would mark the limit at which men would appear together as who they are. Hence the polis would be nothing but the disclosive exposure of the limit, nothing but the space that would articulate men together in an inter-textuality. The polis would then perhaps be the spacing of differences and particularities. This is perhaps how one could understand and reinterpret Arendt when she writes that

the polis, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking

together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be. "Wherever you go, you will be a polis": these famous words became not merely the watchword of Greek colonization, they expressed the conviction that action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly (The Human Condition, pp. 198-99).

The plurality of actions and opinions is primarily expressed in what is perhaps the most important feature of praxis, viz. phronesis. As has already been shown, Heidegger's obliteration of the meaning this notion conveys in the Aristotelian text is most remarkable, and politically certainly not innocent. What, then, is the threat inherent to phronesis? What is so remarkable about Aristotle's phronesis that Heidegger would have deliberately failed to take it into account? And is this political notion crucial to the point that no political thinking could do without it?

In the Nicomachean Ethics, phronesis designates the "virtue" (arete) of the calculative (logistikon) or opinative (doxastikon) part of the soul. It is defined as "a practical disposition with true logos concerning human goods (1140 b 20)." Phronesis is neither an art (its aim is not production or poiesis) nor a science (its object is not necessary) but a practical disposition aimed at the deliberation about what is good or bad for man. Hence

prudence is strictly human or anthropic: it is a virtue by which man knows how to act according to what is good or bad for man. But what is essential about phronesis is perhaps its origin, viz. the phronimos. Whereas very few people know how to define phronesis, anyone can recognize a prudent man. Phronimos is immediately identifiable whenever it occurs. For that reason Aristotle suggests that "we might arrive at the nature of prudence by examining the nature of those whom we call 'prudent' (1140 a 24)." Through the mere observation of prudent men, then, one can get to the heart of what prudence is. But what is perhaps most striking is that the whole of praxis--and hence also the whole of the political life--be exclusively a matter of a true deliberation and a true judgment that results in a true action. The 'essence'--if one can still speak in such a way--of the political would be nothing more and nothing less than the practice of a virtue difficult to define and yet easily identifiable. Without prudence, there can be no praxis and no political life, if by "political life" one understands the web and the frailty of relationships within which men are caught and with which they are compelled to cope. This understanding of the political life, in turn, would perhaps put into question the very search for an "essence." The political life is perhaps that which would most resist the move to the essence, that which would

endanger its life in the very move to its essence. In that regard, it is crucial to note that Aristotle sees no other possibility of defining, or rather circumscribing what is proper to praxis than the mere observation of the plurality of occurrences of phronesis. To live together in a common space primarily means to let the members of the polis practice a certain disposition by which they live well together.

Heidegger would have failed to acknowledge this essential feature of praxis and of the political matter as a whole. In moving from the political life and its plurality of opinions and comportments to what he thought to be the essence of such a life, Heidegger would have left aside the basic demands and prescriptions of the polis. In refusing to take the question of phronesis in its relation to praxis seriously, both in his engagement in 1933-34 and in his later writings, Heidegger became unable to think what was politically so threatening and destructive about Nazism. The philosophical elision was politically overdetermined. Heidegger himself lacked phronesis, that is essentially, judgment in the face of the events. Like Pythagoras or Parmenides, whom Aristotle says are indeed respectable and admirable "philosophers," Heidegger would have lacked practical sense. And this sense--which Kant will merely designate as "judgment"--has nothing to do with the greatness and the subtlety of the

mind. It is nothing other than common sense or true doxa. And this, in turn, is a kind of political excellence, that is, a "virtue" that arises from out of the political realm and that is exercised in the realm of human affairs. In that respect, Aristotle would not be far from saying, with Callicles, that philosophy (as the highest activity of the intellect) drives man away from "all the things that need to be known so as to become an accomplished and distinguished man;" he is not far from considering that philosophers "know nothing of the laws in their cities, or of the language they should use in their business associations both public and private with other men, or of human pleasure and appetites" and that, "in a word, they are completely without experience of habits (ethon)."²⁰ That is the reason why Aristotle chooses Pericles rather than Pythagoras, Parmenides or Anaxagoras as the example or the type of the prudent man. Pericles and "others like him" are prudent because "they are able to perceive (theorein) what is good for themselves as well as for other men."²¹ Theorein means to see. Hence prudence is a kind of seeing. But as distinguished from what Heidegger seems to suggest, it does not mean to "have an eye for the essential," and that is for Being. In the context of

²⁰. Gorgias, 484 cd.

²¹. Nicomachean Ethics, 1140 b 8.

praxis. this particular seeing is aimed at the management of human affairs and directed toward the others with which the prudent man lives. The absence of prudence or judgment, then, would be a kind of blindness that would result in the obliteration or the covering-up of the political realm, and that is of the web of relationships within which each man is caught.

Since prudence is aimed at the management of human affairs, and since the opinions as well as the actions of men are always caught in an already shared world, prudence necessarily results in a common deliberation in which each citizen is to participate. Deliberation (bouleusis) is what most reveals the plurality of opinions; it designates the very hinge on which the bios politikos turns. What is crucial about the polis or the community is that everybody be able to formulate his opinion, that everybody be able to speak about the polis itself. Such would perhaps be the best definition of demokratia, a definition that indeed refuses to privilege the efficiency and the univocity of the polis over its plurality and its plurivocity. The unity and the subsistence of the polis would be guaranteed only through the plurality of its speeches and of its deeds. The community would exist only through the expression of its own explosion, through the diffusion of its multiple voices, i.e. through the unceasing exchange of words and deeds between its members.

Hence the community would be most remote from the unifying mythos or discourse of the Führung, whether such Führung be "spiritual" or "poetic." The submission to or the recognition of a unique voice in the political realm marks the impossibility of deliberation and the death of judgment. The political life is most endangered when it is centered around a common discourse, when it grounds its essence on a unifying myth. To inscribe deliberation and judgment at the very heart of the political, on the other hand, is to prevent oneself from the totalitarian closure inherent in the mythic temptation; it is to resist the myth of the poetic voice that opens up the future of an entire people in the disclosedness of its concealed origin.

Arendt never ceased to react against the covering-up of the essential role of judgment in the political realm. At the end of the final lecture of the course on "Basic Moral Propositions," in a very Aristotelian passage, Arendt denounces the evil implicit in the inability or the refusal to judge:

In the last analysis...our decisions about right and wrong will depend upon our choice of company, with whom we wish to spend our lives. And this company [in turn] is chosen [and this choice involves much of what Aristotle calls bouleusis and proairesis] through thinking in examples, in examples of persons dead or alive, and in examples of incidents, past or present... Morally and even politically speaking, indifference, though common enough, is the greatest danger...Out of the unwillingness or inability to choose one's examples and one's company, and out of

the unwillingness to relate to others through judgment, arise the real skandala, the real stumbling-blocks which human powers cannot remove because they were not caused by human and humanly understandable motives. Therein lies the horror and, at the same time, the banality of evil.²²

For Arendt, this "evil" is perhaps most proper to our Century and was best revealed in its epitomized version, viz. in Nazism. The absence of judgment, and that is to say primarily the absence of critical thinking, is what enabled Nazi propaganda to spread as quickly and as easily as it did. The absence of judgment is the manifestation of a politically desubstantiated life.

The problematic of judgment is perhaps what constitutes the very center of Arendt's political thinking. This problematic arises mainly from a retrieval and an interpretation of Kant's Critique of Judgment in conjunction with his more directly historical and political writings. In Arendt's writings, judgment first appears as a condition for acting, and in close connection to the Aristotelian phronesis. One finds different accounts of judgment in connection with the vita activa in the texts from the 60's, whether in "Freedom and Politics,"²³ in "Truth and Politics," or in "The Crisis of

²². Course given at the University of Chicago. The last session was entitled "Some Questions of Moral Philosophy" (Hannah Arendt Papers, Library of Congress, Container 40, p. 024651).

²³. "Freedom and Politics," in Freedom and Serfdom: An Anthology of Western Thought, ed. Hunold, 1961.

Culture."²⁴ Like phronesis, judgment is rooted in common sense, which "discloses to us the nature of the world insofar as it is a common world;" like phronesis too, judgment "enables man to orient himself in the public realm, in the common world." Political judgment is also the result of the gathering of other people's opinions with whom one lives. Such gathering is in itself both a debate in which everybody tries to be persuasive and convincing and a deliberation with oneself. The activity of judgment is aimed at the formation of opinions and at the performance of actions in the political realm. Hence "judging is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass."²⁵

Yet if one turns to Arendt's writings of the 70's, one sees a shift in intonation. Indeed, judgment no longer appears as a faculty operative in the vita activa. It is now on the side of the vita contemplativa. Judging is now decisively aligned with thinking. In the act of judging it is no longer a matter of a deliberation between political actors with a view to acting. The emphasis has shifted from the actor on the stage of the world to the spectator in the hall. It is now a matter of judging

²⁴. "Truth and Politics" and "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance," in Between Past and Future (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961).

²⁵. Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 221.

events that have already occurred. In other words, it is a matter of judging appearances. At this point, Arendt turns to Kant's Critique of Judgment. Now what is most striking about Kant's analysis of judgment is that it does not arise from a discussion about the political but from the examination of the phenomenon of taste and hence from an aesthetic concern. The question, then, becomes to know how Arendt can retrieve a theory of political (and not aesthetic) judgment from the third Critique. What about the relation between aesthetic judgment and political judgment?

For Arendt, politics is essentially a matter of phenomenality or manifestation as self-disclosure in a space of appearances. Political things, whether words or deeds, shine forth in the midst of beings, but in a world essentially shared with others. Just like works of art. For both art and politics are rooted in common sense, i.e., in what Kant calls the sensus communis. This "common sense" is no longer the good sense²⁶ of phronesis, but rather the sense by which our strictly private and "subjective" five senses are adjusted to a nonsubjective and "objective" world which we share with others. Both art and politics "are phenomena of the public world."²⁷ They both reveal a world which, from the very outset, is

²⁶. What the French call "bon sens."

²⁷. "The Crisis in Culture," p. 218.

shared with others. Therefore the phenomenality of politics is analogous to the phenomenality of art.

To say that the relation between art and politics is analogous, however, is not tantamount to saying that they are the same, nor, unlike what Heidegger suggests, that the essence of art as "poetry" is itself the very essence of politics. Nor does it amount to what Walter Benjamin denounced in Nazism, viz. "the aesthetization of politics." It is to draw the attention to a certain kinship between the phenomenality of art and politics in connection with the eyes of the spectator. From this very specific perspective, one can draw the analogy: as in aesthetic taste, the political judgment of the spectator involves "universality" (it involves the idea of humanity as a whole) and "disinterestedness" (he is merely a spectator and not an actor). The best and most famous formulation of such a political judgment can be found in Kant's commentary on the French revolution in Part II of The Contest of Faculties. Kant stresses that he is not concerned with the actual deeds of the actors but only with

the mode of thinking of the spectators which reveals itself publicly in this game of great revolutions, and manifests such a universal yet disinterested sympathy for the players on one side against those on the other, even at the risk that this partiality could become very disadvantageous for them if discovered. Owing to its universality, this mode of thinking demonstrates a character of the human race at large and all at once; owing to its disinterestedness, a

moral character of humanity, at least in its predisposition [my italics].²⁸

Judgment in the face of events, and specifically of extraordinary events like the French Revolution or the National-Socialist revolution, is unavoidable and irreplaceable. For judgment, like thinking, entails a withdrawal from the actual deeds of men in order to reflect on the meaning of what they do. There is a certain political responsibility of the spectator, and specifically of the thinker. But what if the thinker refuses to consider the problematic of judgment as philosophically and politically relevant? What if the thinker refuses to see in the rise of events, in the daily deeds and words of the plurality of the members of the community the essential stakes of the political life, and prefers to focus his political discourse on "the spiritual destiny" of a people as a whole and on the mythos around which this people would be gathered?

Heidegger's political misadventure may have revealed the necessity--and that is the political demand--to think the community in terms of plurality of words and deeds, of opinions and actions. It may have also revealed the resistance that politics (the political life) puts up

²⁸. Kant, On History, ed. Lewis White Beck, trans. L. W. Beck, R. E. Anchor, and E. L. Fackenheim, Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), pp. 143-44.

against the political, and that is to the move into the essence of politics. Heidegger's political misadventure may have revealed the necessity of bringing politics back to itself, back to the immediacy and the spontaneity of its factuality. And politics as factuality is precisely the interruption--fracture, displacement, disturbance--of the political constituted in the univocity of its myth.

But what if the possibility of such a community were already at play in Heidegger, and specifically in the text which marked the outbreak of his thought, viz. Being and Time? What if the project of fundamental ontology could give way to an unsuspected and promising thinking of the political, a thinking, moreover, that would work against Heidegger's later texts?

CHAPTER FOUR

Being, Time and Community

Personne ne pense plus que la
réalité d'une vie commune--ce
qui revient à dire de l'existence
humaine--dépende de la mise en
commun des terreurs nocturnes et
de cette sorte de crispation
extatique que répand la mort.

Georges Bataille--L'expérience intérieure

Of the possibility, then, as slight as it may be, but also as decisive as it could be, of the political in Being and Time. Of the possibility of what has often been considered as an impossibility.¹ Of a reading of Being and Time in which, to a certain extent, it will be a matter of reading Heidegger against Heidegger, specifically against certain of his later writings. Of a reading of Being and Time that would in a way resist that in the name of which Heidegger engaged himself politically. In such a reading, it will be a matter of putting the emphasis on thematics and analyses of

¹. Mark Blitz's Heidegger's Being and Time and the Possibility of Political Philosophy (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), however, would be a remarkable exception

Heidegger's that are usually set aside or considered as merely derivative. Specifically, it will be a matter of carrying these analyses to their most extreme possibilities, to the point, perhaps, at which the very center of Being and Time would get displaced, if not radically disrupted. Hence of a disruptive accent.

But on what does such an accent bear? On death. Specifically, on the death of the Other and on the connection of such a death with the very possibility of the community: on death in its connection with Being-with-one-another. The task that would follow from such an emphasis is often considered, as we suggested earlier, as an impossible task. For indeed, death, as my ownmost possibility, is most remote from the innerworldly world of equipment in which other Daseins are first encountered. Being-towards-death, and that is relating oneself to one's ownmost possibility, is the very possibility that undoes all other possibilities, the relation that undoes all other relations, whether to beings that are present-at-hand, to beings that are ready-to-hand, or to beings that are in the world in the same way I, as a Dasein, am in the world:

Dasein's death is the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there [die Möglichkeit des Nicht-mehr-dasein-könnens]. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relation to any other Dasein have been undone [my emphasis]. This

ownmost, non-relational [unbezügliche] possibility is at the same time the uttermost one (250).

In other words, Dasein is itself to the extent that it runs ahead to its death. It is death, its own death, that throws Dasein back entirely upon itself. Insofar as death is "essentially my own" (240), it not only cannot be experienced by the Other but, as the "ownmost," it is also the most nonrelational possibility. In projecting myself against my own self, death interrupts my relation to the Other. To be one's ownmost self is to be cut off from the Other as Other. For in the relation to the Other, Dasein's ownmost Being is not what is at issue.

It would seem, then, that when the question gets down to determining the ownmost Being of Dasein, and that is Dasein's essence, any reference to Dasein's being in the world with other Daseins,² to the nature of Dasein's

². Daseins: The use of the plural form attached to the word Dasein might strike as not being Heideggerian. Indeed, Heidegger never speaks of Daseins, but always of Dasein, and in such a way that it would seem that there would be no space for difference in Dasein or between the plurality of Daseins--whether the difference be a matter of sex (is Dasein a male or a female? Could it be both? And what about the sexual or the erotic in Being and Time?) or a matter of merely pointing to the Other Dasein, to the multiplicity of entities which have Dasein's kind of Being in the same way I do, and which are nonetheless different from me as well as from one another. In only speaking of Dasein, and in focusing on the ontological difference, Heidegger would have repressed the very possibility of thinking the difference that would space the plurality of Daseins. Even though such a thesis is to a certain extent legitimate, we shall be engaged in a reading that will attempt to show how the space of difference and alterity can indeed be articulated in Being

relation to other Daseins. is inevitably misleading and necessarily irrelevant. The investigation into Dasein's essence would be most remote from any political or communitarian concern. Dasein's ownmost Being and essential structure, its Being-towards-death, would actually interrupt the moment of the political and undermine its very essence. Does this mean, then, that there is no space for an authentic Being-with-one-another? Does this mean that the Other is, from the outset and inevitably, nothing but the anonymous "they" which my own Dasein, in its everydayness, gets identified with? Can the Other be something else than the very threat of my ownmost potentiality-for-Being?

(A)

Before attempting to think the relation between the Miteinandersein and death, it is necessary to delineate the context within which the analysis of the Being-with-one-another first arises. For such context is that which later in Being and Time determines the thinking of the Other as well as what we believe to be the very possibility of a retrieval of the question of the community.

The Other first appears in the context of

and Time.

innerworldly equipmentality. Dasein is always already engaged in a world constituted by ready-to-hand entities, but it is also engaged in a world within which other entities relate themselves to the entities ready-to-hand in the same way Dasein is related to these very entities. In other words, Dasein is, from the very outset, caught up in a world shared by other Daseins:

Thus along with the work, we encounter not only entities ready-to-hand but also entities with Dasein's kind of Being (71).

Hence the Other first appears in a derivative or mediated way: Other Daseins appear only insofar as they too are related to the equipmental world I am involved in. It is important to note that, at this point, Heidegger calls this other entity "Dasein" only insofar as it too relates itself to the world as a user. The Other is essentially (and not temporally, hence not in a Hegelian way) that which is mediated by equipment. In other words, the other Dasein is not Other as Other, but is only an other Dasein among other Daseins caught up in the same world. The only relation I, as a Dasein, have with other Daseins, is a relation mediated by the world of equipmentality, and hence mediated by our "concernful" mode of being in the world: Between the Other and "me," the world is always already interposed. It is perhaps for this reason that Heidegger, at this point, does not refer to the other

Dasein as the Other.

But this does not mean that the other Daseins I encounter in the world are merely "added on in thought to some Thing which is proximally just present-at-hand" (118). Dasein is not with other Daseins in a merely derivative way. Dasein is not first in the world and then with others. Rather, its Being-in-the-world necessarily implies, as a mode of its Being, its Being-with- others. In other words, Dasein is "essentially in itself Being-with" (Mitsein) (120). Being-with, to which being with the Other is terminologically and ontologically connected, as well as Dasein-with, are already given with the Being-in-the-world of Dasein. The chapter in which Heidegger, for the first time, explicitly enquires into being-with-one-another "leads to structures of Dasein that are equiprimordial with Being-in-the-world: Being-with and Dasein-with (Mitdasein)" (114). With respect to Being-with, this does not mean that it arises with equal originality alongside Being-in-the-world. Rather, it means that "the Being-in-the-world of Dasein is essentially constituted through Being-with" (120). Being-with is an essential mode of Being of Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Without this "with-like" (mithaften) way of being in the world Dasein could not be what it is:

By reason of this with-like Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world [Mitwelt]. Being-in

is Being-with Others (118).

But what does it mean for Dasein to be essentially with? Specifically, what does it mean for Dasein to be essentially with other Daseins? What does it mean for Dasein to live in a world always already shared with Others? In Heideggerian terms, the question amounts to knowing what the mode of Being of Dasein in its relation to other Daseins is. Heidegger calls Dasein's relation to the Being of entities present-to-hand that do not have the mode of Being of Dasein "concern" [Besorgen]. On the other hand, Dasein's relation to Others, in its being with Others, is one of Fürsorge, of "solicitude". It is important to note that both concern and solicitude, "as essential structures of the constitution of Dasein, belong to the condition of possibility of existence in general" (263). At the same time, it is precisely for this reason that "Being alongside the ready-to-hand belongs just as primordially to Being-in-the-world as does Being-with-Others" (181). In other words, Being-with-Others is just one constitutive mode of Dasein alongside other constitutive modes. It can in no way be privileged over or isolated from the other modes of Being, because the Other, who, in this respect, does not differ from the ready-to-hand, is aligned with "me": "He is the projected of my project," so that "Being-with-one-another is essentially represented by the model of my relation to the

other and not by the relation of the Other to me."³

Yet, for the purpose of this analysis, I shall henceforth focus exclusively on the Being-with-one-another and on the "solicitude" towards--or the "caring for"--the Other. In this regard, it is essential to note that the only section explicitly devoted to the problematic of the Miteinandersein in Being and Time, viz. § 26, is only developed by Heidegger with a view to answering the question concerning the "who" of everyday Dasein. In everyday life, Dasein encounters other Daseins "at work" in the world. For the most part, the life of Dasein is a "concernful" life in which other Daseins, who are also involved in a concernful relation to the world, are encountered. Hence the everyday life of Dasein in its relation to other Daseins is a life mediated by the world of entities present-to-hand in which it is involved. So that, proximally and for the most part, the relation of Dasein to other Daseins, viz. Fürsorge, is a "deficient" and "indifferent" mode of Being-with-one-another:

Being for, against or without one another, passing one another by, not "mattering" to one another--these are possible ways of solicitude. And it is precisely these last-named deficient and indifferent modes that characterize everyday, average Being-with-one-another

³. Michael Theunissen: The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Buber, trans. Christopher Macann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), p. 179. As we shall see later in our analysis, such statement can be challenged if thought from the perspective of the death of the Other.

(121).

In other words, because of the average, everyday life in which Dasein is involved, the Others, with which Dasein is from the outset, are considered in terms of das Man, of the "they", and thus form the horizon within which the Others, as Dasein-with, are thematized.

But if Heidegger mentions the deficient modes of solicitude, he also mentions, in an anticipatory way, i.e., in a way that anticipates the analysis of "Care as the Being of Dasein," the positive modes of Fürsorge.⁴ Solicitude, in its positive mode, has two extreme possibilities. The first possibility is, for the most part, linked to our concern with the ready-to-hand, and thus constitutes an inauthentic possibility of solicitude. Such a possibility consists in Dasein's taking the Other's care away from itself in taking over its concern. In such a possibility, Dasein puts itself in the position of the Other, so that the Other is "thrown out of his own position" (122). In taking the place of the Other, Dasein throws the Other away from its place, displaces it in such a way that the Other remains without a place, and hence completely dependent on Dasein: "In such solicitude the

⁴. Both the analysis of Besorgen (the "taking care of") and Fürsorge (the "caring for") are, in a way, anticipatory, for both will eventually have to be elucidated from the analysis of Sorge ("care") as "the Being of Dasein".

Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him" (122). Hence in Dasein's "leaping in for the Other" [für ihn einspringen] there is a danger of not letting the Other be what it is, of not letting the Other be other. Here is perhaps the first indication of a possibility of radical alterity in Being and Time, a possibility that will be confirmed and radicalized further on in the text.

In contrast to the leaping in for the Other, Heidegger suggests that authentic solicitude consists in a "leaping ahead of him" [ihm vorausspringen]. In such a possibility, it is a matter for Dasein of giving the Other's care back to itself, of "leaping ahead of the Other in his existentiell potentiality-for-Being," so that the Other becomes free for its own care. In this mode of solicitude, it is the very existence--and hence the very Being--of the Other that is involved, and not only some concern of his. All of a sudden, my relation to the Other in authentic solicitude appears as essential to the very problematic of existence. In one short paragraph, Heidegger broaches what can be considered as the possibility of an authentic Being-with-one-another, and even, as we shall attempt to show, of the possibility of the community. Specifically, he broaches the space that enables us to think the Other in its alterity, i.e., in a way that enables Dasein to render the Other free for

itself. To have an authentic relation to the Other is to comport oneself in such a way that the very existence of the Other becomes an issue for the Other. To comport oneself in such a way is to enable the Other to become free for itself, and that is to be engaged in its ownmost existential possibilities. "Freedom" and "existence" are essentially to be thought together:⁵ Dasein is always free for something, precisely because Dasein is an ek-sisting being, i.e., a being whose Being consists in its very ek-sistence. Dasein ek-sists in its being free for--whether for care, for the call of conscience, for death or for any existential possibility. Freedom is not a property of man, but rather a mode of Being: in engaging itself into its very own ek-sistence, Dasein becomes free for it.

But what must be the nature of authentic solicitude so that it can free the Other for itself? What kind of comportment does this imply? What kind of Being-with-one-another is at stake? Such questions lead us to the threshold of the issue already broached, viz. the question of the community. But it is precisely at this

⁵. In order to think the belonging together of ek-sistence and freedom, one would need to turn to Vom Wesen des Grundes and to the fourth section of Vom Wesen der Wahrheit, where freedom gets identified with ek-sistence: in engaging itself into the world, in standing outside itself into the open [das Offene], into the space of Unverbogenheit in which beings can come to presence. Dasein is engaged into a letting-be [Seinlassen] of beings. Such letting-be is what Heidegger calls "freedom".

point that Heidegger closes off the discussion:

Everyday Being-with-one-another maintains itself between the two extremes of positive solicitude--that which leaps in and dominates, and that which leaps forth and liberates [vorspringend-befreinden]. It brings numerous mixed forms to maturity; to describe these and classify them would take us beyond the limits of this investigation (my emphasis) (122).⁶

Hence it is perhaps beyond the limits of Heidegger's investigation that one would want to venture. Not, however, by way of completing a Heideggerian analysis that would have remained uncompleted in Being and Time or elsewhere. It is not a matter of pursuing and completing a predefined program. Rather, it is perhaps, at this point, i.e., at the threshold of the question of the community, a matter of thinking beyond Heidegger. And yet, everything that will be said henceforth will remain, in a way, Heideggerian, for it will arise from out of a reading of certain passages of Being and Time. Specifically, it will arise from out of a certain interpretation of death, of the death of the Other, and of Dasein's transcendence. So that our question, viz. the question of the nature of the relation of Dasein to the Other in authentic solicitude, needs to be postponed once

⁶. Rather, Heidegger proceeds to describe the Miteinandersein of everyday Dasein, for, "proximally and for the most part," the Others are encountered in the world of Dasein's concern. In such Being-with towards Others, Dasein is never itself. But then who is Dasein in everyday Being-with-one-another? The answer is: das Man, the "they".

again.

(B)

Why death? Because death, as we suggested earlier, is Dasein's ownmost possibility, the possibility that threatens and undoes all other possibilities, the horizon within which each Dasein lives and ek-sists as a being for which its own Being is an issue. Death is the mark of Dasein's Eigentlichkeit, that is the mark of its authenticity and its ownness. Hence death, as the mark of Dasein's transcendence, can appear as the very impossibility of the community. Death, which is always my death, will always remain withdrawn from the political life. It resists the being-in-common, to the point that it would become impossible to think something like an authentic Being-with-one-another, i.e., a Being-with-one-another at the very center of which Dasein's transcendence could be situated, a Being-with-one-another of which the essence would precisely be the death of the Other. Yet it is this impossibility that Heidegger invites us to think, or rather provokes us to think. For his analysis of death in its connection to the Being-with-one-another remains at the level of inauthenticity.

What, then, about the relation between death and Being-with-one-another? Is the Miteinandersein void of

any understanding of death? Not quite, as § 51 seems to show. But the understanding of death that publicness has is a deficient understanding expressed in "idle talk." Indeed, for the "they" death is not Dasein's ownmost possibility. It is not even a possibility. Rather, it is an event, and a rather usual and meaningless one:

People who are no acquaintances of ours are "dying" daily and hourly. "Death" is encountered as a well-known event occurring within-the-world (253).

To the "they" death is a mere Vorhandene. Even though it happens to everyone, it never destabilizes the "they" which remains unaltered by this very common event. People die, everybody will die, eventually: death is "obvious." But the life of the "they" never stops, it is never threatened. In other words, when taken over by the "they," "dying, which is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative, is perverted into an event of public occurrence which the "they" encounters" (253).

Hence any attempt to think the death of the Other would be inauthentic thinking. Such a thinking would express itself in a deficient mode of discourse, viz. idle talk. Indeed, such a thinking does not consider death in its dimension of possibility, but rather as an inevitable and hence trivial event. In other words, the thinking of the death of the Other is inauthentic insofar as it fails

to acknowledge the uniqueness or the irreducible "mineness" of death. The thinking of death in general leaves the essence of death aside. It is an anonymous thinking for an anonymous death, a thinking for which "people" die:

Factically one's own Dasein is always dying already; that is to say, it is in Being-towards-its-end. And it hides this fact from itself by recoinng "death" as just a "case of death" in Others--an everyday occurrence which, if need be, gives the assurance still more plainly that "oneself" is still "living" (254).

But what kind of "living" is at stake here? What are the essential features of a living-together which has an inauthentic understanding of death? What is the connection between a Being-in-common and death? If Being-with-one-another is thought from the "they," and that is from an abstraction within which all Daseins are interchangeable and replacable; if the "they" refuses to Dasein its transcendence and its uniqueness, of which Being-towards-death is the mark, then a certain conception of the community, and a certain conception of the political life is already under way: a community as unity, as totality, as communion and as fusion--in other words, a community which represses the essential transcendence of Dasein, a community turned towards its own immanence: an imploded community. If, on the other hand, Dasein is defined in terms of its Being-towards-death, and that is of its mineness, then the space of the Being-with-one-

another will no longer be the space of the "they," but the space of the co-appearance of each Dasein in its transcendence, without any possibility of fusion or communion.

What would need to be recognized, then, in the thinking of Being-towards-death as Dasein's ownmost possibility, is Dasein's transcendence. Insofar as the very structure of Dasein is a structure of excess, of transcendence, of a possibility that is always the possibility of one specific Dasein, the Other will always remain Other. The Other cannot be brought back to the Same (to myself, to the community). It always already exceeds the communion, the totality in which the "they" would entangle it. What is at stake here is indeed the ontological possibility of an ethics and a politics, a possibility grounded in Dasein's transcendence.

Heidegger considers such possibility of an authentic Being-with-one-another in § 60. This section is the last section of the second chapter of the second division. The chapter as a whole is devoted to the question of "Dasein's Attestation of an Authentic Potentiality-for-Being, and Resoluteness." In this chapter, then, it is a matter of knowing whether there is an authentic potentiality-for-Being of Dasein that will be attested in its existentiell possibility by Dasein itself. In chapter I, Heidegger revealed the ontological

possibility of such a potentiality-for-Being in Dasein's Being-towards-death. But the question is now:

Does Dasein ever factically [my emphasis] throw itself into such a Being-towards-death? Does Dasein demand...an authentic potentiality-for-Being determined by anticipation [Vorlaufen]? (266)

So here, in chapter II, Heidegger inquires into the authentic possibility of Dasein's existence, a possibility that would be the result of Dasein's own demand. Such is "resoluteness" [Entschlossenheit], at which Heidegger arrives in § 60. Entschlossenheit is the word Heidegger uses to name Dasein's authentic disclosedness [Erschlossenheit] attested in Dasein itself by its conscience. Entschlossenheit, then, is the authentic truth of Dasein, and, as such, it is the most "primordial" one. Entschlossenheit, along with its attestation in conscience, involves the three determinations of Being-there in the world, viz. the "state of mind" [Befindlichkeit], "understanding" [Verstehen], and "discourse" [Rede], along with their authentic modalities, viz. "anxiety" [Angst], "Being-guilty" [Schuldigsein] and "reticence" [Verschwiegenheit]. Each of these modes of Being have the characteristic of individualizing Dasein in its conscience, of cutting Dasein off from the "they" in which Dasein is involved, proximally and for the most part.

One would think, then, that Dasein's

"resoluteness" is nothing but a cutting itself off from the world, an interiorization of its self in its "conscience". It is actually quite the opposite. For "resoluteness" is Dasein's authentic mode of disclosedness, and that is its authentic way of projecting itself into the possibilities into which it is thrown. So that the "conscience" in which Dasein's "resoluteness" is attested is not to be thought in terms of the conscience or the interiority of a "subject" withdrawn from the world. Dasein's conscience is never my conscience for "I" am--is--not a subject. The conscience of Dasein is rather the interruption of any self-consciousness, for the inner life of self-consciousness is, according to Heidegger, always already outside of itself, thrown into the world. Dasein's conscience points to the very engagement of Dasein into the world, and to the possibility of its being free for this world. Dasein's conscience is the "call" to its own self (as opposed to the "they-self") that arises from out of the world and that engages Dasein within the world, along with the world. And that is precisely the reverse of interiority and isolation:

When the they-self is appealed to, it gets called to the Self. But it does not get called to that Self which can become for itself an "object" on which to pass judgment, nor to that Self which inertly dissects its "inner life" with fussy curiosity, nor to that Self which one has in mind when one gazes "analytically" at psychical conditions and what lies behind them. The appeal to the Self in the they-self does not force it inwards upon itself, so that it

can close itself off from the "external world". The call passes over [überspringt] everything like this and disperses it, so as to appeal solely to that Self which, notwithstanding, is in no other way than Being-in-the-world (my emphasis) (273).

What Entschlossenheit primarily does, then, is to take the they-self away from itself, to "leap over" it and "dispers" it, so that each Dasein is left with its own Self, and with its ownmost potentiality-for-Being.

But does this mean that insofar as "resoluteness" individualizes Dasein and undoes inauthentic Being-with-one-another, it also renders impossible any kind of authentic relation to the Other? Or does it mean, on the contrary, that insofar as it discloses Dasein authentically into the world, it becomes at the same time the very condition of possibility of an authentic--and that is to say free--relation of Dasein to the other Daseins with which it is in the world? Heidegger is quite clear if brief on this issue:

Dasein's resoluteness towards itself is what first makes it possible to let the Others who are with it "be" in their ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and to co-disclose this potentiality in the solicitude which leaps forth and liberates [vorspringend-befreienden] (298).

This passage not only points to the possibility of an authentic Being-with-one-another, but also determines the nature of the relation of resolute Dasein to the Other. To that extent, it provides an answer to the question that

we raised in discussing §26⁷ and that remained unanswered at that time. The difficulty with which the question of the authentic relation to the Other has to cope can be formulated in the following way: to relate oneself authentically to the Other is to relate oneself to the Other in such a way that the Other's ownmost potentiality-for-Being will be revealed to it. But how can Dasein help the Other relate itself to what is most proper to it? Surely, if what is at issue is the Other's ownmost and proper potentiality-for-Being, then Dasein, as the Other of the Other, will have no access to such ownness. Were Dasein able to do so, what it would relate itself to in the Other would no longer be the Other's ownmost Being, but rather something that could be pointed to or even taken up by Dasein itself. It would seem, then, that the relation of Dasein to the Other would be nothing but a relation of disowning, of disappropriation, of alienation. Such would indeed be the case if the very nature of the relation to the Other were not a relation of "letting-be". What Heidegger understands by a "letting-be" of the Other, and what we ourselves understand by it after Heidegger, is what needs to be clarified. For such understanding will be crucial to the question of the community.

In authentic Being-with-one-another, it is a matter of letting the Other be in its ownmost

⁷. See above, p.9.

potentiality-for-Being. Hence it is not a matter of pointing to that ownmost possibility, of showing it as that which has to be taken up by the Other. For that possibility, as the Other's ownmost possibility, is not something that can be pointed to. Nor is it a matter of remaining passive, withdrawn from the Other's ownmost Being, not concerned by the Other. It is not a "selfish" attitude. Rather, it is a matter of engaging oneself with the Other, for the sake of the Other, in such a way that the Other gets thrown back to itself, and that is to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, to its death as its ownmost and uttermost possibility. Such throwing back, however, is not the work of Dasein. Nor is it an order or an injunction that the Other would take upon itself. Rather, it is a withdrawal that calls the Other upon itself, a kind of active passivity or passive activity by which the Other would be faced with its ownmost Being. But insofar as this ownmost potentiality-for-Being is the Other's and essentially not mine, I can in no way tell the Other what this potentiality consists in. Nor can I, for the same reason, i.e., because of the transcendence of the Other, appropriate or reappropriate its ownmost Being with a view to inscribing it within a larger project, a work or a program. In my authentic relation to the Other, I am related to it in a way that radically excludes any teleological undertaking, even if this undertaking were to

be done for the sake of the Other. In resolutely comporting myself to the Other, I do nothing but primarily acknowledge the infinite transcendence of the Other, a transcendence that I, as resolute Dasein, can only acknowledge because of my own transcendence, because of my own awareness of Dasein's existential excessive structure. In resolutely comporting myself to the Other I do nothing but acknowledge and mark the impossible communion or fusion of the Others under a common program or a common end that would realize the Others' ownmost Being.

Even though this acknowledgment does not constitute rules for a praxis, and least of all for a politics, it perhaps points to the very essence of what it means to live within a common space, and hence it points to the horizon from which any authentic politics could unfold. This, to say the least, suspends and interrupts the praxical and political notions with which we are daily involved, viz. notions such as "nation," "people," "class," "State," etc., all of which conceive of men as subjects that can be brought together under larger universalities which, in turn, are themselves thought as subjects. In revealing Dasein's essential transcendence as the very heart of authentic Being-with-one-another, Heidegger radically puts into question these subjectal universalities, in such a way as to engage anew the question of our Being-together. So that now it would be a

matter of asking whether something essentially other is at issue in our Being-with-one-another. This other thing, following the thinking of Jean-Luc Nancy, can be called the community.⁸ We thereby wish to point to something that never ceases to come to us (insofar as it constitutes what is common to us) and which remains nonetheless withdrawn from what we usually call the society or the political life, yet allowing it from its very retreat.

(C)

Mourir sans but: par là
(ce mouvement d'immobilité),
la pensée tomberait hors
de toute téléologie...

Maurice Blanchot--L'écriture du désastre.

Being-with-one-another, Being-there-with-others, what could be called the community, cannot be thought of in terms of communion, of fusion. For Dasein, in the mineness of the Being-towards-death which marks its authenticity, manifests its transcendence with regard to the "others" considered as an anonymous mass (as "they").

⁸. Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy, La communauté désouvrée, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986. The remaining part of this chapter is engaged in an attempt to show how Heidegger's text can open the way to analyses that perhaps exceed Heidegger's "intentions," but that in any case reveal the unsaid of the text. Even though Nancy situates himself at a certain distance from Heidegger, we believe that most of what he says can be unfolded from out of Heidegger's text.

Indeed, the community is interrupted, fractured by the uniqueness or the singularity of Dasein, a uniqueness that it would not be able to include or to reappropriate in a fusional totality. Such would be the community: a factual Being-with-one-another that would take Dasein's transcendence, i.e., Dasein's ownmost possibilities, upon itself. In other words, the community would not present itself as a coherent whole within which each Dasein would have its "place" or "function"⁹--in other words, not as a performative totality functioning on the basis of an individual or atomistic understanding of man, a totality which would actualize the essence of man, but rather as a "rapport" which would ex-pose Dasein in its Being-with-other-Daseins, according to its existential structure.

Because of its existential-ecstatic structure, Dasein cannot be thought of as an individuality, since this (political) notion presupposes for Dasein the possibility of its being an atom, an immanent substance that would stand for itself. The ecstatic existence of Dasein is precisely the impossibility of what Nancy calls an "immanence." By immanence Nancy means any thinking or ideology which thinks of itself and of the world as a

⁹. Such conception runs throughout the entire history of metaphysics, from Plato to Hegel, and lies at the very heart of our contemporary political regimes, whether "capitalistic" or "communist". In such conception, the political community is thought as a signifying totality, as a living organism.

work, and hence as something which has to bring an essence into being, specifically the essence of man.

"Immanentism" is a humanism. In it, man--a certain conception of man--is both arche and telos, both the origin and the end. In that sense, Nancy means by immanence nothing else than what Heidegger means by humanism. We shall nonetheless keep Nancy's vocabulary, for the notion of immanence is opposed to the transcendence of Dasein and is a more directly political notion in Nancy¹⁰. Dasein is the being whose death cannot be put to work: it can neither be appropriated nor recuperated nor superseded in a organic totality, in a communion of bodies and souls that would live on and through its dead. As such, death is the very interruption and the very impossibility of an organic totality which, in turn, is nothing but the idea of a universal immanence, of a plural unity which functions as a Subject.

What Being and Time teaches us, implicitly but insistently, is that our Being-with-one-another cannot be dissociated from our implicit understanding of death, or, as Nancy puts it, that "death cannot be dissociated from the community, for the community is revealed in death--and

¹⁰. The word "immanence" is actually substituted for the word "totalitarianism" which Nancy had used previously on certain occasions. See, among other texts, the "Opening Remarks" in Rejouer le politique (Paris: Galilée, 1981) and "Le retrait du politique" in Le retrait du politique (Paris: Galilée, 1982). These two texts also bear the signature of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe.

reciprocally."¹¹ Death, or rather the way in which we comport ourselves to it, commands a certain conception of life, and specifically of our living-with-one-another. A community which does not understand death as a possibility, and as one's ownmost possibility, is a community which allows itself to put its dead to work, i.e., a community whose dead do not die "for nothing". The death of the members (and here the organic vocabulary is adequate) of the community is not a "useless" death, for insofar as the excess and the absolute loss in the Other's death is denied, death can be superseded, and the community of the dead becomes that upon which the community of the living can be elevated, justified. The living community can speak and act in the name of the dead, and that is always, sooner or later, more or less violently, more or less obviously, in the name of death itself, i.e., in the name of an impersonal death, of an immanent death. In the name of death and of its deads, which are conceived both as arche and telos, the community can require of its members that they not only die, but also kill for the community's sake, that their death be turned into something usefull, something creative: Into a work--whether a "work of art" (Goebbels), a work of Reason

¹¹. Ibid., p.39.

or of Spirit.¹²

Authentic community, i.e., the community that is revealed in the death of the Other, suspends and interrupts the community of immanence, the community of what chapter three revealed as the myth. It is attached to death as the very possibility of its existence, but to death as the very impossibility of its being put to work. The death to which the community is attached does not bring about the transition of the dead being to some communal intimacy. The community, on the other hand, does not bring about the transfiguration of its dead in some substance or subject--whether Nation, State, native Soul or Blood, Humanity. The community is precisely that which takes this impossibility upon itself. It is a community of what Nancy, after Blanchot, calls the "désœuvrement," i.e., a community that undoes and undermines the finalities at play in a work, and which does so by revealing itself as that which is workless.

¹². Spirit, Geist, from Hegel to Heidegger (at least to a certain Heidegger), is the word which signified the collectivity as project and the project as collective. Geist is the word for the arche-teleological principle that guides men in their deeds and in history. How can Heidegger have put to work such a notion in his political engagement, after having shown in Being and Time the necessity of avoiding [vermeiden] it? To what extent the introduction of such a vocabulary and its use in connection with the notion of Volk dismissed and denied the possibilities laid out in Being and Time, and specifically death as Dasein's ownmost possibility, is something that still needs to be thought. On the use of Geist in Heidegger's texts, see J. Derrida, De l'Esprit: Heidegger et la question, Paris: Galilée, 1987.

that which consumes itself in a pure loss--death--, in an excess that will not let itself be superseded:

Ne comptez pas sur la mort, la vôtre, la mort universelle, pour fonder quoi que ce soit, pas même la réalité de cette mort si incertaine et si irréelle qu'avec elle s'évanouit ce qui la prononce.¹³

In other words, the community does nothing but reveal to its members their finitude, along with the excess by which this finitude is marked: death as the ownmost and uttermost possibility. Or, as Heidegger puts it in Being and Time, it does nothing but reveal this being in which "death, guilt, conscience, freedom and finitude reside together equiprimordially [gleichursprünglich zusammenwohnen]" (385). Such residing-together Heidegger also calls "fate" (Schicksal), and it is also identified as the very condition of possibility of Geschichtlichkeit.

Hence the community would be the space within which I, as a resolute Dasein, would be conscious of the necessary finitude and the absolute transcendence of the death of the Other. The community would be nothing but the ex-hibition or the ex-position of the limit at which, on which and from which I would appear with--and relate to--the Other as Other. It would be the space within

¹³. Maurice Blanchot, L'écriture du désastre, Paris: Gallimard, 1985, p. 143.

which singularities (and not individuals)¹⁴ would appear together. How is this ex-position articulated? What kind of discourse, what kind of praxis unfolds from such a community? To what extent am I "consciously" attached to or involved in this articulation?

To the extent, precisely, that resoluteness is attested by Dasein's conscience. Conscience is said to be "the call [Ruf] of care" (§ 57). Now the call is a mode of discourse [Rede], and discourse "is a primordial existentiale [Existenzial] of disclosedness" (161). Insofar as disclosedness is primarily constituted by Being-in-the-world, discourse too must have a specifically worldly kind of Being. Discourse's way of Being-in-the-world is language [Sprache]. Insofar as language expresses Dasein's thrownness into the world, and not Dasein's "inner life," it is essentially Mitteilung. Mitteilen, in German, or at least in Heidegger's German, means both to communicate and to share. One does not share that which is communicated. Rather, communication itself is a sharing. Communication is not the transmission of an interiority into an exteriority, but rather the expression of the fact that the inside is

¹⁴. Unlike individuals or individualities, singularities are precisely that which calls for division, that which is always already shared among the others. Singularities are unique in their transcendence, but such transcendence is never withheld from the world. Rather, this transcendence is the mark of Dasein's authentic engagement into the world.

always already outside, in the world and with the others: "Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another" (162). For Dasein is essentially not a subject, i. e., not an immanent and self-sustaining structure with an 'inner life' of its own that would eventually unfold into the external world. Rather, in communication, "the articulation of Being with one another understandingly is constituted," so that through it "a co-state-of-mind [Mitbefindlichkeit] gets 'shared'" (162). Insofar as Dasein is not a subject, communication is essentially a sharing--the sharing of a space within which Daseins appear together in their ec-static ex-istences. And the community would be the space of such Mitteilung, the space of the communication that shares and of the sharing that communicates. Mit-teilen: to communicate, to share, to share a common space in the very communication of this space. But how is this space being communicated? What kind of communication is at play in such sharing?

Since Dasein is not a subject, since communication is not the expression of the inner life of Dasein, but rather the expression of its always already being involved with others in a common space, language cannot have the meaning, the use and the effects it usually has. In communication as Mitteilung, it cannot be a matter of

communicating one's own experiences, of defining programs or projects: of putting language to work in such a way that it would produce works around which and in which a community would communicate--as in a communion. In such communication, it is rather a matter of acknowledging the worklessness of language in its essential dimension of sharing. The language of the Mitteilung produces nothing. It is rather that which inscribes Daseins in their differences and their singularities, that which exposes them to one another and marks this exposition as the very limit at/on which they co-appear. But this co-appearing itself is constituted by the sharing: the Mitteilung is the very distribution and the very spacing of Daseins whereby Daseins become other for one another in a common space. Hence the Mitteilung privileges the articulation of Daseins in their differences over the organization of the community; it privileges the explosion of Daseins in their multiplicity over their implosion in society.

Communication inscribes--ex-cribes--the sharing: it writes it. It is a kind of writing, a writing that writes the désœuvrement of the community--in thinking, in language, and perhaps most of all in literature (precisely not as a whole of literary works, not as "books"¹⁵, but as

¹⁵. The community cannot be articulated like a Book. Like most political societies, Books function as self-enclosed and self-sustained identities: as immanent structures or Subjects. Hence the end of the Book would also signify the possibility of the community. In the

a writing that inscribes the sharing of singularities, a writing that inscribes the limit of our co-appearing). As such, it is perhaps most remote from the techno-social and performative language of society, the language that results in "ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative fraternizing in the "they" and in what "they" want to undertake."¹⁶ The society or Gesellschaft--and by society we mean the overstructured space of technology--would be suspended and interrupted by the Mitteilung of the community or the Gemeinschaft. Literature would be that which would most resist the efficiency and performativity of the Gesellschaft, that which would endanger it in revealing itself through another use (that would precisely not be a use) of language. But the community is not to take the place of society. It is rather to interrupt it, in such a way that the society would get dis-placed, dis-located in this very interruption. But such displacement does not constitute a common program or an elaborated project. The community, the Mitteilung is not something to come; it does not belong to the future. Nor does it belong to the past, in the way of a paradise lost that could be recovered through some reconstruction. For the community was never actually

question of the community, writing itself becomes an issue, a truly political issue.

¹⁶. Sein und Zeit, 298.

"there." It never happened; it was never an event. And yet it has always already occurred; it is constantly occurring, constantly coming to us, in the way of a call that would never cease to call. It is a call, a call that calls for itself, for the actualization of its own désœuvrement. Like Being. And it is perhaps our responsibility to hear the call and to comport ourselves resolutely to it. There is perhaps a proper (eigentliche) political dimension in this call, a dimension to which we must not remain deaf. For what is at issue in this call is Dasein's authenticity, and that is primarily Dasein's transcendence.

Dasein's conscience, then, the conscience at the very extreme of conscience,--since for conscience it is no longer a matter of desire and self-recognition, but of responding resolutely to the call of its own facticity--can only happen as the communication of the community, and as that which the community communicates: as language, as writing--as literature. So here we are, once again, faced with the question of literature as the very center of the question of the political. It is no longer a matter of poiesis as poetry (although it can be a matter of poetry) or myth, but rather of literature as the very inscription and articulation of Daseins in their differences, as the writing that differs and spaces--as the writing, perhaps, of différance. For writing marks the spacing of Daseins

and articulates them together in such spacing. But writing also differs, i. e., postpones, the moment of the techno-social, in such a way that this moment would essentially differ from itself. What this indicates is that the demand of the community be perhaps essentially scriptural, i. e., that the community be articulated in and as writing--which does not mean that the members of the community be necessarily involved in the actual writing and reading of "books".¹⁷ For the writing referred to is not the work of a subject that would be communicated to the community. Rather, the community as writing indicates that the community must be articulated in its own désœuvrement, and that the language of the Mitteilung is such as to respond to such a demand. This prescription, of course, does not make a politics, nor an ethics--although an insistent and persistent demand never ceases to emanate from the community (the community is in fact this very demand). It dictates, literally, nothing. And yet, it constitutes the limit or the horizon from which a certain politics could unfold. It constitutes the

¹⁷. The community as writing would actually be the mark of the end or the closure of what Derrida calls the "Book." For the Book is itself the expression of a full speech, the locus of a logos (or a mythos) and a voice present to itself and to its world, through which history as such can happen. The articulation of the community as writing would mark the closure of the political understood as logó- or rather as mythocentrism, i.e., as the founding and living speech in the communion of which the people as a whole would be united.

delimitation of a politics of transcendence and of
finitude: a politics of freedom.

CONCLUSION

At the very end of this work, Heidegger's political discourse can be resumed in its specificity as well as in its general context. With regard to the latter, the following conclusion can be drawn: in addressing the question of the political in terms of art, and specifically in terms of poetry as Dichtung, Heidegger allied himself with a problematic that was first formulated in Plato's Republic. But above all, he situated himself on the horizon of an historical and political debate that was initiated in Germany at the very beginning of the Nineteenth Century. This horizon was marked by a philosophical emphasis on art--and specifically on the mythic vocation of language--through which the German people was to exist as such. In other words, like the discourse of most German philosophers of the past three hundred years, Heidegger's own discourse focused on the question of Germany's identity. Is there such a thing as Germany? Can one talk of a German "people?" Where does the essence of Germany lie? Such were the questions that constituted the very heart of

Germany's political debate. And to a certain extent, one can assert that Germany is still concerned with these questions. In order to answer these crucial questions and to delineate the possibility of a truly German existence, German thinkers turned to the Greek model. Through the appropriation or the reappropriation of Ancient Greece, of its myths and of its art, it was a matter of originating something radically new. For the German people, it was a matter of identifying itself and of producing its own essence through a privileged relation with Ancient Greece.

Lacoue-Labarthe designates this problem of identity and identification as the question of mimesis.¹ This notion is the political notion par excellence, i.e., the notion in which the whole of the political drama since Plato is concentrated.² The structure of mimesis is complex and can be in no way reduced to the operation by which an "original" would be reproduced in a "copy." The logic of mimesis is contradictory: the German mimesis of

¹. Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, La fiction du politique, chap. 8.

². If this holds true for Ancient Greece and German thought, art and literature, it is not self-evident for the rest of the West. One might think, of course, that the Italian and the French Renaissance constituted the mimetic gesture par excellence. Yet the political dimension of such a gesture is not obvious. France, for example, never suffered Germany's identity and identification crisis. The question of language was never a central political issue as it was in Germany. The political problems were more directly religious and representative.

Ancient Greece is in search of a model by which it would itself become a model, autonomous and spontaneous. As Lacoue-Labarthe puts it:

What the German imitatio is in search of in Greece is the model--and hence the possibility--of a pure springing up, of a pure originality: the model of a self-formation.³

This model, Lacoue-Labarthe adds, is "explicitly Heidegger's in the Rectoral Address." It is still Heidegger's in 1967:

It is necessary to take the step back. Back to where? Back to the [Greek] beginning...But this step back does not mean that the world of Ancient Greece would need to be brought back to life in one way or another...⁴

The contradiction, therefore, lies in the fact that the appeal to the model is such as to initiate a radically new beginning, i.e., such as to free the derivative from the original.

Heidegger will not have been extraneous to such imitation. His entire "political" discourse, according to Lacoue-labarthe, will have been governed by the logic of imitation. From 1933 to the very end of his life, Heidegger never ceased to think the possibility of the political from the horizon of the great Greek beginning.

³. Ibid., 121.

⁴. Lecture held at the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Athens on April, 4, 1967.

and specifically from an endlessly renewed meditation on technè. Through and through, the question of history and of the political remained attached to the question of art, and specifically to the saying of Hölderlin, the major stake of which was the possibility of a relation to the gods. Till the very end, the only political alternative to the distress of the West was located in the essence of the political, and that is in art as Dichtung. Heidegger never even considered the possibility of another problematic. To the following question raised in the Athens lecture: "What about art today in the eyes of its ancient provenance?," Heidegger replies:

The ancient gods have fled. Hölderlin, who experienced this loss more than any other poet before and after him, asks in the elegy devoted to the god of the wine Dionysos and entitled "Bread and Wine":

Wo, wo leuchten sie denn, die Fernhintreffende
Sprüche?
Delphi schlümmert und wo tönet das große Geschick?
(IV)

After two thousand five hundred years, is there today an art that stands under the demand under which art once stood in Greece? And if not, what is the region from which the demand to which modern art in all its domains answers originates? The works of art no longer spring from the stamped limits of a world of the popular and the national [Ihre Werke entspringen nicht mehr den prägenden Grenzen einer Welt des Volkhaften und Nationalen]. They belong to the universality of world civilization.

The traces of a secret "mimetology" can be detected into the very last writings of Heidegger. From the very start to the very end, Heidegger's discourse will

have been sustained by the mimetic logic. With the exception, perhaps (and this Lacoue-Labarthe would have failed to acknowledge), that Heidegger engages this imitation in the process of its own completion and interruption. For Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin does not promote a "new mythology": for us Westerners (and specifically Germans) it cannot be a matter of creating new gods and new heroes with which the entire people could be identified. Hölderlin's mythos is void of any heroic-tragic pathos. Rather, it is a matter of enduring a time of distress marked by the absence of the gods. But no Dichtung, and a fortiori no historico-political will can bring the gods back. The coming of the gods does not depend on human will. We can only free the space for such coming. Now this may very well be historically and politically unacceptable. Yet this also designates the impossibility of creating or inventing new gods, of identifying oneself as a people through a common projection of oneself in the myth. It is, in a way, to undermine the very function of the myth and to radically put into question the very possibility of a mythology. The time of distress--the flight of the gods--echoed in Hölderlin's poetry designates the impossibility of the mythic--the appeal to the presence of gods. The relation to the gods has now become a relation of impossibility, or at least a relation of absence; hence a relation which is

exclusive of the myth, for the myth is precisely defined in terms of a voice fully present to itself and to those who are united in it. The Hölderlinian myth operates at the very limit of the myth: it is, as it were, a myth without myth, a myth about the impossibility of the myth. In that sense, Hölderlin (and Heidegger) would be freed from the Romantic version of the myth. The operation at the limit of the myth would mark the specificity of Heidegger's discourse on art and poetry in connection with the political.

But Heidegger's discourse also remains decisively attached to the mythic temptation, and that is to the relation to the gods. Indeed, the relation to the gods (as absent gods) remains the central trait of the political discourse. The political discourse as a whole is ordered to the relation with the gods. The gods are the cause of our distress, and yet only they can save us, even though they are perhaps never to come. This is politically (and philosophically) non satisfying as well as unacceptable. For the world in which I (as Dasein) am immersed and in which other Daseins are encountered forbids me to abstract myself from this decisive everydayness and to measure the present of a common life from the standpoint of a transcendence and a future which will perhaps never be. As Arendt repeatedly pointed out, our life is a common life, and that is a web of

relationships in which each particularity is trying to say who he is through a series of words and deeds. To think history and to think politics is primarily to be engaged in the articulation of these particularities in their differences. Heidegger will have refused to answer such a demand, even though Being and Time broached the way for the thinking of the community, not in terms of art and myth, but in terms of what in chapter 4 is called "writing."

Hence everything seems to happen as though the question of the political could not be separated from the question of language in the widest sense, whether as mythopoiesis in the Platonic sense, as logos or lexis in the Aristotelian (and to a certain extent Arendtian) sense, or as communication in the sense of writing. It is as though a discourse about the political--whether polis, State or community--had to be at the same time a discourse about discourse--whether understood as logos, mythos, Sprache or Mitteilung. The reason for such belonging-together lies in the fact that the relation to language is constitutive of our very being-with-one-another. To think the political under the horizon of the constitutive mythos is to prepare the way to a community of immanence, i.e., to a community the members of which live in and through the communion of the common mythos. To think the community as communication and "writing," on the other

hand. i.e., to think of the community as the very limit on and at which Daseins appear as who they are, is to render radically impossible the gathering of the members under a "spiritual mission" or a "destiny." Thus it is also to render impossible the closure of the community.

Heidegger will have perhaps been the ultimate as well as the most revealing figure of a metaphysical scene born some two thousand five hundred years ago in which the drama of the political in its relation to the poetic was being enacted. For Heidegger radicalized the poetic or mythic tendency already at play in Plato, inverting, as it were, the two poles of the mimesis, so that the political would come to imitate the poetic, or at least the poetic would found and initiate the political as such. Yet Heidegger will have also marked the outcome of this scene, i.e., its most radical and theatrical expression as well the impossibility of keeping the scene alive. On the one hand, Heidegger's political engagement⁵ and, to a certain

⁵. Even though Heidegger's engagement remained totally withdrawn from that which constituted the very content of the Nazi myth, Heidegger's thinking remained at an almost absolute point of proximity to that which constituted the greatest perversion--and also the closing scene--of the mythic temptation. Willy-nilly Heidegger found himself to be in collusion with the extreme (and murderous) aesthetization of the myth. Moreover, even more so after his breaking-off with Nazism, Heidegger kept trying to think the possibility of the political from a reflexion on art and on language as myth, without ever being able to put into question the political danger inherent in the myth. The myth is essentially total: totalizing and totalitarian.

extent, his reading of Hölderlin, will have served to mark the interruption of this drama, the impossibility of the political as such, i.e., the impossibility of its essence and of the will to its essence; on the other hand, Heidegger's Being and Time gives way to the truly communitarian and scriptural demand that unfolds from such impossibility. The demand consists in thinking the political apart from the poetic or the mythic. It consists in thinking the community as writing, i.e., as the limit on which and at which Daseins appear in their transcendence. The demand requires that one be engaged in the writing and the inscription (or rather in the ex-
scription) of the limit, and that is, simultaneously, in the disruption and the destruction of the myth. The writing of the community designates the end of the political as mythocentrism.

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APPENDIX

FIRST CHORUS FROM SOPHOCLES' ANTIGONE

There is much that is strange, but nothing
that surpasses man in strangeness.
He sets sails on the frothing waters
amid the south winds of winter
tacking through the mountains
and furious chasms of the waves.
He wearies even the noblest
of the gods, the Earth,
indestructible and untiring,
overturning her from year to year,
driving the plows this way and that
with horses.

And man, pondering and plotting,
snares the light-glidding birds
and hunts the beasts of the wilderness
and the native creatures of the sea.
With guile he overpowers the beast
that roams the mountains by night as by day,
he yokes the hirsute neck of the stallion
and the undaunted bull.

And he has found his way
to the resonance of the word,
and to wind-swift all-understanding,
and to the courage of rule over cities.
He has considered also how to flee
from exposure to the arrows
of unpropitious weather and frost.

Everywhere journeying, inexperienced and without issue,
he comes to nothingness.
Though no flight can he resist
the one assault of death,
even if he has succeeded in cleverly evading
painful sickness.

Clever indeed, mastering
the ways of skill beyond all hope,
he sometimes accomplishes evil,

sometimes achieves brave deeds.
 He wends his way between the laws of the earth
 and the adjured justice of the gods.
 Rising high above his place,
 he for who the sake of adventure takes
 the non-being for being loses
 his place in the end.

May such a man never frequent my hearth;
 may my mind never share the presumption
 of him who does this.

HÖLDERLIN'S HYMN "GERMANIA"

Not them, the blessed, who once appeared,
 Those images of gods in the ancient land,
 Them, it is true, I may not now invoke, but if,
 You waters of my homeland, now with you
 The love of my heart laments, what else does it want, in
 its hallowed sadness? For full of expectation lies
 The country, and as though it had been lowered
 In sultry dog-days, on us a heaven today,
 You yearning rivers, casts prophetic shade.
 With promises it is fraught, and to me
 Seems threatening too, yet I will stay with it,
 And backward now my soul shall not escape
 To you the vanished, whom I love too much.
 To look upon your beautiful brows, as though
 They were unchanged, I am afraid, for deadly
 And scarcely permitted it is to awaken the dead.

Gods who are fled! And you also, present still,
 But once more real, you had your time, your ages!
 No, nothing here I'll deny and ask no favours.
 For when it's over, and Day's light gone out,
 The priest is the first to be struck, but lovingly
 The temple and the image and the cult
 Follow him down into darkness, and none of them now may
 shine.

Only as from a funeral pyre henceforth
 A golden smoke, the legend of it, drifts
 And glimmers on around our doubting heads
 And no one knows what's happening to him. He feels
 The shadowy shapes of those who once were here,
 The ancients, newly visiting the earth.
 For those who are to come now jostle us,
 Nor longer will that holy host of beings

Divinely human linger in azure Heaven.

Already, in the prelude of a rougher age
 Raised up for them, the field grows green, prepared
 Are offerings for the votive feast and valley
 And rivers lie wide open round prophetic mountains,
 So that into the very Orient
 A man may look and thence be moved by many
 transformations.
 But down from Aether falls
 The faithful image, and words of gods rain down
 Innumerable from it, and the innermost grove resounds.
 And the eagle that comes from the Indus
 And flies over the snow-covered peaks of
 Parnassus, high above the votive hills
 Of Italy, and seeks glad booty for
 The Father, not as he used to, more practised in flight,
 That ancient one, exultant, over the Alps
 Wings on at last and sees the diverse countries.

The priestess, her, the quietest daughter of God,
 Too fond of keeping silent in deep ingenuousness,
 Her now he seeks, who open-eyed looked up
 As though she did not know it, lately when a storm,
 Threatening death, rang out above her head;
 A better destiny the child divined.
 And in the end amazement spread in heaven
 Because one being was as great in faith
 As they themselves, the blessing powers on high;
 Therefore they sent the messenger, who, quick to recognize
 her,
 Smilingly thus reflects: you the unbreakable
 A different word must try, and then proclaims,
 The youthful, looking towards Germania:
 "Yes, it is you, elected
 All-loving and to bear
 A burdensome good fortune have grown strong,

Since, hidden in the woods and flowering poppies
 Filled with sweet drowsiness, you, drunken, did not heed
 Me for a long time, before lesser ones even felt
 The virgin's pride, and marvelled whose you are and where
 from,
 But you yourself did not know. Yet I did not misjudge you
 And secretly, while you dreamed, at noon,
 Departing I left a token of friendship,
 The flower of the mouth behind, and lonely you spoke.
 Yet you, the greatly blessed, with the rivers too
 Dispatched a wealth of golden words, and they well
 unceasing
 Into all regions now. For almost as is the holy
 The Mother of all things, upholder of the abyss,

Whom men at other times call the Concealed,
 Now full of loves and sorrows
 And full of presentiments
 And full of peace is your bosom.

O drink the morning breezes
 Until you are opened up
 And name what you see before you;
 No longer now the unspoken
 May remain a mystery
 Though long it has been veiled;
 For shame behoves us mortals
 And most of the time to speak thus
 Of gods indeed is wise.
 But where more superabundant than purest wellsprings
 The gold has become and the anger in Heaven earnest,
 For once between Day and Night must
 A truth be made manifest.
 Now threefold circumscribe it,
 Yet unuttered also, just as you found it,
 Innocent virgin, let it remain.

Once only, daughter of holy Earth,
 Pronounce your Mother's name. The waters roar on the rock
 And thunderstorms in the wood, and at their name
 Divine things past ring out from time immemorial.
 How all is changed! And to the right there gleam
 And speak things yet to come, joy-giving, from the
 distance. ,

Yet at the centre of Time
 In peace with hallowed,
 With virginal Earth lives Aether
 And gladly, for remembrance, they
 The never-needy dwell
 Hospitably amid the never-needy,
 Amid your holidays,
 Germania, where you are priestess and
 Defenceless proffer all round
 Advice to the Kings and the peoples."

HÖLDERLIN'S HYMN "THE RHINE"
 To Isaak von Sinclair

Amid dark ivy I was sitting, at
 The forest's gate, just a golden noon,
 To visit the wellspring there, came down
 From steps of the Alpine ranges

Which, following ancient lore,
 I call the divinely built, the fortress of the Heavenly,
 But where, determined in secret
 Much even now reaches men; from there
 Without surmise I heard
 A destiny, for, debating
 Now this, now that in the warm shade,
 My soul had hardly begun
 To make for Italy
 And far away for the shores of Morea.

But now, within the mountains,
 Deep down below the silvery summits,
 And in the midst of gay verdure,
 Where shuddering the forests
 And the heads of rocks overlapping
 Look down at him, all day
 There in the coldest chasm
 I heard the youth implore
 Release; and full of pity his parents heard
 Him rage there and accuse
 His Mother Earth and the Thunderer
 Who fathered him, but mortals
 Fled from the place, for dreadful,
 As without light he writhed
 Within his fetters, was
 The demigod's raving.

The voice it was of the noblest of rivers,
 Of free-born Rhine,
 And different were his hopes when up there from his
 brothers

Ticino and Rhodanus
 He parted and longed to roam, and impatiently
 His regal soul drove him on towards Asia.
 Yet in the face of fate
 Imprudent it is to wish.
 The sons of gods, though,
 Are blindest of all. For human beings know
 Their house, and the animals
 Where they must build, but in
 Their inexperienced souls the defect
 Of not knowing where was implanted.

A mystery are those of pure origin.
 Even song may hardly unveil it.
 For as you began, so you will remain,
 And much as need can effect,
 And breeding, still greater power
 Adheres to your birth
 And the ray of light
 That meets the new-born infant.

But where is anyone
 So happily born as the Rhine
 From such propitious heights
 And from so holy a womb,
 To remain free
 His whole life long and alone fulfil
 His heart's desire, like him?

And that is why his word is a jubilant roar,
 Nor is he fond, like other children,
 Of weeping in swaddling bands;
 For where the banks at first
 Slink to his side, the crooked,
 And greedily entwining him,
 Desire to educate
 And carefully tend the feckless
 Within their teeth, he laughs,
 Tears up the serpents and rushes
 Off with his prey, and if in haste
 A greater one does not tame him,
 But lets him grow, like lightning he
 Must rend the earth and like things enchanted
 The forests join his flight and, collapsing, the
 mountains.

A god, however, wishes to spare his sons
 A life so fleeting and smiles
 When, thus intemperate but restrained
 By holy Alps, the rivers
 Like this one rage at him in the depth.
 In such a forge, then, all
 That's pure is given shape
 And it is good to see
 How then, after leaving the mountains,
 Content with German lands he calmly
 Moves on and stills his longing
 In useful industry, when he tills the land,
 Now Father Rhine, and supports dear children
 In cities which he has founded.

Yet never, never does he forget,
 For sooner the dwelling shall be destroyed,
 And the laws, and the day of men
 Become iniquitous, than such as he
 Forget his origin
 And the pure voice of his youth.
 Who was the first to coarsen,
 Corrupt the bonds of love
 And turn them into ropes?
 Then, sure of their own rights
 And of the heavenly fire
 Defiant rebels mocked, not till then

Despising mortal ways,
 Chose foolhardy arrogance
 And strove to become the equals of gods.

But their own immortality
 Suffices the gods, and if
 The Heavenly have need of one thing,
 It is of heroes and human beings
 And other mortals. For since
 The most blessed in themselves feel nothing
 Another, if to say such a thing is
 Permitted, must, I suppose,
 Vicariously feel in the name of the gods,
 And him they need; but their rule is that
 He shall demolish his
 Own house and curse like an enemy
 Those dearest to him and under the rubble
 Shall bury his father and child,
 When one aspires to be like them, refusing
 To bear with inequality, the fantast.

So happy he who has found
 A well-allotted fate
 Where still of his wanderings
 And sweetly of his afflictions
 The memory murmurs on banks that are sure,
 So that this way, that way with pleasure
 He looks as far as the bounds
 Which God at birth assigned
 To him for his term and sight.
 Then, blissfully humble, he rests,
 For all that he has wanted,
 Though heavenly, of itself surrounds
 Him uncompelled, and smiles
 Upon the bold one now that he's quiet.

Of demigods now I think
 And I must know these dear ones
 Because so often their lives
 Move me and fill me with longing.
 But he whose soul, like yours,
 Rousseau, ever strong and patient,
 Became invincible,
 Endowed with steadfast purpose
 And a sweet gift of hearing,
 Of speaking, so that from holy profusion
 Like the wine-god foolishly, divinely
 And lawlessly he gives it away,
 The language of the purest, comprehensible to the good,
 But rightly strikes with blindness the irreverent,
 The profaning rabble, what shall I call that stranger?

The sons of Earth, like their mother are
 All-loving, so without effort too
 All things those blessed ones receive.
 And therefore it surprises
 And startles the mortal man
 When he considers the heaven
 Which with loving arms he himself
 Has leaped upon his shoulders,
 And feels the burden of joy;
 Then often to him it seems best
 Almost wholly forgotten to be
 Where the beam does not sear,
 In the forest's shade
 By Lake Biemme amid foliage newly green,
 And blithely poor in tones,
 Like beginners, to learn from nightingales.

And glorious then it is to arise once more
 From holy sleep and awakening
 From coolness of the woods, at evening
 Walk now toward the softer light
 When he who built the mountains
 And drafted the paths of the rivers,
 Having also smiling directed
 The busy lives of men,
 So short of breath, like sails,
 And filled them with his breezes,
 Reposes also, and down to his pupil
 The master craftsmen, finding
 More good than evil,
 Day now inclines to the present Earth.

Then gods and mortals celebrate their nuptials,
 All the living celebrate,
 And Fate for a while
 Is levelled out, suspended.
 And fugitives look for asylum,
 For sweet slumber the brave,
 But lovers are
 What always they were, at home
 Wherever flowers are glad
 Of harmless fervour and the spirit wafts
 Around the darkling trees, but those unreconciled
 Are changed and hurry now
 To hold out their hands to the other
 Before the benevolent light
 Goes down, and night comes.

For some, however,
 This quickly passes, others
 Retain it longer.
 The eternal gods are full

