Seduction is Not Yet Betrayal: Trust and the Essence of Truth for Heidegger and Freud

Author: William Britt

Persistent link:

Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Department of Philosophy

SEDUCTION IS NOT YET BETRAYAL:
TRUST AND THE ESSENCE OF TRUTH FOR HEIDEGGER AND FREUD

a dissertation

by

WILLIAM G. BRITT, IV

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014

Seduction Is Not Yet Betrayal:
Trust and the Essence of Truth for Heidegger and Freud

William G. Britt, IV
Director: Prof. Jeffrey Bloechl

Abstract: This project takes up the old question of the nature of truth by seeking to say, at one stroke, both what enables truth and falsity and what lets them matter to us so centrally. Somehow, we as human beings are fundamentally connected to a world in which the truth of statements and the genuineness of things can matter to us deeply and coherently. And yet, I try to show, this coherent unity between being and thinking can also be radically (if not always permanently) broken in the experience of psychosis. I argue that the source of that vulnerable unity must be a contingent event in which I find myself disposed trustingly toward the world, and therein find the world disclosed as trust*worthy*. Such primitive trust is phenomenally related to trusting a person, and Freudian psychoanalysis shows us that it develops psychologically *through* relation to a person. As what fundamentally structures self and world, however, this kind of attunement transcends psychology. Our very access to the being of things, i.e., to their compelling importance and organized significance, depends upon it.

Thus, I support Heidegger's account of the essence of truth as what first makes accessible the comparisons (between word and thing, for example) on which more traditional theories of truth are based. Yet I also confront Heidegger's phenomenological version of trust by highlighting what is at stake ontologically in our interpersonal psychic development, which psychoanalysis reveals to take place by way of seduction. Heidegger assumes that being must show itself, even if in a concealed way, and thus always takes absence as withdrawal or absenc*ing*, rather than as a radical break. By attending to the meaningful phenomena of psychosis, I defend the thesis that our relation to the world is instead opened up and sustained by a fundamental affective attunement (trust) that *can* dramatically fail. In other words, I try to show that we are exposed to a more radical kind of concealment than Heidegger's thinking of truth seems able to do justice to, a failure of being that can thoroughly overwhelm us.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Let me acknowledge my deep gratitude to…

ὁ λόγος ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθές

Erin Stackle, who was wise and patient enough to help me through the most difficult parts of the project, but also foolish and precipitous enough to marry me while I was writing it.

My director, Jeff Bloechl, who put up with my self-imposed and poorly enforced deadlines, helped me to find an appropriate tone, introduced me both to Italy and to the work of Jean Laplanche, and carefully read far more text than he probably bargained for.

My committee: Vanessa Rumble, who introduced me to Freud in a way that I could take seriously; Tony Steinbock, who granted me space to work, an already filtered library, and some very helpful conversations about the phenomenon of trust; Richard Capobianco, who generously read a lot of material very quickly and provided helpful (and friendly) resistance to my project.

My parents, for their continuing support and encouragement, although they knew not what I did.

Those who kindly lent me unpublished manuscripts of essays: Tony Steinbock (again), Richard Polt, and Tom Sheehan.

Dr. Eric Stackle, who voluntarily proofread the work in its entirety. (Now if only he could teach my students how to proofread…)

The Phenomenology Research Center at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where the first chapter was researched and written nearly in its entirety. This chapter turned out to be much less preliminary and much more pivotal for the project than I had anticipated.

Those with whom I discussed the project at length: Tony Anderson, Mark Sentesy, Tobias Keiling, James Oldfield, Teresa Fenichel, and Chris Merwin.

Abbreviations used in the text:

I give full bibliographic information the first time a work is cited in the dissertation; thereafter, I give an expanded, recognizable name the first time each work appears in a particular chapter. The following abbreviations are used subsequently.

GA = *Gesamtausgabe*
BT = *Being and Time* (Macquarrie and Robinson translation) = GA 2
KPM = *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* = GA 3
OBT = *Off the Beaten Track* = *Holzwege* = GA 5
QCT = *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, from GA 5 and GA 7
"What are Poets For?" and "Building Dwelling Thinking" are both in *Poetry, Language, Thought*
          and are from GA 5 and GA 7, respectively
WCT? = *What is Called Thinking?* = *Was Heisst Denken?* = GA 8
Discourse = *Discourse on Thinking* = *Gelassenheit*, from GA 16
Metaphysical Foundations = *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* = GA 26
FC = *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* = GA 29/30
IM = *Introduction to Metaphysics* = GA 40
Basic Questions = *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"* = GA 45
Thinking and Poetizing = *Introduction to Philosophy—Thinking and Poetizing* = GA 50
Contributions = *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)* = GA 65
CPC = *Country Path Conversations* = GA 77
 "Thing," "Positionality," "Danger," "Turn" = essays in *Insight Into That Which Is*, from GA 79
BPT = *Basic Principles of Thinking*, from GA 79

SE = *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*
GW = *Gesammelte Werke*
Project = "Project for a Scientific Psychology," from SE 1
Studies = *Studies on Hysteria* = SE 2
Interpretation = *The Interpretation of Dreams* = SE 4/5
Three Essays = *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, from SE 7
Formulations = *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*, from SE 12
Schreber = *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)*, from SE 12
Unconscious = "The Unconscious," from SE 14
Instincts = "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes [Or: Drives and Drive-Fates]," from SE 14
Supplement = "A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams," from SE 14
Introductory Lectures = *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* = SE 15/16
Wolf-Man = *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, from SE 17
Civilization = *Civilization and Its Discontents*, from SE 21

AT = Adam and Tannery (eds.), *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 11 vols. Paris: J. Vrin, 1983.

Modes of internal reference:

Arabic numerals designate *chapters*.
Roman numerals designate *parts* of chapters.
Upper-case English letters designate *sections*, which may be further specified by Arabic numerals, and again by lower-case English letters.
Thus, reference to a *part* involves a lower level of specificity than reference to a *section* within that part.
If there is no chapter included in the reference, the chapter containing the reference is meant.

Introduction

I. Troth, Trust, and Truth

It seems evident that trust between people opens up a certain kind of discursive space for the first time. Trust makes room for and encourages truth-telling, in two ways. It raises an expectation of honesty, and it provides a context in which defensive patterns of relating can be relaxed or suspended. But such trust also gives a new force or importance to falsity, since it is within that same new context that a lie can be felt as a personal betrayal rather than as an abstract falsehood. Interpersonal trust thus opens us up both affectively and normatively to the difference between truth and falsity: it makes that difference matter in a new way, even if only on the level of human relationships. Of such things are moral conversions made.

But what if something like this enabling relation between trust and the true/false distinction turned out to be the case much more fundamentally, as well? What if our ability consistently to differentiate truth from falsehood *at all*, even when we are relatively bad at doing so, were enabled by a more basic or more global kind of trust? And what if that same ability to differentiate true from false also opened up the central *importance* that the difference has for us, along with our (sometimes tragic, sometimes comic) sense of being situated at some negotiable distance from the truth?

If we could make sense of this much, then the analogy would suggest a reasonable further question: how is that more fundamental kind of trust related to the interpersonal trust that opens up truth-telling between people? Is it similar? Or would this basic trust be more like assuming that a systematically structured whole will continue functioning as it always has? (Day will follow night, occasional eclipses notwithstanding; the seasons will continue giving way to one another, allowing for some year-to-year modifications and even for long-term climatic variation.)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for example, has spoken of a kind of "perceptual faith," an "unjustifiable certitude of a sensible world common to us."[1] Despite being "the seat of truth within us," this confidence that we share the world, "entirely irresistible as it may be, remains absolutely obscure; we can live it, we can neither think it nor formulate it nor set it up in theses." Our sense of being together in a shared reality is thus clearly not something that we could ever reason our way into. On the contrary, Merleau-Ponty's thesis is that this faith opens up our very reasoning activity – "that it is by borrowing from the world structure that the universe of truth and of thought is constructed for us." When we dig back to the sources of our shared existence, he claims, we find simply that "our assurance of being in the truth" – of having access to things as they are – "is one with our assurance of being in the world." But this is an insight already at work in Plato. Richard Polt explains:

> Just as we automatically expect the ground to support us when we take a step, we count on the subsistence of the whole of beings in our every act. Plato's word for our relation to corporeal things is also the right word for our prephilosophical relation to all things: *pistis* (Republic 511e), which is best interpreted neither as belief nor as faith, but as trust.[2]

If Merleau-Ponty and Plato are right, how should we characterize the trusting relation we bear to the *kosmos*, to the very structure of the world of things in which we find ourselves? At stake here is the nature of our fundamental integration into that world, the shape of our belonging to the structuring whole: belonging with people and with things, in such a way that getting them right, being faithful to them by telling the truth about them, can grip us as being of central importance, can be difficult to achieve, *and* can be sidelined when we want to deceive.[3]

---

[1] For this quotation and the remainder of this paragraph, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, tr. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), pp. 3, 11-13.

[2] Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 24. The passage to which Polt refers is the divided line discussion in book 6 of Plato's *Republic*, which discussion is itself an explanation of Socrates's analogy between the sun and the good. Allan Bloom is one who translates *pistis* as trust in this passage – see *The Republic of Plato*, tr. Allan Bloom (Basic Books, 1968), 511e, 534a.

[3] The problem elided in this paragraph – whether the *kosmos* should be thought as the structured world (an entity), the structure of the world (perhaps an entity, perhaps not), or the structur*ing* of the world (the opening of the ontological difference between structure and structured, one might say) – is taken up in some detail in chapters 2-3, below.

These are the questions with which our investigation will be concerned. Broadly speaking, they form one way of posing a familiar philosophical question about the *nature* or *essence* of truth: in virtue of what do certain things (usually assertions or beliefs) count as true or false? What is it for something to be true? Articulating this question in terms of trust is new, but is not simply foreign to our pre-theoretical experience. In fact, it picks up on an English etymological connection between truth and trust: *tréowe*, from which derive 'truth' and 'trust,' as well as 'troth,' the pledge of trustworthiness (as when I 'plight my troth').[4]

But my way of posing the question about the essence of truth already inflects it toward a second question, one that is less often *asked* than simply taken for granted: why do we care whether something is true or false? As Friedrich Nietzsche puts it in defining his own task of thinking, "the value of truth is tentatively to be *called into question… .*"[5] It is not by chance that in the same passage he names the *will to truth* (the overwhelming desire for it, which he takes to be one of the most central features of humanity up to now) – names it precisely a *faith* (*Glaube*) in the divinity of truth.[6] Modifying very slightly, we could say: the will to truth is a peculiar trusting,[7] one within which truth shows up as of the highest importance – perhaps even as the very criterion of importance.

---

[4] Joseph J. Godfrey has attended to this connection in *Trust of People, Words, and God: A Route for Philosophy of Religion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), chapter 6. Also see the entry for "truth" in the Oxford English Dictionary.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, tr. Carol Diethe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3rd Essay: §24.

[6] *Ibid.*; see also Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, tr. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), §344. Again, it is not accidental that Nietzsche speaks here of the will to truth as a mode of piety; we will later see Martin Heidegger, too, employ the term 'piety' to name the fundamental receptivity at issue here (chapter 7, section 7.B.2).

[7] Nietzsche contrasts both believing (*Glauben*) and confidence (*Zutrauen*) with mistrusting (*Misstrauen*). See *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, §344, in volume 5.2 of G. Colli and M. Montinari (hrsgs.), *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971).

II. Betrayal: Despair Over the Truth

This Nietzschean question has to some extent, albeit indirectly, been brought to the fore in Anglo-American philosophy by the recent preponderance of what are called *deflationary* accounts of the nature of truth. These are really theories about the expression 'is true' (i.e., the truth-predicate), since they typically claim that *truth* has no nature: there is no single property (no unified essence) that is expressed by all or most such predications.

One way to motivate a deflationary project is to point out the difficulties with traditional correspondence views of truth. At least as they have been presented in the last century, such views set out to explain truth as a real property of assertions (whether propositions, statements, or sentences) that relates those assertions in a specifiable way to the world (whether states of affairs, facts, situations, events, etc.).[8] This way of approaching the problem lends itself to several possible objections: on one side, it is hard to give an ontologically appropriate account of the nature of assertions (insofar as they are 'truth-bearers'): this is a problem of language. On another side, one might ask whether we can make sense of positing states of affairs as entities (insofar as they are 'truth-makers'): this is a problem of being. Thirdly, the difficulty of the *relation* between language and being shows up in semantic pathologies, beginning with something like the Liar Paradox: 'All Cretans are liars,' when said by a Cretan.

Above all, if assertions or beliefs are somehow maps or pictures of the world of objects (i.e., something that can correspond to states of affairs), and truth *is* this correspondence of the assertion or belief to the thing, how could we ever know what is true? And why would we care? Either we do *not* have access to the world independently of these assertions or beliefs, so we cannot possibly check the correspondence – this is the claim of many theories that take truth to be

---

[8] As a rough account: "The truth of a proposition is constituted by a state of the world such that, were the proposition stated, it would state the world to be that way." Gerald Vision, *Veritas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 1.

a matter of the internal coherence of one's beliefs – or we *do* have such access, in which case it is unclear why we would need the assertions in the first place. (Maybe, in the latter case, we need the assertions so as to communicate states of affairs to others. But according to the hypothesis, would these others not *also* have language-independent access to the world?[9])

Incipit deflationary posings of the question. Perhaps truth is simply a disquotational function of language that cancels semantic ascent, so that when we affirm of a quoted sentence like 'The world is a mystery' that it is *true*, we generate the same sentence without quotations: The world is a mystery. Or perhaps truth is a kind of semantic pretense that allows expression of infinite conjuncts in a finite discourse, i.e., it allows us to make generalizations we otherwise could not.[10] There are several other proposals. But they seem to have in common something like the following attitude: 'why can we not just say that what is important about the predicate 'is true' is the logical or expressive shortcut it grants us, whereas assigning it explanatory force is a bizarre abstraction? If I believe that the grocery store is open now and consequently succeed in obtaining groceries, then my success is in virtue of the *conjunction* of my belief with the grocery store's being open. Why try to attribute some efficacy to the mysterious *truth* of that belief?' On the other hand, it seems very hard to say why the content of my belief about the grocery store *mattered*, unless we appeal to something more substantive about the truth-predicate.

---

[9] Maybe we could claim that we care about the truth of propositions when we communicate to people who are or were absent from, and thus unable to witness, the relevant state of affairs. But such a claim hardly seems consonant with our actual experience of speaking. It is much more as if we lived in speech the way a fish lives in water, for we talk about *everything*, whether our conversation partner was absent for the event or not. And it is precisely in light of this constant speaking that truth and falsity matter to us. It hardly makes sense of this experience to say that we encounter a state of affairs first, then translate it into language ('propositionalize' it) afterward.

[10] See James A. Woodbridge, "Truth as a Pretense," in *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*, ed. M.E. Kalderon (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2005).

I do not wish to play out the whole debate here.[11] I merely want to register two observations. First, this deflationary trend contrasts with our everyday sense that truth and falsity make *all* the difference, even once we allow (with Nietzsche and with Sigmund Freud) that this does not mean we want only the truth. Second, this contrast should be no surprise, since we have just seen that mostly what these accounts deflate is the 'problem of truth' as construed in a very particular way – namely, as a question about the semantic function of the truth-predicate. But this is a far cry from what we might, in an everyday sense, mean by the importance of truth or truthfulness.

While I think we should interpret deflationary accounts as lodging an *appropriate* complaint about certain ways of thinking about the essence of truth, I do not think we should simply follow their analysis and have done. We should rather recognize that setting up the problem of the nature of truth in this particular way not only yields a false problem (as the deflationists typically claim) but also covers up the really interesting problem (as they typically would *not* claim). In other words, we could say that the deflationists' despair is really an odd kind of distress, one that Martin Heidegger has diagnosed as characteristic of modern Western philosophy: a *failure to be troubled* about the self-evidence of the given.[12] The problem with ignoring the givenness of things is that we take as obvious what in fact could and perhaps should be given in another way. But if Heidegger is right in his diagnosis, we need not give in to this

---

[11] For a recent, broad-based defense of correspondence against deflationary objections, see Vision, *Veritas*. For a collection of the most important papers on all sides, see *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Michael Lynch (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).

[12] Cf. Søren Kierkegaard: in despair, to will to be oneself. *The Sickness Unto Death*, trs. H.V. and E.H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 67-74. On the distress of the lack of distress (*Not der Notlosigkeit*), see Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trs. R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012)/GA 65. Since this is arguably not only a concern about foundationalism, it is broader than but related to what Wilfrid Sellars calls 'the myth of the given.' See Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," in *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. I, eds. H. Feigl & M. Scriven (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), pp. 253–329.

despair. We must instead attend to the problem of truth as such, seeking out what in it might be really worthy of question.

III. Heideggerian Questioning

To do this, we would have to remain a bit longer with the difficulties of the correspondence theory, hearing in them precisely what is worthy of philosophical pursuit. Correspondence theories tend to run aground on their positing of truth as a kind of rightness: a match, an adequation, etc.[13] It is hard to say in what this rightness might consist. How might saying match up with the world? But what we *can* do is ask more basically about the access that enables this adequation: how might the world be given to us in our speaking about it? Or: how might the world be given to us as already articulated *so that* we can speak about it?[14]

That is the project I take Martin Heidegger to be carrying out when he locates the essence of truth in the ancient Greek word *alētheia*, which he hears as *a-lēthē-ia*, the abstract noun form (*-ia*) of the verb *alētheuein*, to remove from (*a-*) concealment (*lēthē*). I will follow his analysis in detail in chapter 2, but let me here at least indicate his unusual approach.

Heidegger's thinking about truth is, we might say, manifestly *in*flationary, although not in the sense that he works out a complicated theory of just what it is for something to be true. Rather, he asks above all about being, truth, and language as fundamental to our existence. Thus, he claims that "[t]he *nature* [Wesen] of truth is no mere concept that people carry about in their heads; rather, truth *essences* [west]: in the temporary [*jeweilige*] shape of its essence *it is* the determining power for everything true and untrue, what is sought, fought over, and suffered

---

[13] This includes non-correspondence theories that project into the future the object to which the assertion must correspond: e.g., certain pragmatist theories on which truth is whatever science turns out to hold once it is complete, or Hegelian theories on which the true is the whole when fully developed.
[14] In other words, what enables us ever to link up truth-bearers with their truth-makers at all, regardless of what we take to play those roles?

for."[15] Here he reads the essence of truth verbally, that is, as an essenc*ing*, which we can provisionally gloss as 'coming to prevail', or 'coming to structure our outlook on the world by shaping what we take as self-evident'. This is why he adds that "[t]he 'essence' of truth is a happening [*Geschehen*],"[16] one which we might characterize as an event in which human beings are integrated into a coherent, shared world. It is only *within* this world – which is a world of everyday action just as much as one of beliefs or sentences – that things (including assertions) can show up as correct or incorrect, genuine or ungenuine: true or untrue. But if he is right that the essence of truth is the shape of our stance in the world, the pattern according to which things can become accessible to us in their importance – things to be sought, fought over, or suffered for – then he can appropriately raise the existential question: "should we not maintain […] that the conception [*Auffassung*] of the essence of man depends upon the conception of truth at any particular time?"[17]

Already we can recognize, then, that our self-understanding as human beings – the question of our own being – will be centrally at issue in any Heideggerian investigation of truth. Who are we, that we are so preoccupied with truth? Indeed, this is central to what it is to *exist* as a human being, in his technical sense of 'exist': to have one's own being as a matter of concern, and hence to be open to whatever is (including truth) in terms of its being or nature.[18] His account will therefore be a helpful guide into the matter at hand in this project, namely, just how our trusting relation to being (our own and that of other things) lets truth and falsity emerge in their

---

[15] This and the next quotation from Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, trs. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 41. (Hereafter: *Basic Questions*.) See also volume 45 of Heidegger's "Collected Edition" (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann), p. 44. Hereafter, I will refer to these German volumes as GA (for *Gesamtausgabe*). The first citation of a text will always include bibliographic information for the English translation, if there is one, followed by the GA citation. All subsequent instances will be formatted: 'GA [vol.]:[page]/Translation [page].'
[16] GA 45:44/*Basic Questions* 41.
[17] GA 45:21/*Basic Questions* 20.
[18] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trs. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962), pp. 12ff (marginal page numbers in the English translation, cf. the German 18th edition [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001])/32ff (English page numbers). Hereafter, *BT*, always with German pagination first.

importance. Heidegger does not often concern himself with trust as such, but I hope to show that attending to it as a way of thinking phenomenality itself in terms of mood can fruitfully open up his work.

Because of the centrality of Heidegger's work for our investigation, we should address in a preliminary way two concerns about his account before proceeding (see chapter 2, part II, for more detail). First, it might seem like his move to understand the essence of truth as something that first grounds or opens up any relation of adequation would be a move to *discredit* correspondence views of truth. If truth is really a matter of a more basic disclosure, we might think, then claiming that a belief is true in virtue of its being correctly adjusted to things as they are is just missing the point. But this is not what Heidegger is saying, as Dan Dahlstrom has shown at length.[19] Dominique Janicaud sums up a more reasonable way to understand what happens in Heideggerian thinking:

> Overcoming metaphysics never meant for Heidegger thinking without heeding the requirements of adequation; it never meant not reasoning, the denying of the realm of presence. […] His enterprise is more subtle, aiming not at the 'impossible,' but rather at responding to the injunction concerning possibilities yet reserved (thinking what adequation presupposes, what presence covers up, naming what up until then had no name, unfolding the appropriation of the originary).[20]

In other words, we could say that Heidegger wants to sort out how things can be given 'as they are' in the first place, so that we can then adjust ourselves to them or *let* them be the standard of our speaking and believing. This certainly does not mean that he wants to leave our ordinary *conceptions* of things just as they are, but it does mean that he wants to articulate (and be faithful to) how things *really* are, which is how they show themselves to us.

Secondly, then, we might worry that when Heidegger claims that we are only open to the world on the basis of our own concerns or investments, this issues in a kind of idealism. Although

---

[19] Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[20] Dominique Janicaud and Jean-Francois Mattei, *Heidegger from Metaphysics to Thought*, tr. Michael Gendre (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 10.

we should not too quickly pass by his close relations to the German Idealist tradition, we can initially respond to this concern by drawing a crucial distinction. Saying that there is no truth without the human being is not idealism: 'truth' just *means* for Heidegger a certain kind of human relation to things, whether it is applied to actions (as appropriate/inappropriate to the way things are), beliefs (as holding things to be a certain way), or statements (as thematically articulating the way things are). Even if we interpret him to be making a stronger claim, namely, that *the way* things *are* depends in part on the human being, this is still not the same as saying that *things* are dependent on the human being. Indeed, in Heidegger's later work, things *are* as various ways of gathering human beings into the world, letting us belong, just as much as we let them belong in their context. So, at least temporarily, we can conclude that Heidegger's account does not *necessarily* entail idealism, and we can recognize that whether it turns out to do so or not, on further consideration, is going to depend on how we understand being. (Of course, how we can understand being is *the* question for Heidegger, and far from easily answered.)

IV. Questioning Heidegger

In the course of the investigation, we will go a long way with Heidegger, so there will be time to sort out such matters in more detail. But eventually, I will want to ask whether Heidegger's account of our relation to being does not interpret that relation as proceeding too smoothly, in a way more guaranteed than is really warranted by the range of human experience. I will try to show, in fact, that he understands our being in the truth as the kind of trust that lets us belong to an institution or a structured whole, and that there is something troubling about this. We have already seen (part I, above) that there is at least an analogical reason to think that our most basic investment of trust in the world might instead have the character of trusting a person, and I will try to establish that more firmly in what follows.

But my argument is not merely an analogy; the task is, rather, to show that the matter at stake is genuinely one of trusting, and to use a phenomenological investigation of various types of trusting to help appropriately interpret the matter in question. But to carry out this project, we will need a field of experience within which we can catch sight of the obscure relations between trusting and our fundamental integration into the shared world.

For that we will turn to the field of Freudian psychoanalysis, seeking philosophical lessons in both its thoughtful encounter with extreme mental illness – what diagnostic categories label *the psychoses* – and its attention to the complex trusts and mistrusts at work in all human psychic development. Why psychoanalysis? And especially, why Freud? It is a well-established Heideggerian strategy to bring into view obscure phenomena by attending to their moments of rupture or failure. In consulting Freudian analysis, I follow this strategy in two ways.

In general, it seems to me that Freud is philosophically helpful primarily because of his sensitivity to interruptions. Not that, like Kierkegaard or Derrida, he philosophically thematizes interruption as such. Rather, probably because of his habit of listening primarily for gaps or interruptions in his patients' speech, he often begins his theorizing with the simplest possible explanation, positing it as functioning completely smoothly, then attends to what gets in the way of such functioning and thus to how the description will have to be complicated in order to be faithful to the phenomena at issue. This can be fruitful phenomenologically as a kind of imaginative variation, one that highlights the structural necessity of including certain things within our interpretations so as to remain with the phenomenon.

In particular, if it is possible for our basic trust in the world to be betrayed – for our very being in the world to undergo a serious rupture – this would at least have to show up as a significant mental breakdown, and psychoanalysis concerns itself primarily with plumbing the depths of psychic distress. Yet it does so, by contrast with general psychiatric medicine, for example, in a manner oriented by *interpretation*, seeking what meaning is to found in our brushes

with the abyss. This orientation already accommodates it to philosophical questioning. Freud, especially, has an eye for detail and a boldness in thinking that open his accounts to inferences beyond the realm of the merely psychological, while his own worries about philosophy as a discipline keep his thinking at a certain provocative distance.

It must be admitted that Heidegger was not especially familiar with Freud's work; it must also be admitted that what familiarity he did have, he largely regretted. Medard Boss, the psychotherapist who persuaded Heidegger to read some of Freud's writings, reports that the philosopher grew almost physically ill in going through Freud's theoretical work, although he found the practical papers on psychoanalytic technique far more promising.[21] Indeed, Heidegger was so struck by the contrast between clinical goals and theoretical assumptions in Freud that for 10 years, toward the end of his life, he gave regular seminars to psychiatrists in an effort to help them see the human being more clearly. What he did not do, as far as I can tell, is read Freud with anything like the care that he gave to the interpretation of the great philosophers and poets.

Setting aside what Heidegger himself had time or inclination to do, is there even the possibility for such a Heideggerian reading? From what he says in the *Zollikon Seminars*, it seems as if the gap might be too wide to bridge. Heidegger there advances two methodological criticisms of Freud that it will be worthwhile to confront here at the outset of our investigation.

The first of Heidegger's concerns is that Freud fails to remain faithful to the phenomena because of his scientific commitments to causal explanation. Heidegger insists that one must have the lived phenomenon adequately in view, as a whole, before turning to questions of causality. "What goes unnoticed is that an acquaintance with the phenomenon must be presupposed if physico-psychological explanations are not to be totally unfounded. […] Science becomes blind

---

[21] As quoted in Richard Askay, "Heidegger's Philosophy and Its Implications for Psychology, Freud, and Existential Psychoanalysis," a "Translator's Afterword" to *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters*, trs. F. Mayr and R. Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), p. 309.

to what it must presuppose and to what it wants to explain in its own purely genetic way."[22] His point seems to be that we should seek to understand the essence of, say, hysteria before trying to figure out how it comes about, since we first need to know *what* it is we are investigating.[23]

Heidegger specifies this objection more clearly by distinguishing three meanings of 'assumption' (*Annahme*). One meaning is simply 'to expect or to assume' (*Annehmen*), but the other two are crucially different. 'To be supposed or posited' (*angenommen*), taken for granted, pertains to a hypothesis. Heidegger designates it this way: "to suppose something as a condition, that is, as something which actually is not and cannot be given in itself." This is what he takes Freud to be doing. By contrast, phenomenology attempts to accept (*Annahme, acceptio*) what has been given *as* given, to attend to it in its givenness, or "to keep oneself open for a thing" itself.[24] This is how one recognizes fundamental principles; it is close to the perceptual faith to which Merleau-Ponty addresses himself. Seeking to show causation is seeking to prove a hypothesis (acceptance in the second sense), whereas the simple evidence of what is given cannot be proven but can only be seen and accepted (or received: *vernommen*).

There are at least three responses possible here. The first is largely a factual matter: it seems to me that Freud is often doing something much more like accepting what is given than he is simply hypothesizing and proving, if his frequent appeals to what shows itself in the *experience* of psychoanalysis are any indication. But the second response is more philosophically substantive. Causality is a complex issue in psychoanalysis – and one which Heidegger admits in a letter to Boss that he does not understand.[25] But in probably the most important book yet on phenomenology and Freudian psychoanalysis, Paul Ricoeur has defended the thesis "that

---

[22] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, p. 75 / *Zollikoner Seminare*, 3. Auflage, hrsg. M. Boss (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), p. 97. Hereafter: *Zollikon Seminars* [German page number]/[English page number].
[23] Cf. *Zollikon Seminars* 266/212-13.
[24] *Zollikon Seminars* 5-6/5.
[25] *Zollikon Seminars* 319/254.

Freudianism exists only on the basis of its refusal of [the following] disjunction: either an explanation in terms of energy, or an understanding in terms of phenomenology."[26] This is to say that the very power of the Freudian approach, which at first glance simply proceeds on two incompatible levels – one a matter of forces and drives, the other a matter of meaning and motivations – in fact thereby opens up ways to address the problems of mind-body unity and of language (which is also both bodily and meaningful) that we would not otherwise have. It is in virtue of its practical concern to heal through speech, along with its self-reflexive concern with analyzing the transference relations involved, that psychoanalytic theory can sometimes move us through philosophical barriers that had otherwise seemed impenetrable.[27]

It is worth noting, thirdly, that at the very time when he was beginning to give the seminars in Zollikon, Heidegger was hard at work reading Nietzsche.[28] Although the latter is more clearly engaged with the philosophical tradition than Freud, Nietzsche also focuses on the relation between forces and meanings, and he, too, often tends toward a kind of biological excess that frustrated Heidegger. But in Nietzsche's case, this frustration did not prevent Heidegger from working out a multi-volume philosophical interpretation that circumvents the biologism in favor of a thoroughly ontological reading.[29] Surely this suggests that something similar could be done for Freud.

---

[26] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, tr. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 66. Cf. Ricoeur, "The Question of Proof in Freud's Psychoanalytic Writings," in *On Psychoanalysis*, vol. 1 of *Writings and Lectures*, tr. David Pellauer (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), pp. 11-49.

[27] Heidegger, for example, claims that the human body is the most difficult matter to think. See his discussions of bodiliness (*Leiblichkeit*) in *Zollikon Seminars*, especially 292ff/231ff, as well as *Heraclitus Seminar*, tr. C.H. Siebert (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 146/GA 15:236.

[28] In 1960. See *Zollikon Seminars* 320/255.

[29] See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 4 vols., tr. D.F. Krell (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991). This is a translation of Günther Neske's 1961 *Nietzsche*, 2 Bde., which was reproduced as GA 6.1 and 6.2. For clarity, I will give the relevant GA citation, followed by the translation volume number (in Roman numerals) and page number (they are numbered separately).

The correspondences in general outline are as follows: The first three English 'volumes' ("The Will to Power as Art," "The Eternal Recurrence of the Same," and "The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics") translate all of GA 6.1, but the second volume includes a translation of a contemporaneous essay from GA 7, *Lectures and Essays*, entitled "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?", while

Heidegger's second major concern about Freud's work is closely related to the first. It has to do with scientific rank and the status of the questions Freud opens up. The objection here is simply that Freud is making a category mistake (in the full Aristotelian sense): he is a departmental scientist using methods and principles appropriate to the investigation of psychological entities (and perhaps therapeutic enterprises) to make claims about first principles. Or, at best, Freud is assuming a particular set of such principles, which it is the proper domain of first philosophy to investigate, and the principles from which Freud in fact proceeds are not very good.[30] This seems to me for the most part correct, except that I think Freud is much more tentative about the principles he assumes than Heidegger notices. The real question is about what follows from the objection. Is it the case that, for a philosophical reader, nothing ontological – nothing concerning the phenomenality by which particular phenomena show up – can be entailed by Freud's largely ontic investigations?

I think not. Especially as concerns the human being, Heidegger himself is consistently concerned to find ontological significance in ontic phenomena. Richard Polt is helpful once more, in this case by marking out the stakes for an ontological interpretation of psychoanalytic experience:

> The challenge […] is to avoid reducing the human way of being to a set of ontic facts, while at the same time showing that our understanding of being emerges from the ontic domain. / One point on which Heidegger would insist is that an adequate understanding of human being […] must be temporal and historical.[31]

the third volume also contains two parts taken from GA 6.2 ("The Eternal Recurrence of the Same and the Will to Power" and "Nietzsche's Metaphysics"). The fourth English 'volume' ("Nihilism") comes from GA 6.2 and includes "European Nihilism" and "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being," while excluding "Metaphysics as History of Being," "Sketches for a History of Being as Metaphysics," and "Recollection in Metaphysics." The latter three parts can be found in translation by Joan Stambaugh in a volume called *The End of Philosophy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1973), along with another piece from GA 7, titled "Overcoming Metaphysics."

[30] *Zollikon Seminars* 35-39/28-32.

[31] Polt, "The Burning Cup: Or, Im Anfang war die Tat," *International Journal of Žižek Studies* **1**.4: 1-26, p. 11.

When we turn to Freud (in chapters 5-7) for evidence of radical failure in the understanding of being, we will have to keep this point in mind.

One final consideration relevant to engaging Freud in a discussion with Heidegger, especially a discussion oriented by questions about trust, is that these two interpreters seem to give rise to the same kinds of complaints. Both invest themselves in letting what is hidden show itself, and both are accused of unfaithfulness or misunderstanding as a direct result. Heidegger is infamous for his aggressive readings of the history of philosophy, while Freudian analysis is routinely confronted with its own ability to abuse its patients. We will have to return to these concerns later (see chapter 5, section II.C, and chapter 7, section II.B), but the striking part is that both men claim to be interpreting *more* faithfully (or, at any rate, understanding better) just at the moments when the people speaking might seem to be most betrayed by the interpretation. We can write this off as towering arrogance, but there may also be something philosophically important that emerges here.

V. Plan of the Investigation

Having addressed some initial objections, let us turn to a characterization of the path our investigation will pursue. Most generally, we will try to think through the philosophical consequences of madness, especially what it can show us about the centrality and character of trust in our relation to being. I will defend the thesis that in psychosis a person can cease to be being-there (*Dasein*) as Heidegger has described it, without ceasing to be either alive or human. Furthermore, this shows us something about Heidegger's account of our belonging to being: that account seems unable to admit the possibility of such a radical betrayal. A psychotic break is a failure of this belonging, an expropriation (*Enteignis*) that is not interwoven with appropriation (*Ereignis*). One does not then belong to the shared world at a distance or across a phenomenal field; one just no longer belongs. It is, at the same time, not impossible that such a person can be

reintegrated into the world, but usually only through trusting another person, and never with any guarantee of success. The kind of trust that can be radically betrayed, and for which there subsequently remains some hope but no guarantee, is personal trust. So, I will maintain that our fundamental relation to being, what Heidegger means by originary truth, is a primitive kind of trusting that is most akin to trusting a person. Although I cannot yet say what character of being is presupposed by truth when it is understood as this kind of trust,[32] if I am right, then we are faced with the task of rethinking originary truth on the basis of trust-phenomena.

The project as a whole is divided into seven chapters, collected into two major parts. Chapters 2-4 are a detailed reading of Heidegger's philosophy, while chapters 5-6 draw on Freudian psychoanalysis. These two roughly equal parts are bookended by an initial chapter on trust and a final chapter bringing Heidegger and Freud explicitly together. Because the argument relies on some crucial preliminary distinctions if it is to make any sense, in this overview I will say rather more about the first chapter than about the others.

Trust usually becomes visible when it is tested, threatened, or broken. So, in chapter 1, I articulate three broad phenomenological unities to be found in the experience of trusting, distinguishing them by attending to the different levels of complexity involved in discovering oneself to be betrayed. I try to show that the most basic level, straightforward fulfillment or disappointment of specific expectations, belongs to the explicit decision to rely on someone or something. It differs essentially from a second level, on which my specific expectations may variously be met or disappointed, but I can be betrayed *either way*. Thus, my community may be meeting most of my specific expectations and still exploiting me; the theory I eventually formulate about a topic may be very disappointing to my expectations but ultimately true. This second level designates our relation to systems, institutions, theories, and basic frameworks of

---

[32] Dahlstrom points out that an adequate analysis of truth "must give an account of itself and the sense of being that it presupposes" (*Heidegger's Concept of Truth*, p. xvii).

assumption. When my assumption-trust in such abstract things is betrayed, I find myself disoriented.

Both of the first two levels, then, differ once more from a third level, on which betrayal is radical and always possible, yet not able to be remedied in advance by building checks and balances into the system. This kind of betrayal belongs to trusting in its fullest, personal sense: being given over to the discretion of another person. Such trust is not directly voluntary, and despite being vulnerable to betrayal at every point, nevertheless does not primarily concern itself with this vulnerability. It is directed toward the other *person*, who is thereby revealed as trustworthy, not toward the possible harms that person could do me.

Finally, I try to show that our primitive or basic trust in the world as a whole – our sense of being safe or basically supported despite any number of particular disappointments, disorientations, or even betrayals by other people – belongs to the third level rather than to the second. That is to say, our most fundamental engagement with the shared world is more like trusting a person, which admits of radical betrayal at any moment, than it is like assuming a framework or belonging to an institution. If it were more like the latter, then it would be possible to build into our belonging to the world a kind of distance, in which we recognized that betrayal was likely and took that into account in advance.

The first of the two major parts of the project constitutes a confrontation with Heidegger. In chapter 2, I give several reasons to think that what I outlined in chapter 1 as primitive trust is an interpretation of the same phenomenon that Heidegger describes when he speaks of originary truth. This phenomenon is phenomenality itself: that on the basis of which anything shows up as either true or false, as well as the peculiar pattern according to which truth centrally matters to me. My argument here rests on both a consideration of the matter itself – our most fundamental belonging to an organized world – and an appeal to Heidegger's texts, especially a section on faith and knowledge in the *Contributions to Philosophy*.

I then work through Heidegger's essay "On the Essence of Truth," attending to the various levels of concealment involved in the truth-phenomenon and addressing them as betrayals, from which one recovers by seeing them within a phenomenological unity. For this I take as a model Heidegger's move from *Being and Time*, in which it is quite disorienting that the meaning of being has not even been adequately asked about in the whole history of Western philosophy, to his accounts of the history of being, in which we recover our balance through the phenomenological insight that this forgetting is not so much our fault as it is inherent to being itself. We constitutively wander in errancy in part because being only gives itself *in* what is (beings), which is to say by withdrawing.

If I am right about both parts of the argument in chapter 2, it begins to be plausible to say that Heidegger's interpretation of our most basic relation to being inclines toward the second level of trust, assuming a framework, rather than the third. In this case, the framework or unified structure would be originary truth, understood as unconcealment that presupposes concealment.

In chapter 3, I focus more closely on the history of being as a way of checking this inference about Heidegger's understanding of the unity between being and the human essence, thinking. I first interpret Heidegger's objection to the metaphysical tradition as a concern that metaphysics misplaces its trust when it assumes the givenness of being and relies on reason to secure its possession of that being. On his reading, truth in the history of Western philosophy thus looks more and more like self-assurance, until it reaches explicit self-certainty in Hegel (and soon after finds itself betrayed in Nietzsche). But Heidegger's proposal for rethinking the unity of being and thinking involves recognizing that we always already belong to being, which shows itself (and calls for thinking) precisely in its withdrawing. This phenomenological insight that being must appear (even if only complexly) then seems to be a way for the Heideggerian thinker to reassure himself, similar to the move made with originary truth: being is not simply given once for all (we are in some sense betrayed), but we nevertheless belong ineluctably and essentially to

its history (so we can recognize that it does not and will not fully abandon us). Our being-in-the-truth (and thereby always also in the untruth) turns out to be quite safe.

Since one obvious response to my question about Heidegger's own brand of self-assuring is to point to his discussions of danger to our essence, the rest of the chapter is devoted to an examination of his concern that our possibilities of disclosure might be irreparably lost. Here I contrast his apocalyptic language about the potential annihilation of the human essence with his insistence on Hölderlin's dictum that the possibility of salvation is always to be found in the same place as the growing danger. By considering various interpretations of Heidegger's work – some more phenomenological, some more apocalyptic – and identifying an ameliorating factor in each of his especially dire texts, I try to make clear an important tension internal to his thinking. As a sort of slogan, I propose understanding this as a pulling apart of the hermeneutic and the phenomenological strands of his hermeneutic phenomenology.

After this immanent critique, in chapter 4 I focus on some openings in Heidegger's thought toward a more radical, more genuinely apocalyptic danger that threatens our relation to being. These point in the direction of madness, understood as something more and something other than merely the extreme form of inauthenticity that Heidegger takes it to be. I then propose that Heidegger's phenomenological distinction between death (my finitude that faces me here and now) and demise (my physical cessation that will one day happen) offers a possible location in his thinking for madness as a traumatic break with being-in-the-world, a radical betrayal of originary truth.

That proposal brings to a close the body of my interpretation of Heidegger by calling us back to the matter itself: how *are* we related to being, integrated into a shared world organized along lines of (ontic) truth and falsity? Can the primitive trust that lets me belong to the world be radically betrayed? If it can, that would suggest that our belonging to being has a different

20

character than the one Heidegger seems to find in it. Primitive trust would be more like personal trusting than like dwelling within an assumed essential structure.

The second major part of the investigation concentrates on insights into madness gleaned from Freudian psychoanalysis. In chapter 5, I work out a structural account of psychosis as an initial rejection of full integration into the shared, organized world, followed by a subsequent complete break with that world in response to an overwhelming demand. In other words, it involves an initial (partial) failure of primitive trust, which the person only fully experiences, in a delayed way, if he later undergoes a radical betrayal of that weakened trust (a psychotic break). Such a break is not predictable, since it is never possible to say in advance what will constitute an overwhelming demand for that particular person. Nor is it predictable, once the break has taken place, whether the person will be able to recover. The only way back into the shared world is through rebuilding primitive trust, and when this turns out to be possible, it seems to take place through the mediation of building trust in a person (often, the analyst).

If this is right, it serves as further evidence that primitive trust shares the characteristics of personal trusting, both because of the character of the betrayal involved and because of the transference between trust of a person and a rebuilt global trust. But it also opens up a difficult problem: how can the sufferer from psychosis trust a person when he lacks the support of primitive trust, and in what way can (or should) the analyst trust her analysand if he is psychotic? How can a transference relation work here? The remainder of chapter 5 thus attends to the complexities of trust in psychoanalytic transference generally, as a foundation for thinking about work with psychotics. The philosophical emphasis, with an eye to Heidegger, falls on my claim that it is in large part Freud's personal trust in his patients that justifies his inference to the dynamic unconscious.

In chapter 6, I try simultaneously to work out a reading of Freudian metapsychology that would allow him to deal more adequately with psychosis, and to make his metapsychology a bit

more intelligible to Heideggerian philosophy. This is accomplished, first, by showing that the drives are in part responses to the world, rather than merely internal conflicts in a Cartesian container. Second, by tracing the psychogenesis of the individual, so as to mark out more clearly the role of primitive trust in integrating us into the shared world. Third, by articulating the close relationship between the infant's personal trust of her parents (or parental figures) and her primitive trust in the world they represent. The investigation thus clarifies the universal conflicts at the root of our vulnerability to psychosis, shows that we are all susceptible to such a break in virtue of our exposure to things as mattering (i.e., in virtue of our very being in the truth), and emphasizes the fragility of psychic development against Heidegger's apparent confidence that we are all constantly open, more or less, to being.

Finally, having provided in chapters 5-6 several reasons to think that primitive trust both arises in conjunction with and continues to bear the characteristics of personal trusting, rather than assumption-trust, in chapter 7 I return to Heidegger to consider both his criticism of Freudian analysis and his own practice of trust. The latter takes place in the context of his conversations, either with the philosophical tradition or when he writes dialogues. I raise a concern that Heidegger overlooks the role of the concrete other person, in her peculiarity, as the one trusted, in favor of a generalized trust in the givenness of being. This is hardly a new concern, although the inflection in the direction of trust is unique, but it further supports my broader thesis, which I have not seen argued anywhere else: namely, that Heidegger's interpretation of our relation to being is inappropriately self-assured, not because he does not question (which he consistently and thoroughly does), but precisely because he tacitly understands that relation on the model of assumption-trust rather than personal trusting. If we need particular other persons to seduce us into more fully belonging to the world, then originary truth should perhaps be rethought from the phenomena of trusting, and our relation to being should be understood on the same basis.

I conclude chapter 7 with some provocations to further research, in which I propose that Freud's struggle with the question of truth in psychoanalysis, out of which arises his thinking of originary fantasy, can help us make sense of the event of integration into the world, the happening of truth, that was Heidegger's central preoccupation.

To put the whole thing extremely schematically, we could say that the investigation traces out the following, more or less chiasmic path: trust (chapter 1) and trust in its relation to truth (chapter 2); then truth for Heidegger (chapter 2), trust for Heidegger (chapters 3-4), trust for Freud (chapters 5-6), and truth for Freud (chapter 7).

Chapter One
A Preliminary Phenomenological Investigation
wherein Trust and Related Intentional Acts are examined
in their Unity and Distinction from One Another

Introduction

At its heart, trusting is a kind of self-investment, a founding mode of givenness in which I myself am made manifest as *bound up with* or *given over to* whatever is the object of my trust. Within this mode, the world as a whole may be given, as may other persons, systems or situations, and even individual concrete things, for trust is essentially outwardly oriented – it is a particular way of experiencing something other than me (or the self *as* something other) in the strength of its claim on me. Insofar as the things and people around me claim me, I am disclosed as belonging to them or distant from them (invested in them or not).

Anthony Steinbock has put this well in the course of working out a static phenomenology of trust.[33] He contrasts trust (as "essentially interpersonal") with commitment (which is entirely on the side of the self), since I and no one else can break my commitment, whereas only someone or something else can betray my trust.[34] Günter Figal, too, emphasizes that trust is "essentially relational."[35] Hence, in what follows, I will distinguish some varieties of trust (and closely related phenomena) on the basis of their distinct objects.

---

[33] Anthony J. Steinbock, "Temporality, Transcendence, and Being Bound to Others in Trust" in *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, eds. A. Grøn and C. Welz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 83-102. I shall try to round out – and occasionally contest – his account, both by distinguishing a third sort of trust (assuming: see section II) and by attending to the standpoint of genetic phenomenology (section IV). Cp. his brief mention of the role of the place and of the past in generating trust, p. 91.

[34] What goes for committing goes also for promising. And either party can break a covenant. Thus there is something unique about the phenomenon of trusting (i.e., that it can only be broken by its object), a feature shared by the various modes of self-investment I will discuss here, although only two of them are "essentially interpersonal" (see section III). (The term and the argument are from Steinbock, "The Experience of Trust in the Phenomenology of Personal Emotions," unpublished MS.) Hence I make no claim to exhaust the possible modes of self-investment in what follows; I want merely to trace a few that share a common phenomenal feature and that, together, mostly account for our ordinary-language references to trust.

[35] Günter Figal, "Trusting in Persons and Things," in *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, pp. 103-112 (quotation from p. 104). From the same page: "With trust, the *correlation* between oneself and others, between oneself and the world in general seems to be concerned."

But when disclosed in trusting (or distrusting), these objects are only given to me along with myself as invested in them.[36] (Thus, both self and object are given only *through* the higher-order unity of a relation, even if this relation can be phenomenologically analyzed back into constituent elements.) I shall call this a *self-investment*, without wanting to suggest thereby that trust always involves willfully investing oneself. To the contrary: I will show that the experience of trusting in its fullest forms is an experience of the self as *always already given over* to a person (or to a lived-world). It is only in the less intense forms of self-investment that I consciously and actively give myself over.

The status of that 'always already' is phenomenological: i.e., it is an essential structure of the experience itself, one not to be removed through any tracing back (phenomenological, causal, or game-theoretic) of the genesis of a particular instance of trusting. Such instances will of course have their own histories, to be traced out through a narrative, and indeed I try below to open the field for an account of the structural geneses of trust, as discovered through transcendental reflection. Yet the possibility of working out a genetic phenomenology here ought not be taken to compromise the 'always already' quality of the experience: even if I have never met this person before, in the moment I experience myself as *already* trusting her (or not) in the terms supplied by the relevant context.[37] I may be wrong about who she is, including her trustworthiness, but my relation to her is already one of trust or distrust, prior to more reflective considerations.

There is much more to be said about this temporal aspect of the phenomenon,[38] but perhaps it will serve for the moment simply to illustrate why I find phenomenology to be a

---

[36] In a nice phrase, J.M. Bernstein calls trust "a primitive and original relation to the other, [...] part of the original physiognomy of social interaction." See J.M. Bernstein, "Trust: On the Real but Almost Always Unnoticed, Ever-Changing Foundation of Ethical Life," *Metaphilosophy* **42**.4 (July 2011): 395-416, p. 405.

[37] I am indebted to Steinbock for emphasizing this point: "Temporality," p. 89. Gry Ardal's account of trust as a kind of Kantian aesthetic judgment is also quite helpful in this context (Ardal, "Judging About Trustworthiness," in *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, pp. 115-133).

[38] It is this feature of the phenomenon that makes habitual, inappropriate prejudice so difficult to eradicate in oneself. One's reflective beliefs always come too late to the game. I may talk myself into relying on a

helpful way to approach the question of trust. The problem,[39] at least as it shows up through reading the recent surge of literature on the topic, could be put this way: if we try to *explain* trust from the third-person perspective (either causally, game-theoretically, or in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions), we end up in an irresolvable mess of particular reasons pertaining to particular examples, without feeling like we have given a satisfactory general account.[40] But if we characterize trusting, from the first-person perspective, as an intentional act (a way of comporting ourselves), we can describe its essential structures, various possible modifications, and often-intertwined but essentially distinct acts, without the necessity of working all the precise details of lived examples into one common set of necessary and sufficient conditions (i.e., into one theory). By giving a careful description of the essence of intentional *acts*, we can in a way have our cake and eat it, too: we find both a theory of the essential structures of a certain kind of experience *and* an opening onto the limitless empirical experiences of it. We can, for example, coherently claim a) that trusting is lived as always already given – that is its peculiar temporality – and b) that there are some essential ways according to which it is genetically constituted, *and* c) that we may be able to adduce some causal factors for any particular instance without invalidating (a) or (b).

---

person who seems questionable, but the very seeming is already evidence of my distrust: in fact, he seems to me untrustworthy, although I have never exchanged two words with him. We might be inclined to regard this structure as a predisposition to (dis)trust, rather than as already (dis)trust, but in such situations there is no further step of beginning to trust – there is only a subsequent decision to rely or not to rely, as informed by one's lived trust or distrust, and perhaps later a growing trust. We may be able in general to describe a person as predisposed to distrust others with particular characteristics, but the first-person experience in a concrete situation is that of already trusting or distrusting.

[39] Joseph Godfrey has avoided this problem in a recent book by defending a 'core' sense of trust that can be found in each of four "dimensions" of trusting activity. See especially chapters 2-3 of Godfrey, *Trust of People, Words, and God*. This is the most important book-length treatment of trust available in English.

[40] This seems to me, as it seemed to Aristotle, an inevitable feature of central moral phenomena. Knowledge about them cannot come through the precision of mathematical symbolization or fully generalizable rules, since such accounts falsify the very phenomena they attempt to explain (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* I.3). Annette Baier, for example, who has a distinct feel for the complexities of real situations, apologizes for the somewhat anecdotal nature of her account ("Trusting People," in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1994], p. 194) by appeal to the nature of trust as able to show up only through such anecdotes. I would add that in moral matters, examples and counterexamples tend toward the infinite.

I said above that I would distinguish various modes of self-investment according to their objects, but this is not quite sufficient. For this would yield only a list: descriptive, but lacking the essential structure of the phenomenon. Since we mostly live *through* the phenomenon itself, rather than being directed *toward* it, I propose in a Heideggerian vein that this structure can best be made visible by attending to its possible modes of betrayal.[41] Here we must not attempt an exhaustive taxonomic survey – which could go on indefinitely – but attend instead to how the experience of betrayal differs in complexity in each case. This yields three levels of complication of the phenomena of self-investment insofar as they pertain to trust:

(1) *relying*, which is deciding to give oneself over in a limited context to a particular individual (person or thing) on the basis of concrete expectations which can be straightforwardly fulfilled or disappointed. (I rely on *x* for *y*.) Included here is all *en*trusting of particular items to another person or to a system (I rely on *x* for *y* regarding *z*), though the decision to entrust may be grounded in some other form of self-investment;

(2) *assuming*, which is being given over to something at one level of abstraction, like a system, a set of principles, a theory, or some other *context* of comportment. The system may function adequately for some time without my recognizing either that it *is* functioning as my ground or that it is ultimately *in*adequate as ground. For this reason, my being given over to it can only be changed through a kind of leap into another set of assumptions. Included here is the child's sense of being at-home in certain contexts, upon which its various relyings are founded, although these are also closely bound up with its interpersonal trusting of the caretaker and its basic trusting of the world;

(3) *trusting*, which is a disclosure of the self as always already given over, more and more completely, to a person who is simultaneously disclosed as trustworthy in a mood-like orientation that binds up my emotional state and well-being with that of the other person. Included here is primitive trust, which involves a participant stance of openness to the world[42] in which the latter is disclosed in its fundamental trustworthiness or

---

[41] I suppose one could also call these defeasibility conditions. Approaching through attention to betrayal is by no means foreign to the literature, although such an approach is mostly used to decide whether particular examples count as trusting (would I feel betrayed if… ?), rather than systematically, so as to make visible the structural relations. The straightforward point *that* we mostly only notice trust the way we notice an atmosphere, when it is "scarce or polluted" (to use Annette Baier's phrase), is widely recognized. See Baier, "Trust and Anti-Trust," *Ethics* **96**.2 (January 1986): 231-260, p. 234.

[42] For the meaning of 'participant stance' as one in which I am implicated in the fate of that toward which I stand, see P.F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment," *Proceedings of the British Academy* **48** (1962): 1-25. For trust as openness or self-transcendence, see Claudia Welz, "Trust as Basic Openness and Self-Transcendence," in *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, pp. 44-64.

untrustworthiness; it forms the completely global backdrop for my particular trusts and distrusts.[43]

I should say up front that these three levels are normally interwoven in any lived self-investment (and often only distinguishable from within the phenomenological step back).[44] That should become evident in my consideration of examples, as I will switch between levels just by imaginatively varying the terms of those examples. My genetic considerations at the end of this chapter will explicitly address the interrelations between levels. Nevertheless, it is possible to see in a preparatory and general way the interaction between these phenomena: it is analogous to the interplay of background and foreground in perception. Thus, any act of relying (1) has as its backdrop the valence of my attitude of basic trust (3), my trust (or lack thereof) in the persons relevant to the situation (3) – including those who have attested to the present object's reliability – and an assumed context in which I may feel fairly confident or not at all safe (2). (At the level of relying, these could all be data used in an explicit judgment.) Likewise, my act of trusting (3), though experienced as always already accomplished, discloses the other person as trustworthy against a background of previous acts of reliance (1), within a specific context of comportment (say, as a janitor, or as my spouse), and on the basis of primitive trust in the world (3). (At the level of trusting, these are reasons that may be used to justify myself after the fact, or implications contained in the emotion itself.)

It is crucial to recognize, however, that while the foreground experience of self-investment in each case is affected by the background, the latter does not simply determine the

---

[43] Relying is obviously similar to Godfrey's reliance-trust; assuming involves in part what he calls security-trust; trusting proper, I will argue, includes both his I-thou trust and his openness trust, although as distinct modes. See Godfrey, *Trust of People*, ch. 2.

[44] There may also be a fourth level of self-investment, one suggested by D.Z. Phillips in "On Trusting Intellectuals on Trust" (*Philosophical Investigations* **25**.1 [January 2002]: 33-53): *religious trust*, which according to Phillips cannot be betrayed since it is a trust in the humanity of the other (made in God's image), who cannot cease to be human. I think this may just be personal trusting in God, albeit worked out in terms of its implications for other people. If I am right, then it would still be able to be betrayed by God, but I am not sure. If it really were impervious to betrayal, such trust would constitute a fourth level of self-investment not dealt with here.

former. Just as the character of the horizon (bright, dark, wide, narrow, etc.) makes possible and to an extent characterizes my perception of foreground objects but yet does not sufficiently determine what those objects are, so all of the levels of self-investment are involved in making possible any particular experience of such investment, without thereby sufficiently determining its valence. (Implied in this claim is that any lived experience of self-investment will contain a level of complexity to which it primarily belongs, even if this is often only fully disclosed in the experience of being betrayed.)

I. Relying

The first and most superficial level of "betrayal" – which, as we will see, is far from unimportant – is not yet betrayal properly speaking, but rather the *disappointment* of expectations. Such expectations are always concrete, meaning that they are restricted not only to a specific context but to a specific situation within that context, and the feeling of disappointment, though it may have other ramifications, is centered on that situation. What does the disappointing – i.e., the objects of one's trust in these cases – is primarily particular individuals, whether things or persons. But just as the "betrayal" at this level does not quite warrant the full sense of the word, so this kind of trust is only loosely to be labeled 'trust' at all In keeping with the literature and with a fair number of ordinary language situations, it could be called *reliance-trust*; nevertheless, the experiential phenomenon I wish to describe is *relying*.[45]

---

[45] The term "reliance-trust" is from Godfrey, *Trust of People*, ch. 2.
   Nearly everyone writing on the subject of trust, at least since J.N. Horsburgh inaugurated the contemporary Anglo-American discussion in 1960, has distinguished between trust proper (Horsburgh calls it 'confidence') and reliance (or 'mere reliance,' or 'reliability' – Steinbock's term), which latter is sometimes taken to count as a kind of trust and sometimes not. I am willing to go either way on that, given the imprecision of everyday language, so long as we can get the structure right. For relying is a phenomenon closely tied to trusting, and I shall try to say how. At the very least, it must be the case that some relying is oriented toward trust and some is not. Cf. Horsburgh, "The Ethics of Trust," *The Philosophical Quarterly* **10**.41 (October, 1960): 343-354.

This kind of self-investment includes all those cases in which we are disclosed to ourselves as the subjects of a *decision* whether or not to trust. Thus it includes all instances of what we call *entrusting*, in which I trust you *with* something (possibly including myself under some limited aspect, for example my physical health).[46] It also includes all calculated trusts that could legitimately be modeled game-theoretically, including the majority of what is dealt with in the sociological and philosophical trust literature.

Richard Holton takes as an obvious but helpful example the trust-fall game,[47] popular at team-building workshops, in which one person stands (either on a bit of a height or simply on the ground) within arm's length of her team members, who have their arms extended, perhaps interlocked, to catch her. She is told to close her eyes and let herself fall (more or less rigidly – just crumpling in place works less well), trusting her team members not to let her hit the ground.

In such a moment, the sense of actively giving myself over is quite strong, and it seems that I genuinely do have a choice whether or not to rely on my comrades. Should I opt to fall, the conditions for disappointment are quite clear because the expectation is quite straightforward: my comrades either succeed or fail at keeping me off the ground. Or, more precisely (in case we want to include things like getting accidentally punched in the ribs but not entirely dropped as partial disappointments), the result can be fit unproblematically onto a continuum stretching from success to failure.

---

[46] Such three-term relations are the focus of Baier's "Trust and Anti-Trust," meaning that although her examples and some of her analyses go beyond relying toward interpersonal trusting, her theoretical apparatus is to just that extent insufficient to deal with them. For example, the test that she proposes for deciding whether trust is pathological or healthy involves being able to express the reasons why I trust (hence, rely) on someone. See also the end of the article, where Baier quite openly lays out her own misgivings about her account, one of which is precisely that in some cases we would "want to say that unless we first trust [the people involved] we will not trust them *with* anything" (pp. 258-9, original italics).

Godfrey's analysis of reliance trust extends this to a five-term relation "to take account of two ranges of discretion: the range of what one cares for, and the range of what counts as a good outcome": *I* trust *someone/something* with *something* for *some purpose* (i.e., with a certain expected outcome) on *some basis* (reliability, necessity, the other's good will, etc.). Godfrey, *Trust of People*, p. 39 and n. 22.

[47] Richard Holton, "Deciding to Trust, Coming to Believe," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* **72**.1 (March 1994): 63-76. See p. 63 for the example.

Similarly, if I am running down a steep trail and make a split-second decision to rely on a particular root to hold my weight briefly, the intentional act of deciding contains a concrete expectation – whether explicitly worked out or not – based on a practical judgment informed by experience, beliefs, an assessment of the immediate situation, and so on. If the root snaps and I tumble, I will certainly be disappointed, but it will be hard to be indignant with the root for *betraying* me, as this would require attributing to the tree a kind of cognizance that I have delivered myself into its care.

In fact, it is essential to the phenomenal structure of expecting (as distinct from, say, hoping or anticipating) that expectations be concrete, and so they will necessarily be met somewhere on a continuum of fulfillment and disappointment. They need not be so straightforward as in the examples above in order to remain within this structure, since, as many have noticed,[48] I might go ahead and rely on my teammates to catch me without expecting that they in fact will or even believing that they can. So perhaps my expectation will only be that they try hard, or that they refrain from kicking me once I am on the ground. I may rely in this unconfident – ordinary language might also say, "untrusting" – way for any number of reasons: maybe I have been trained how to fall and am being paid to entertain them with pratfalls; maybe I wish to educate them about the importance of knowing the team's collective limits before beginning projects; maybe I am simply generally cynical but need to impress the boss who organized this particular adventure.[49] Perhaps, like Dostoevski's underground man, I just wish to horrify them out of spite. As Holton points out, regardless of the particular content of my

---

[48] Horsburgh, Holton, and Baier included.

[49] Horsburgh is particularly interested in the educative or 'therapeutic' motivation. Holton, too, includes an example oriented toward the morally educative: "Suppose you run a small shop. And suppose you discover that the person you have recently employed has just been convicted of petty theft. Should you trust him with the till? It appears that you can really decide whether or not to do so … [and] that you can do so without believing that he is trustworthy" (Holton, "Deciding," p. 63).

expectations (i.e., beliefs), I can choose to rely or not to, and my expectations will be either fulfilled, disappointed, or some combination.

The example of educative or therapeutic or even cynical "trust" brings to light a further distinction within the phenomenon of relying. Choosing to rely varies somewhat independently of my confidence in that on which I rely. So, although we shall see later that genuine, interpersonal trust is built and sustained through reliance of a kind that is oriented toward trust – relying in the moment for the sake of trusting more completely in the future – there is also a kind of 'mere' reliance that remains suspicious or even mistrustful.[50]

Such mistrustful reliance is probably most frequently met with in situations of social dependence, in which I may not see any other way than to rely upon someone whom I do not find myself trusting.[51] This could be pathological, in a context of mistaken assumptions or insufficient strength of character, or it could be simply an unchangeable fact of my situation, social or physical. (Notice that this is not only true for reliance on people: I may be caught in a thunderstorm while mountaineering and have to rely for shelter on something I judge to be woefully inadequate. I still encounter myself as given over to it, though in the attitude of distrust.)

The phenomenon of mistrustful reliance indicates that there are a variety of possible presentational modes in which the decision to rely is couched. It may show up simply as a

---

[50] Here it may be helpful to point out that there are at least four possible attitudes, though these should not be thought of on a continuum. One can trust (that is, have confidence in, be given over to more and more completely); one can neither trust nor distrust (i.e., be indifferent toward, unacquainted with, or otherwise unaffected by); one can *dis*trust (i.e., harbor suspicions about the object's trustworthiness); or one can *mis*trust (i.e., be positively convinced of the object's untrustworthiness and deal with it accordingly). *Reliance* is compatible with any of these attitudes, although of course it will be modified by whichever one characterizes the relation. *Assuming* is only incompatible with mistrust. Full-blown *trusting* is only clearly compatible with the first attitude, although it may also be compatible with some level of distrust.

[51] Baier has emphasized, against a model of trust as disguised contract, that historically, most situations of entrusting for most people in the world have been of this necessary reliance variety. In a happy phrase, Godfrey calls this "accepted dependence" (*Trust of People*, p. 33). Such dependence does not yet determine whether or not the relying is done within a situation of trust, however; one can also trust someone upon whom one is forced to rely. Cf. Baier, "Trust and Anti-Trust," *passim*.

Nor, for example on J.-P. Sartre's account, would such reliance ever lose the essential character of a decision, since suicide would always be another option. Such a consideration need not prevent us, however, from distinguishing between necessary and unnecessary reliance.

decision to continue relying on someone I have trusted for a long time, or on someone whom I have not yet trusted (in the full sense) but on whom I have been relying gradually more and more, and who has now come up again for further review. It may be a decision about relying on a stranger in a wholly new situation, or in a context where I feel at home. It may, as in the case of dependence, present itself as a decision made beyond my control, although I remain subjected to it, and it retains (from a transcendental perspective) the contingent character of a decision.[52]

Because it has the intertwined character of deciding in each case and involving concrete expectations, however, relying is essentially functionally oriented. This can be seen, as Godfrey points out, when that on which I rely fails me: it is in principle replaceable.[53] If I rely on your medical opinion and it disappoints me, I can find a new doctor. If I am relying on you to help me move house, and you sleep in too long, I will call someone else. This feature is what allows Niklas Luhmann to analyze trust generally as a problem-solving function: it reduces complexity through a voluntary, affective, risky generalization across time. In Luhmann's analysis, self-control over how much I rely substitutes for control over the object on which I rely, and the voluntary generalization across time allows me to leap over my inherent information deficit with regard to the future.[54]

Luhmann's analysis also brings into view *two essentially distinct modes of relying*. He distinguishes between 'familiarity' and 'trust'; since I am reserving 'trust' for a different phenomenon, I shall distinguish between 'familiarity' and 'probability.' Luhmann takes trust to require risk, a kind of voluntary leap into the unfamiliar, and he recognizes that in it we have (at least sometimes) to deal with the freedom of the other as *alter ego*, as one who can disappoint me

---

[52] In each of these cases, as mentioned above, the context (of trust or one of the other possible attitudes) is crucial but not sufficiently determinative, since, for example, I can choose not to rely in a certain situation on someone whom I generally trust (and hence is generally given to me as trustworthy).

[53] Godfrey, *Trust of People*, p. 40.

[54] Niklas Luhmann, "Trust," in *Trust and Power: Two Works*, tr. G. Poggi (Chichester: John Wiley, 1979).

despite my best predictions.[55] In other words, we have to deal only with probabilities of action, not certainties.[56] Diego Gambetta expresses the situation nicely when he extracts from his manifold and interdisciplinary study the following definition: "Trust [is] a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both *before* he can monitor such an action … *and* in a context in which it affects *his own* action."[57] To put this into the terms I have been using: relying in the mode of probability has the structure of an assessment that issues in a decision, in which I am disclosed as given over to the object on which I rely, in principle independently of my certainty as to its ability to fulfill my expectations. Here disappointment may be in my calculations as well as in the object relied upon.

On the other hand, there is also a mode of relying characterized by something more like certainty, or rather characterized by the putting out of play of probability. Luhmann calls this 'familiarity,'[58] while Steinbock refers to it as 'reliability,' but the phenomenon is the same. Here reliance is lived as a straightforward act of believing, motivated by previous experience with the object (or its kind), which object is thus experienced in a kind of "temporal density" or continuity. There is, as Steinbock puts it, an unruptured concordance of the present with the past, and on this basis I rely unproblematically for the future.[59] When I sit in the same reliable chair in which I sit every day, there is no expectation that 'it will probably hold me'; I just decide to sit in it. If it lets

---

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 21. This is also true of interpersonal trusting as I shall characterize it below, but Luhmann's insight falls victim to his own presuppositions. In looking for the problem that trust functions to solve, he ends up with trust as a primarily self-protective function of systems, which does not accord at all with the phenomenon of being given over to the other.

[56] This is the kind of self-investment with which most of the literature deals, trying to sort out the various considerations involved in relying: promises, coercion, incentives, expectation of the other's goodwill (Baier), and recognition that my decision about relying affects the other's decisions about fidelity, as well as concerns about the other's view of the relevant material, her competence (in reasoning and acting), the relation between my values and hers, her care for me, and her beliefs about the circumstances. Cf. Edward S. Hinchman, "Trust and Diachronic Agency," *Nous* **37**.1 (2003): 25-51.

[57] Diego Gambetta, "Can We Trust Trust?" in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 217, original italics.

[58] Luhmann, "Trust," pp. 19-20.

[59] Steinbock, "Temporality," p. 85.

me down, my calculations are not to blame, for I have not really made any; only the object has disappointed me.[60]

Finally, as should be clear by now, reliance is a decision involving expectation and fulfillment/disappointment because it relies on (what is experienced as) an individual object. Thus, although the tree root is made of many parts, if it nearly snaps but manages to hold on long enough for me to safely shift my weight, it as a whole has proved reliable, and I am not disappointed. Likewise, in the trust-fall example, either the group will catch me or not. If one strong woman jumps out and catches me by herself, the group has still caught me, functionally speaking, and I am not disappointed.

II. Assuming
"Can't an assertoric sentence, which was capable of functioning as an hypothesis, also be used as a foundation for research and action? I.e. can't it simply be isolated from doubt, though not according to any explicit rule? It simply gets assumed [*wird hingenommen*] as a truism [*Selbstverständlichkeit*], never called into question, perhaps not even ever formulated."[61]

But with the question of the object of reliance, we find an opening onto another level of possible "betrayal." Staying with the trust-fall situation: it could be that I *expect* the group to work together to catch me. If one heroic woman does all the work, maybe I will still be disappointed, even though part of my expectation was fulfilled (being caught). This much remains functional; I have only included a higher-order goal in my expectations when I rely on the group for teamwork as well as catching. If, however, regardless of whether or not I expect such teamwork, I make my decision to rely while *assuming* that it is only by virtue of the group's unity as a group that I could be caught, then there is a more complicated level of trusting going on. I shall call it *assumption-trust*, and the phenomenon to be explored *assuming*. In this case, how am I to know whether I have been "betrayed"?

---

[60] This analysis of familiarity is heavily indebted to Steinbock's account of reliability in "Temporality," pp. 84-86.

[61] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, trs. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), §87.

35

Let's say that I merely expect to be caught (without further specification) and, choosing to rely, I *am* caught, but only or primarily by the heroine. My concrete expectations have been beautifully fulfilled. But has my assumption been borne out? Was it by virtue of the group's unity that she was able to catch me? Perhaps. Maybe the best expression of the group's unity was to be found in this single act, performed by this single person, empowered by the confidence of the rest of the group members. Maybe if they had all tried at once, they would have dropped me – say, by accidentally pushing me back over the other direction. On the other hand, maybe this was an act of supreme selfishness by someone who thereby sabotaged the group's (somewhat tenuous) sense of unity. Either of these could turn out to have been the case,[62] as revealed by further events, but the point is that determining whether my assumption is right or wrong – whether or not I was right to trust the unity of the group to save me – is at a categorically different level of complexity from determining the fulfillment or disappointment of my expectation.

The kind of "betrayal" that belongs to this mode of self-investment, then, might be called *disorientation*.[63] It lacks the immediacy of being dropped by a team of people trying to catch me, or of tumbling when the tree root gives way under my foot. Rather, discovering that inappropriate assuming has delivered me over to unstable ground is an experience not unlike that portrayed by cartoon character Wyle E. Coyote, who often runs out over the edge of a cliff in a cloud of dust, continues running for some moments before discovering that the ground has disappeared from beneath him, pauses in dismay, and only then plunges earthward. The coyote's moment of stunned immobility upon his discovery is typical of disorientation. This kind of "betrayal," unlike disappointment, implies a previous motion. Expectations can be disappointed before I ever get anywhere. But disorientation implies that one was both already oriented in a certain direction (via

---

[62] I use the cumbersome future anterior because there might be situations, more complicated than that of this example but still within the structure of assuming, in which neither scenario simply was the case, but (based on things still to happen) one of them may yet turn out to *have been* the case. See chapter 6, below.
[63] Or perhaps, *a là* Heidegger, 'having-the-rug-pulled-out-from-under-me.'

expectation), and also already moving in that direction (buoyed by concrete assumptions). Even being-oriented is given in terms of the system of landmarks *by which* one is oriented (i.e., in terms of assuming).

The word 'disorientation' also connotes being lost, having taken a path that turns out in some way never to have been quite right. Yet that 'in some way' is not fully specifiable in the experience of being disoriented, precisely because any specification would be with reference to a context, and it is the context that is disclosed as untrustworthy here.[64] It is as if the rug has been pulled from under my feet without my noticing until somewhat later – and when the chasm eventually appears, yawning beneath me, I am stunned for a bit (never mind that I am metaphorically hanging in the air) before any other response becomes possible.[65]

The further irony of the cartoon situation, of course, is that the coyote has only run off the cliff because he was chasing Roadrunner (a flightless bird), who himself never looked down to realize that he was off the cliff and so made it safely to the next cliff, running on air, held up by speed, confidence, and a cloud of dust. This physics-defying metaphor presents the complexity of revelation and concealment held together, wherein both the lack of support (running over the edge) and continued standing (without falling) can be co-given.[66]

---

[64] Moreover, 'to disorient' is rarely if ever used as an active, transitive verb in English, unlike 'to disappoint' or 'to betray.' This fact of usage corresponds to the phenomenal differences under discussion here, since assuming is the only one of these three kinds of acts that cannot take a person as its object. At most, I could say that I "betray" myself when I am disoriented, having discovered that I assumed wrongly, but even here the temporal delay makes this awkward. Better to say that in disorientation, I am disclosed to myself as having-been invested somehow inappropriately, and the world-as-assumed is disclosed as somehow untrustworthy.

[65] My remaining in the air until I get my bearings sufficiently to fall in fact indicates that this kind of "betrayal" is not wholly basic. There is some other self-investment, some other more fundamental way of belonging, which enables the delay involved in disorientation. My assumptions are and have been inadequate, but something prior to them maintains my stance in the world. This something is what psychologists call 'basic trust,' which I work out in section III under the label 'primitive trust.' If *it* is betrayed, there is no place for me to stand in the world anymore.

[66] This and the following discussion of reorientation will be crucial in the reading of Heidegger carried out in chapters 2-4.

We could say, in fact, that this is precisely the experience of disorientation: I am betrayed (there is no solid ground here), and yet in the midst of that I am somehow justified (for I yet stand). On the other side, one's assumptions can be given as justified (it's working!) *in their very "betrayal"* – as when a system works both *for* my purpose and, sometimes precisely thereby, *against* it. In other words, the phenomenon of disorientation demands a dialectical weaving together of the terms 'fulfillment' and 'disappointment', with one present in the other, rather than simply locating a point somewhere on the continuum between them.

Such interweaving points to one of two ways of resolving disorientation. When I find my expectations disappointed and myself still (somehow) standing, with no ground underneath me – that is, when my assumptions are shown to be inappropriate – I can sometimes reinterpret the whole situation within a *larger* systematic context. This reorients me by allowing me to account for my previous assumptions, their "betrayal," and the very possibility of my own reorientation. If, for example, I do not realize that I am in a funhouse, and my expectations that water will not run uphill are repeatedly disappointed, leading to a sense of disorientation about my more basic assumptions, I can recover by recognizing the nature of the building I am in, even if I do not learn the specific tricks used. I come to recognize them as tricks by reestablishing the context in which my disorienting experiences belong. Thus, in such a reorientation, I do not give up standing on air; rather, by assuming a larger context or a different system, I interpret air, too, as a substantial surface, and thus find myself back on solid ground.

The other path to reorientation is more like fleeing back to the cliffs around me, which now, once I have found myself "betrayed," show themselves more clearly as safe ground. This could mean leaping into a new set of assumptions at the same level as the previous set – embracing a rival theory, for example. Or it could mean entrenching myself with renewed vigor in my previous set of assumptions. In the latter case, I would have to refuse to engage with the

disorienting information – or defend excessively against it – so as to insist against all odds that my assumptions must be correct.

A) Foreground and Background Assuming

The necessary delay in sorting out whether or not my assumption-trust was well-placed corresponds to the temporal structure of assuming as a mode of self-investment. Relying is oriented to the past (to the familiar reliability or the necessity of the object – or of objects like it, in new situations) and to that past's smooth continuity into the future (to the expectations that arise on the basis of such reliability). It thereby has the temporal meaning of already having checked-up on the object of my "trust."[67] Assuming, by contrast, is oriented to a kind of extended present, and thus it has the temporal meaning of a necessarily deferred check-up.[68] That is, one *can* become disoriented with regard to even the most fundamental assumptions, but such disorientation occurs only across a temporal gap. So while both kinds of "betrayal," disappointment and disorientation, have a temporal density, they differ in their fundamental temporal orientation.[69]

The delay is easiest to see in the kind of assumptive trust that occurs in proceeding by hypothesis. We could call this *foreground assuming*: the conscious, willed taking-up of an account of something, bracketing my doubts about that account. I give myself over to a certain set of assumptions, which giving over requires at least temporarily putting on hold any possible verification processes (whether out of necessity or by choice). For example, say that I formulate a hypothesis and build an experiment to test it. Here there can be a significant amount of self-investment required (there is structurally at least some) before any verification of my hypothesis

---

[67] Along with its possible modifications: wishing that I had had the chance to check more thoroughly (in situations of unchosen reliance, e.g.), or feeling the moral weight of responsibility for not having checked when I did have the chance – i.e., for being gullible.

[68] This deferral of accounting or reckoning is what Baier means by trust quite generally.

[69] By contrast to both, we will see that interpersonal trusting has no comparable temporal density, but rather a kind of opening onto an ongoing relation.

is even possible. Yet, all of my activity to enable verification depends on my holding onto the hypothesis, however tentatively – otherwise, I am not designing a test *for* anything.[70]

But with assuming, I can also be disclosed as *already* given over to a set of assumptions – what we might call *background assuming*. In the posthumously published *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein distinguishes between what I am calling background and foreground assuming by differentiating between a world-picture (*Weltbild*) and the empirical propositions structured by that picture. The *Weltbild* is "the substratum of all my enquiring and asserting."[71] He describes it as "a kind of mythology," and the propositions constituting it as "rules of a game" (presumably a language-game), which game "can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules." Then he differentiates the "riverbed of thoughts" (i.e., the rules of the mythology) from the flowing of the river's waters (the various propositions governed or tested by the rules). Either may shift, but their shifting is not the same. And even the riverbed is not uniformly susceptible of movement, since it "consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, and partly of sand."[72] (I will argue later [part III] that even such background assuming is to be distinguished from truly *basic* or primitive trust, which is the existential investment allowing me to adhere to *any* set of assumptions as stable and real.)

Foreground, voluntarily adoptable assumptions are the river in this analogy, changing with relative swiftness, while background assuming forms the riverbed, which need not ever have been explicitly adopted.[73] Indeed, we can say that such background assumptions have the form of

---

[70] There are of course a great variety of ways that experiments come about; some of them are largely accidents. But if what I am doing is testing a hypothesis, even if that hypothesis is only that some bit of technology will work if I construct it in this particular way, I have to assume that it is the *right* way for at least a while (sometimes an expensive while) before I can verify whether or not it *will* work. Without such a starting assumption, construction (or testing generally) will never begin.

[71] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §162.

[72] Wittgenstein, §§95-99.

[73] For example, a child "doesn't learn *at all* that that mountain has existed for a long time: that is, the question whether it is so doesn't arise at all. It swallows this consequence down, so to speak, together with *what* it learns" (Wittgenstein, §143). Similarly, what is assumed as part of the *Weltbild* can be discovered

believed propositions only from a third-person perspective. I live them in the first-person simply as ways of comporting myself as confident or as unsure.[74] That is to say, "When a child learns language it learns at the same time what is to be investigated and what not."[75]

For example, before I ever adopt a particular hypothesis and start formulating an experiment, I have been instructed in a more or less modern scientific environment, structured by the set of assumptions guiding that endeavor (taking measurability, verifiability, objectivity, and so on as standards).[76] I did not, presumably, choose to be born into such an era and inspired by such standards.[77] How am I to discover whether *this* self-investment is well-placed? It does seem like, in principle, I could *eventually* find myself "betrayed" by this whole fabric of assumptions – probably such a disorientation is roughly what pre-modern scientists experienced when Galileo finally convinced them that he had not rigged his telescope, or what it felt like to be deeply convinced of Newtonian mechanics when Einstein started turning the tide of learned opinion. But such a "betrayal" could only be encountered *eventually*.

As we can see, one reason for the delay inherent to either mode of assuming is that assumptions can only be modified via a complex maneuver: I must somehow step back from whatever part of my life is built on them in order to thematize them as such; I must decide that

---

"subsequently, like the axis around which a body rotates. The axis is not fixed in the sense that anything holds it fast, but the movement around it determines its immobility" (§152).

[74] This point is from Lars Hertzberg, "On the Attitude of Trust," in *The Limits of Experience* (Helsinki: The Philosophical Society of Finland, 1994), p. 62.

[75] Wittgenstein, §472.

[76] Here Wittgenstein agrees: "One cannot make experiments if there are not some things which one does not doubt" (§337). He goes on in the same paragraph to distinguish in another way what I am calling foreground and background assuming, pointing out that those undoubted things (the existence of the experimental equipment, the constancy of the numbers in a calculation, etc.) are not explicitly taken up (*hinnehmen*) as particular presuppositions (*Voraussetzungen*). Rather, I assume (*annehmen*) a system that makes possible what I expect to happen in a particular case.

Elsewhere, he acknowledges that this sounds strange (§411): "If I say, '*We assume* [*nehmen an*] that the earth has existed for many years past' (or something similar), then of course it sounds strange that we should *assume* such a thing. But in the entire system of our language-games it belongs to the foundations. The assumption [*Annahme*], one might say, forms the basis of action, and therefore, naturally, of thought."

[77] Suppose we could construct a situation according to which I did choose. Then we are in a larger version of the hypothesis situation, where the set of modern scientific standards are the hypothesis.

they are in need of changing; then I must (to a greater or lesser extent) leap into a new set of assumptions. In foreground assuming, this can be relatively easy – as when I change design plans for my backyard shed partway through construction – since the step back is not difficult. Even though I am living through my assumptions toward the work that they make possible, they do not (obsessions aside) ground a very large part of my life, so that I have plenty of ground to stand on (at the kitchen window, say) while I interrogate them. Furthermore, since I consciously took them up, I know their structure pretty well, and it has not yet been deeply sedimented into my way of life. On the other hand, of course, background assumptions are notoriously difficult to change, and even to recognize.[78]

The problem of recognition forms a second reason for the necessary delay. For not only must I step back so as to recognize (thematize) my assumptions, I must appropriately diagnose the "betrayal." And, as I began this section by saying, that is no simple task. Unlike with relying, a disappointment of expectations here does not yet equate to disorientation, since it could reasonably be explained in various, hard-to-eliminate ways. To remain with the example of an experimental set-up for the sake of simplicity: the disappointment could be due to a problem with my interpretation of the results, could be due to equipment failure, could be from user-error in the design of the experiment, or it could be due to my global misunderstanding of the problem I am researching. None of these would necessarily entail the falsity of my assumed hypothesis (i.e., entail disorientation), although some of them would point to the instability of other assumptions.

Or we could use as an example the system of gender relations in which the woman works in the home and raises the children while the man goes out into the community to win the bread. Not only was this fairly deeply assumed (sometimes with a very strong feeling of confidence) in various Western European communities since at least the Industrial Revolution (if not ancient

---

[78] Even in foreground assuming, changes can also be extremely difficult, if a lot has been invested in the current hypothesis. One thinks of the Social Security program in the United States.

Greece and beyond), it was structurally quite difficult to know what constituted a failure and whom or what to blame for it. If I am a wife and mother in Britain in the year 1900, and I am unhappy with my lot… what follows? Am I "betrayed" by a system that I trusted, or is the system fine and I am failing to be a good enough wife and mother, or is there no failure at all because nobody was ever promised happiness in the first place?

Or, staying with the existential problem of happiness, let us say that I am deeply invested in the background assumption embedded in my culture that money and prestige are the twin gateways to happiness. This assumption and its corollaries orient my desires, actions, expectations, emotions, and habits. The world is given to me as ordered in this way, and that ordering is not so much explicitly attended to as displayed in my way of living. If I am moderately successful and yet unhappy, it will be unclear whether my assumption is at fault – most likely, my assumption will not even come up for review. I will enjoy parts of such a life and be oppressed by others, and if I can tell that I am unhappy, I will assume that moderate success is simply insufficient. But if I become ever more successful and remain unhappy, and if I can gain the clarity to notice this (both are significant conditions), I may realize only then, with an insight that is at the same time clear and utterly confusing, that the structure of my world does not fit the structure of the shared world.

It is unlikely to be clear what follows from this, or how to regain my footing, since I feel both lied to by those from whom I absorbed my assumptions and displaced from my cultural home. Is it the case that happiness is impossible or illusory? That it is a private state of mind rather than a worldly achievement? That I am somehow uniquely cursed to be excluded from it? The possibilities under consideration will depend on what is available as I cast about for some new set of assumptions or broader perspective by which to reorient myself.

As we can see, the temporal structure of assuming is one of deferring but not simply abandoning any checking on one's assumptions. This feature is necessary, since the very

complexity of checking implies the delay. This also distinguishes assuming from relying, which is structurally oriented to the past: in relying, I have to some extent *already* checked things out, since I make a decision based on past experience, and if I am nonetheless forced to rely on someone I have discovered to be unreliable, I will build as many recurring check-ups into my reliance as possible.

We have seen, then, that both the temporal structure and the complexity of "betrayal" differ categorically between these first two levels of self-investment. To emphasize that distinction once more, we should notice that assumptive trust phenomenally *underlies* my decision to rely. That is, assuming is not reducible to a further expectation: it is not just that I expect to be caught in my trust-fall, and I additionally expect that this will occur in virtue of the group's unity. If this is the character of the experience, we are still at the level of functionality (i.e., of relying). Nor can I always consciously decide to assume certain things and not others. Rather, it is my being given over to certain assumptions that first *makes possible* both my being presented with a decision about reliance at all and the specific options between which that decision appears to me to be laid out.

Assuming is really an experientially distinct kind of self-investment, then. Accordingly, in it I also find myself given over to a different category of object. I *rely* on a concrete individual (or a group taken as an individual) to meet concrete expectations; I *assume* a system of interactions, a group taken as a web of relations, a set of norms or principles, a social institution, a structuring narrative about the world, etc. Assuming has as its objects whatever sets of relations are sufficiently given as abstract unities-across-difference to provide contexts for living.[79] From the present cultural suspicion of marriage as a social form, for example, it is clear that getting

---

[79] Luhmann designates a similar kind of trust in systems, and his examples are interesting. He interprets the monetary system as a substitute for trusting people, and he takes the system of truth to be something resembling Foucaultian knowledges – i.e., the system substitutes for my own information processing by making certain for me and assuring me that the matter has been verified by experts. See "Trust," pp. 50ff, as well as Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

married requires investing oneself in an institution (a more or less stable social unity of many rather different relationships), in addition to trusting one's spouse.

Godfrey helpfully distinguishes a kind of trust that is localized to particular contexts (his term is "embodied") without being a reliance on anything in particular.[80] He calls it "security trust," though it is not a matter of security from or against particular threats; nor is it even a general confidence that my particular projects will work out. Rather, as befits the more abstract nature of assuming, it is a kind of feeling at-home in particular contexts, an assurance that things will be alright even if my projects do not go well, or if particular dangers do get through the defenses. It is a sense of belonging to the places or situations from which all such things can be dealt with, comparable to the infant being held in its parent's arms.[81] It is not global – he explicitly points out that it permits of other distrusts on the same level, perhaps of the kind that maintain such contexts (e.g., if I feel at-home in the country, maybe I will just refuse to go to the big city) – but nor is it limited to individual objects.[82]

Godfrey sketches here the contours of what I take to be a well-known phenomenon. It is, in fact, precisely the "trust" that we have in certain contexts, marked by a feeling of general confidence. This does not make it infallible: as a mode of assuming, it too can be misplaced, and indeed Godfrey points out that it is conceptualized on the basis of infant-behavior for a reason: the same level of confidence that is perfectly appropriate for the infant would be infantile in an

---

[80] Godfrey, *Trust of People*, pp. 45-8.

[81] This kind of trust is not only *comparable to* the held infant; rather, this is where we should locate at least some structural component of an infant's trust in its primary caretaker. We shall see later (chapter 6) that such trust is by no means as absolute and unproblematic as much of the literature on trust might suggest. Nonetheless, the child does have some implicit trust in its context, and that kind of trust seems to partake of the phenomenon of assuming. As the infant individuates from its mother, of course, its trust in her will become gradually more and more completely an interpersonal kind of trust (what I am calling *trusting* proper). But, as the phenomenon of adolescent rebellion suggests, a certain amount of any child's trust in its parents is really a kind of assumption-trust in its milieu.

[82] I take this limitation to specific contexts to differentiate such security trust from what R.D. Laing means by ontological security, which has to be global, and which I link with primitive trust. (See chapter 5, below, for more on Laing.) Godfrey, however, includes ontological security *within* security trust (*Trust of People*, p. 46), since the latter can be of varying extents. It is thus not clear to me how ontological security relates to his claim that security trust "can be regressive, nostalgic, and narcissistic" (p. 48).

adult.[83] Nevertheless, it makes clear that assuming is precisely a way of "trusting" a context, and as such is more like trusting proper than reliance is.[84] For although a context is not a person, still the experience of assuming a certain context essentially includes its being given as trustworthy, and discloses me as given over to that context, neither of which is consistently true of relying.

The way in which I am given over in assuming is different, however, than the one we will find in the phenomenon of trusting proper. For assuming is not necessarily given in the mode of the 'always already'; it can be entered into through a moment of commitment, as in the case of adopting a hypothesis, which as a foreground assumption may then gradually become integrated into my habitual ways of conducting myself, until it has faded into the background and I no longer notice it anymore. On the other hand, being given over to an assumption is also not the same as relying, since in the former I need only make one commitment (with perhaps occasional renewals). But since assuming does not have the character of deciding in each case, and since we saw that in fact it *underlies* any such deciding to rely, we should ask what kind of character it does display.

B)   Triangulation: Assuming in the Context of Emotion and Habit

Assuming (especially but not only in its background form) structures the way in which the world is given to me. This is an intra-worldly structure – assuming is not the kind of primitive trust that grants me a world at all, and coherence as such does not crumble for me when I am disoriented – but in assuming I am disclosed as given over to things within a more or less coherent context, and those things show up for me at all *as* more or less coherent. That is,

---

[83] Godfrey, *Trust of People*, p. 48.
[84] The distinction for which I am arguing here between background assuming and trusting is not to be found in, for example, Karen Jones's nevertheless coherent account of "basal security." See Jones, "Trust and Terror," in *Moral Psychology: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*, eds. P. DesAutels and M.U. Walker (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 3-18, especially pp. 7ff. She defines basal security as "an unarticulated, affectively laden, implicit, interpretive framework [which is] a set of dispositions of salience, interpretation, motivation, and affect" (pp. 8-9).

although what I assume can appropriately be said to be *my* assumptions, they nevertheless present themselves as the ways of being of the things that belong to the relevant contexts. (Recall Wittgenstein's example of assuming that the world has existed for many years prior to my memory of it.) Assuming thus occupies a curious middle-ground between self and world that brings it closer than relying to the essential relationality of trusting proper, a position that also requires more disentangling. It will be helpful, then, to draw this part of the discussion to a close by distinguishing assumption-trust from two other modes of relating to the world with which it shares certain characteristics. As *my* assuming, this way of being-given over arises and is maintained like a habit, but it aligns me to the world somewhat like (and in conjunction with) emotions. As coming from the side of the world, however, such assuming differs from emotion as something given differs from adjusting oneself in response to the gift.

Assuming seems to arise in a manner resembling the development of habits. Like a habit, it cannot come about all at once, and yet it can be initiated by a conscious commitment. It need not be, of course. Certain assumptions may also simply be absorbed from my community, without any willed commitment on my part, in which case they become background almost immediately and the gradual change as they become more ingrained (more "habitual," we might say) is one in which they gain influence over more of my projects. But that unnoticed influence on my projects and relationships, which is essential to assuming, indicates in another way that it is similar to habit, since habits govern how decisions (about relying, e.g.) show up for me: in what terms, with what options, and so on. Habits themselves, as oriented by my assumptions, provide the context in which something announces itself as a "live" decision, as a decision already made (out of habit) but subject to review, or as not up for decision at all.[85] Furthermore, although (background)

---

[85] Cp. Francis Fukuyama's argument that the functioning of communities and systems requires "certain premodern cultural habits," such as trust. He explicitly differentiates such habits from rational calculation. See Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 10-11.

assuming is prior to habits as providing the milieu in which the latter arise and can make sense, the maintenance of a network of assumptions involves certain habits of interpretation. Like habits, then, assuming gives determinate shape to my freedom for worldly things and people by organizing possibilities.

But to say that assuming simply *is* a habit would be insufficient. For in assuming, I am given as aligned with – or as gradually being brought into alignment with – the object of my assumption. That is, I experience it in terms of sides: I (or we) am for it or against it, and it is for me or against me (or us). I am thus disclosed as belonging to (for good or ill) the things about which I make assumptions. One of the things that bring us into alignment with the situations we encounter in the world is emotion, and it is certainly not hard to observe that some assumptions are invested with deep emotional intensity. This, in fact, is how I can encounter my own self-investment in a set of assumptions (although usually only when the object of my assuming is endangered or questioned); it is why disorientation can bring with it such emotional distress. The emotional intensity of trust in religious systems or systems of government is empirically and experientially evident.[86] One can certainly develop an emotional investment in, for example, a therapeutic protocol on which a psychologist habitually relies to deal with tough situations, or an electrical code that standardizes procedures and allows an electrician to work safely while repairing something she did not build. (Even a certain office culture eventually comes to be strongly affectively invested. Just try to change it.)

Primarily, then, emotions respond to the way the world is given in a particular event or situation by bringing the self – including its character and habits – into alignment, or harmonizing it, with the world.[87] But they do so according to their own, pre-judicative "style of cognition and

---

[86] We shall soon see (section III) that this emotional investment goes for the most basic level of trust, as well: if something central to one's existence proves untrustworthy, one can come apart entirely.
[87] The following account of emotions is heavily indebted to Karen Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," (*Ethics* **107**.1 [October 1996]: 4-25), especially pp. 11-12; Bernd Lahno, "On the Emotional Character of

… of evidence."[88] They play their cognitive role, in other words, *as* modes of perception. As such, they direct reason and reflective judgment by guiding our attention (i.e., disclosing things in terms of salience, so that we are inclined to focus on particular lines of inquiry), by calling up certain associations and suggesting patterns of interpretation, and by shaping the field for desire, which in turn motivates action.[89] Thus, an emotion is not characterized by specific content but by how the world tends to be given through it – in what light things are perceived, and what thought-associations are called up by it.[90] This is why, in specifying for example that fear takes an object, the most we can say in general is that it presents *some* object as fearful.

Emotions differ from habits in that the latter involve a direct relation to being, whereas emotions are modalizations of being, filtering it through (broadly speaking) pleasure and pain.[91] That is, habit involves simply doing or not doing something, while emotion takes up a stance toward that doing or not doing. Nevertheless, the repetition of similar emotional responses gives rise to a predisposition to feel just those emotions in similar situations, and such a predisposition toward (or consistent openness to) trust might be thought of as a habit of trusting. All three of the

---

Trust" (*Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* **4**.2 [June 2001]: 171-189), esp. pp. 174-177; Steinbock, "Temporality" and private discussions; and Erin Stackle, who suggested the harmonization thesis and helped make sense of the emotions' relation to assuming.

[88] Steinbock, "Temporality," p. 84, following Max Scheler.

[89] For the effect of the *pathē* on judgment, cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1378a. This is cited by Lahno, p. 175, who then lays out the three modes of this effect on judgment, listed above. For much more on desire, including the role of both fantasy and emotion in shaping its field, see below, chapter 7.

[90] Here a crucial question arises: how are we to interpret this filtering of the world through emotion? Jones compares affective trusting to "blinkered vision: it shields from view a whole range of interpretations about the motives of another and restricts the inferences we will make about the likely actions of another" (Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," p. 12). I think it is right to say that there is restriction here, but the analogy to blinkered vision suggests that one could see *more* if one removed the blinders. (I do not know if this is the correct implication with regard to horses, but it is the implication assumed by Jones, as the discussion about the dangers of trust in the rest of the paragraph shows.) Is this the case here? Or is trusting more like shading my eyes against the sun's glare, perhaps using sunglasses, which allows me to see much better than I otherwise could? Maybe the proper analogy would be to a telescope, using which I can see much further, but only by blocking out the light of what is nearby? I will return to the question of the appropriateness of emotion at the end of this discussion (part IV).

[91] This distinction was suggested to me by Steinbock in private conversation. For example, while a habit involves either going running in the morning or not doing so, an emotion takes a stance toward going running: I desire to go (even if I cannot), or I fear it (even if I make myself do it), or I rejoice over having done it, etc.

ways in which emotions direct reason and reflective judgment (i.e., with regard to attention, interpretation, and action) can yield these predispositions toward further such direction. Moreover, although emotions are not directly controllable – and our recursive emotional responses to them often show them to be unwelcome – they are nevertheless reciprocally affected by our habits, and thus can be altered indirectly.

As *modes* of perception, emotions are voluntarily alterable in a way and to an extent similar to that of perceptual capacities. I cannot directly change my ability to hear, since it is not itself a habit, but I can, with difficulty, change my habits of listening, and this will eventually improve or destroy my ability to hear. Similarly, if I want to learn to become angry in certain situations, I can make a habit of focusing on the frustrating and upsetting qualities of those situations, acting as if I were angry, and interpreting the situation in anger's terms (e.g., expressing anger I do not necessarily feel). This may even summon up the emotion itself in the moment (like actors who can cry on cue), but over time, my whole emotional response to such situations will change, and the habits may lose their 'as if' character.

Likewise, just as my capacity to hear may become better if I am deprived of sight for a time, since relying on my ears becomes more habitual, so I will feel more strongly emotions with which I am familiar, and be less capable of feeling emotions that are strange to me. Thus, although emotion is not itself a habit so much as a manner of interacting upon which habits are articulated, nevertheless there can also be habitual patterns of engaging certain emotions and not others, just as there are habits of engaging certain senses and not others. These higher-order habits are articulated on sense-perception as a unity of all the specific senses – i.e., my way of sensing the world is heavily sight-driven because my habit is to attend first to what I see – just as higher-order habits of feeling (predispositions to emotion) are articulated upon my whole capacity to disclose the world emotionally.

If assuming is a mode of self-investment that lets me belong to a particular context, albeit from the side of organizing that context, then it is similar to and works with my emotions. We could say that emotions are self-adjustments to the world as given through assumptions, and that disorientation arises as a significant mismatch between my assumptions as disclosing the world and my emotions as adjusting to that world. If that is right, then assumptions tend to settle into the background in the way habits do (without assuming itself being a habit), and they tend to align us to the world somewhat like emotions do (without assuming itself being an emotion).

But we may add one more specification: assuming is especially directed toward – and can reciprocally modify – a certain non-personal emotion called *confidence*. (Non-personal emotions are those that do not essentially contain a reference to another person in their structure. In them, I can simply be related to things, or, as in the present case, systems.[92]) The character of assuming is essentially habitual in a way that it is not essentially emotional (e.g.: in my current milieu, I do assume that getting on the bus without a gun for self-defense is appropriate; I do not necessarily feel one way or another about it), but assuming has as an essential complement the emotion that I call confidence.[93]

---

[92] The distinction is Steinbock's. In the present case, 'confidence' in ordinary language can also mean the *personal* emotion of trusting, since I confide in someone about whom I feel confident. This linguistic identity obscures, for my purposes here, the following lived difference between being confident about things and being confident about persons: I cannot confide in a system, though I can feel confident about it. So, purely on the terminological level, I shall respect this distinction by referring to the non-personal emotion as confidence and the personal one (which involves being able to confide in the other) as trust.

[93] Luhmann, for example, distinguishes confidence from what I am calling 'reliance' (he calls it 'trust,' as was explained above): "If you do not consider alternatives… you are in a situation of confidence" (i.e., confidence does not have the structure of being decided in each case). But since Luhmann does not consider confidence as an emotion (i.e., as *felt* confidence), he does not distinguish it from assuming. Thus, his example of confidence is (in my terminology) really an example of background assuming: "every morning you leave the house without a weapon!" Quotations from Luhmann, "Familiarity, Confidence, Trust," in *Trust*, ed. Gambetta, *op. cit.*

III. Trusting

"Perhaps what has been characterized here [as trust] is a fundamental category of human conduct, which goes back to the metaphysical sense of our relationships and which is realized in a merely empirical, accidental, fragmentary manner by the conscious and particular reasons for confidence [i.e., trust, *Vertrauen*]."[94]

Let us return to the initial example of the trust-fall activity, borrowed from Holton. It could be the case that I trust this group as I would trust a person. In that case, I place my concrete expectations within a kind of suspension[95]: it seems best to me that I should be caught when I fall, but I trust their collective judgment and leave it up to their discretion. Perhaps there is something about the situation that I have not recognized, and really it is better for them not to catch me. Regardless, I trust them to make the right decision (which is not to say that I abdicate my right and responsibility to discuss with them what the right decision might be, both before and after the event), whether that be fulfilling my expectations and catching me or letting me fall. Here I am evidently even further given over to their freedom. In some cases, I may not even trust my own assessment of the situation (including my expectations) as much as I trust these people.

A) Personal Trusting

At this level, finally, we may speak simply of the experiences of *trusting* and of *betrayal*, with no scare-quotes, for now it is to these phenomena as such that we turn. But something curious arises. In trusting as such, it seems that the possibility of betrayal is not taken into account.[96] That is not to say that one has anything like absolute certainty about what the other person will do, or even about her trustworthiness. Instead, the point is that my trusting is not oriented toward the possibility of betrayal, even if this possibility is acknowledged. Trusting turns

---

[94] Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translation of *Soziologie: Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (1908), ed. K.H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950), p. 318. Quoted on page 407 of Guido Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation, and Suspension," in *Sociology* **35**.2 (2001): 403-420.

[95] The term, although not the example, is from Möllering, *Ibid.*

[96] Hence, I shall begin with a positive characterization of the phenomenon of trusting, waiting until later to justify taking it as a third level of complexity in betrayal. Cf. Welz, "Trust as Basic Openness," p. 52: "Trust simply rules certain possibilities out of consideration, for instance the possibility of being betrayed."

me away from this possibility and toward the person trusted. So although I do experience myself as vulnerable in trusting him, my searching for criteria of betrayal in a particular context (e.g., how can I know whether he has been unfaithful?) would indicate a turn toward relying.

Consider experiences such as this one (from Karen Jones):

If I trust you, I will, for example, believe that you are innocent of the hideous crime with which you are charged, and I will suppose that the apparently mounting evidence of your guilt can be explained in some way compatible with your innocence. Of course this resistance to evidence is not limitless: given enough evidence, my trust can be shaken and I can come to believe that you are guilty.[97]

Here I, as the one trusting, recognize the evidence that others take to entail your guilt (i.e., the possibility of my having been betrayed) *and yet* I find myself trusting you. The experiences are distinct, and one is phenomenally founded on the other. You are given to me as trustworthy, and on the basis of this givenness, I encounter the evidence against you as misinterpreted, or maliciously invented, or over-emphasized, or something similar. Insofar as I trust you (and such trust admits of degrees), the evidence feels somehow external to the situation. The more that I start actively attending to boundaries – you will be guilty of having betrayed my trust if I hear *x* about you – the less I trust you.[98]

Let me clarify. I do *not* mean to deny the following: that vulnerability is essential to trusting; that experiencing betrayal is a real possibility, and one frequently lived out, in interpersonal trust; that we make decisions about whether or not to *rely* on people while oriented by the real possibility and even probability of being betrayed (in the sense of disappointed). Nonetheless, the experience of trusting properly speaking is a kind of emotional insight: I am

---

[97] Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," p. 16.

[98] This does not completely determine my decision about whether to rely on you or on the evidence (i.e., on the testimony of others, perhaps including my own observations). I may trust you but know myself to be bad at trusting; the feeling of trust will not go away, however, if I decide to rely on others in this case. I will not (yet) feel betrayed by you, though I will likely feel deeply conflicted. And regarding entrusting, Godfrey reminds us that "I may and should actually refrain from relying on my friend [i.e., one I generally trust] in some matters," namely, those in which she is not competent or reliable. See Joseph J. Godfrey, "The Phenomena of Trusting and Relational Ontologies," *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française* **7**.1-2 (Spring 1995): 104-121, p. 110.

disclosed as always already bound to or given over to another person (or group taken as a person), and simultaneously the other person is disclosed as trustworthy. (The cases of distrust or mistrust are parallel.) This 'always already being bound' (at whatever level of trust or distrust) is then the space within which I either make a leap to rely or prudently refuse to jump.

That such a moment of insight is essential to it could be named the *absolute* character of interpersonal trust. It seems to be structurally distinct from both the decision character of relying and the momentary or gradual taking on of assumptions. Such trust may have boundaries – it may be limited to certain contexts – but (as Jones points out) what is qualified here is not my trust as such but the domain over which my trust extends. I am fully given over to the other person's discretion insofar as she is an electrician, say, or insofar as he is an expert in obstetrics, or a teacher, or a fellow train passenger.[99]

From the coherence of examples like the one cited above, we learn two further things about trusting. First, it does not simply follow from reliability. I do not first ascertain your reliability, then trust you; instead, your reliability is given as a component (or even a consequence) of your trustworthiness, which is disclosed equiprimordially with my being given over to you (i.e., with my trust in you). The unity of both disclosures (my being given over, your trustworthiness) in a moment of (fallible) emotional insight is the essential experience of personal trusting. Thus there is something right about Niklas Luhmann's claim, commenting on the quotation from Georg Simmel that appears as an epigraph to the present section, that "[a]lthough the one who trusts is never at a loss for reasons ... in this or that case, the point of such reasons is

---

[99] Cp. Steinbock's discussion of modalization, "Temporality," p. 100, and Baier, "Trust and Antitrust." This 'insofar as' covers a multitude of different extents to which one can be given over. I am much more thoroughly given over to a good teacher, for example, than to an electrician, but again this has to do with the scope of the object, not the extent of my trust strictly speaking. I take up a more internal boundary in terms of one's values just below.

really to uphold his self-respect and justify him socially."[100] I think that sometimes we *are* at a loss for reasons – we say, 'I don't know why I trust him, I just do' – but the thesis here is right. Reasons or explanations can be given, but they do not suffice to justify my trust.[101] Even in principle, we can give only accidental and fragmentary justifications for trusting, although by contrast we may be able to give complete justifications for relying (since the reasons are involved in the decision itself).

One reason for trusting's lack of ground is that it is simply a richer way of seeing than is reliance. Luhmann claims that trusting simplifies decision-making by allowing certain possibilities (e.g., betrayal) to be excluded from consideration.[102] We saw above, with regard to assuming, that such 'simplification' comes by way of habits of interpretation that narrow down to a sharper focus the realm of what might be salient – and that this can be a strengthening of sight, rather than a blinding of it. We can also add here, following Childress, that trust is typically oriented to the *limits* of another person's actions.[103] Thus, at least in cases where I am bound to another as a friend, experiencing the world in part through her, I have a sense of her boundaries, and so I am free to appeal to her freedom – i.e., I am disclosed as free precisely in finding myself subject to her discretion, remaining confident that the limits imposed by who she is will not require additional watching-over by me.[104]

---

[100] Luhmann, "Trust," p. 26. (Also cited in Möllering, "Nature of Trust," p. 409.) Luhmann takes this to be an extrapolation from available evidence – in other words, his analysis makes it the 'probability' mode of reliance trusting described in my section (1) above.

[101] Although I do not agree with Figal that trust is certainty, compare his claim that there is no fundament for trust, since it is a relation to another's possibilities ("Trusting in Persons," p. 109). Cf. also Welz's claim that "[i]n trust we lose our ground(s)" ("Trust as Basic Openness," p. 56).

[102] Luhman, "Trust," p. 25.

[103] James F. Childress, "Nonviolent Resistance: Trust and Risk-Taking," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* **1** (Fall 1973): 87-112. Cf. esp. the characterization of trust on p. 89. The fact that it aims at limits of action means, for Childress, that those who wish to call into question society's boundaries can nevertheless render themselves trustworthy – in the sense of reliable – through self-imposed limits on action (e.g., commitment to nonviolence).

[104] Steinbock emphasizes this in describing trust as a free relation to another free person, which appeals to her transcendence (her discretion). I find my freedom in the very experience of being bound to her, and she

Notice, however, that there *are* limits imposed by who the other person is, and that these come to light with particular clarity in finding oneself betrayed. In Jones's example, one can discover oneself as betrayed "if there is enough evidence." In terms of the phenomenon, that would mean something like 'if I discover you have done something sufficiently transgressive of the boundaries of who you are', where 'who you are' is how you are (or were) disclosed to me in the moment of insight that constituted the trusting encounter. This is to say that trusting somehow tracks shared worldly orientation; in a disclosure of someone as trustworthy, the central orienting principles of her world and those of mine overlap, and this overlap will determine the extent of the realm in which I trust. This emotional insight is not a calculation on my part but an index of my genuinely being given over to the person as I fallibly perceive her.

I said earlier (section II.B) that the habits of interpretation involved in assuming are directed toward the non-personal emotion of confidence, although assuming is not an emotion. Trusting, by contrast, is itself what Steinbock calls a *personal emotion*, or what Jones calls an *affective attitude*. But it is a peculiar emotion. For it is not merely a particular emotional investment in (i.e., a particular kind of adjustment to) what is trusted, although such confidence can also be felt at this level. Rather, it is essential to trusting that it shifts my very capacity for emotion. Trusting someone alters my empathic abilities. Like love, it puts my emotional life to some extent at the mercy of the other person's emotional life. Trusting is not only a disclosure of the world through feeling, but a disclosure of the self as somehow bound to the feelings of another. My attunement to the world is now also being tuned to (and to some extent *by*) the other's harmonization with the shared world. Probably there never is such a thing as simply my isolated attunement to the world; regardless, any particular experience of trust will include the mediation of my experience of that world through this particular other person (or group).

---

experiences that binding as some level of imposition, an appeal to which she must respond. Cf. "Temporality," pp. 87-89, 97-99.

A second reason for trusting's lack of ground is that, unlike relying, trusting is only indirectly voluntary.[105] I can will to accept someone's promise (i.e., to rely), but I cannot simply decide to trust someone. Nor can I begin to trust someone by committing to do so (unlike assuming). I can commit myself to someone, but that means committing to be reliable and perhaps trust*worthy*. Receiving another's commitment will already be on the basis of an experience of trust or distrust: the extent to which I take your word will be heavily influenced by the extent to which I find myself already trusting you. Committing or receiving another's commitment may ultimately deepen that trust or distrust, but coming to trust is never like assuming a hypothesis. Just as I can only change my mood by changing my surroundings (or the focus of my attention) and then waiting, so I can only bring myself to trust by meeting someone in a safe context, willfully restricting the scope of my attention, choosing to rely – and then waiting.[106] So, trusting proper is unlike relying (and cannot directly follow from it) because trusting is both a richer way of seeing and is only indirectly voluntary.

The other thing to notice from Jones's example of trusting in spite of evidence – as well as from the modified trust-fall case – is that to find myself given over to the discretion of the other person is to find that trusting and my control over the situation are mutually exclusive.[107] At this level, checking-up is in principle impossible (what would be the standard against which to measure?), though again without eliminating the possibility of finding myself betrayed.

---

[105] Welz emphasizes that trust is not at our disposal and, except perhaps at the limit, is not a deliberate action ("Trust as Basic Openness," pp. 49-50).

[106] I may also learn to be generally more trusting by improving my overall character. For a parallel account of indirect self-alteration that involves *belief* coming about through chosen reliance, cf. Holton, "Deciding to Trust," pp. 73-76. What he takes to be trust, I take to be relying, and what he takes to be belief (confidence in another), I take to be parallel to trusting, except that trusting is pre-judicative.

[107] It remains an interesting question whether knowledge and trust are similarly exclusive. I am inclined to think they are not – that, for example, God could trust human beings despite knowing what they will do, or that I could know you well enough to find you totally reliable in some particular field and still experience a more basic level of trust independent of that reliability judgment – but the implied question of what counts as knowledge would take me too far afield here.

In the accounts of relying and of assuming, I characterized this checking-up in terms of temporality, and that seems to be appropriate here, as well. Trusting is oriented to the present (i.e., the moment of insight is here and now), but its temporal *meaning* is futural. Trusting means that I stand open to the future in what Holton (following P.F. Strawson) has called a "participant stance"[108] and Steinbock refers to as "intersubjective temporalization."[109] That is, my future comes toward me in part *through* the mediation of the other person, similar to the way that my emotional life is now to some extent bound up with the emotional life of that person. What she feels affects me particularly deeply. (Hence, the world is disclosed for me in part *through* her world-disclosure.) This also means that personal trusting is intrinsically moving toward the deepening of that trust.

Not only, then, am I disclosed as given over, but I find myself given over indefinitely. That is, I do not trust 'until I can come back and see how things are going.' Although I will likely attend to how things are going (in a friendship, say), this will not be experienced primarily as checking-up but as a different kind of interest in what is happening.[110] Godfrey emphasizes that what I attend to in such situations is the "self-disclosure of the other," and that this "has an openness which is not the same as allowing for possible error in reckoning."[111] This indefinite temporal openness also forms a third reason why trusting is not fully determinable by reasons in each case: trusting, unlike *en*trusting and relying, is not primarily *about* 'this or that case,' even

---

[108] Holton, "Deciding to Trust," pp. 66-67. This is a helpful term, although defined in an un-illuminating way: roughly, as a readiness to take a reactive attitude to the actions of a person. The point, at any rate, seems to be that I am involved with the other in an appeal to her freedom, in such a way that my emotions are responsively invested in how she takes up my appeal. Karen Jones also tries to take this into account in her theory of trust as counting on the other's responsiveness to my dependency. Cf. esp. pp. 70-76 of Jones, "Counting on One Another," in *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, pp. 67-82.

[109] Steinbock, "Temporality," p. 91.

[110] Similarly, if I trust a car mechanic *as* a car mechanic (not just to fix my car, although the former would likely lead to the latter), what could checking-up on this ever mean? Tracking down the people who trained him to see if they were good mechanics? How would I decide that? At any rate, although I might rely on my mechanic more confidently after such an examination (if it turned out to be possible), I would certainly no longer be trusting him, regardless of how good his teachers turned out to be.

[111] Joseph J. Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), p. 185.

though it is essentially given in the present and has as a limit example trusting a stranger whom I have never seen before.

Such indefinite openness, in which I am given over to another more and more thoroughly, cannot but be felt by her as an imposition.[112] That is to say, trusting demands a response from its object – at minimum, that of remaining trustworthy – and this may be deeply unwelcome. But trusting also brings a gift of encouragement, for the other person has been already disclosed as trustworthy, which vision will probably energize and reassure her (though it may oppress and overwhelm her).[113] The negative side of imposition notwithstanding, trusting seems to contain an impulse toward generating further trust, both in the sense of sparking it at the beginning of a relationship and of sustaining it later on.

As an extension of this generativity, Steinbock adds, trust is transitive between people. If you trust Megan, and I trust you, I can also trust Megan, whether or not I have a direct encounter with her.[114] This structural characteristic of trusting is crucial for its genesis – since it can be passed from person to person – and also for knowledge, as shown by John Hardwig.[115] I shall return to it at more length a little later (section IV).

Finally, it turns out that the above description of trusting fits the experience of trusting two different kinds of objects, hence that there are really two modes of trusting proper. As in assuming, they are related to each other as foreground and background, and in their psychological development, but they are distinct experiences with similar characteristics. As Godfrey explains, "developing trust moves both *beyond* trust in specific individuals and *more deeply into* trust of

---

[112] As Steinbock makes clear, pp. 97-99.

[113] For an emphasis on the encouragement side, see Victoria McGeer, "Trust, Hope, and Empowerment," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* **86**.2 (June 2008): pp. 237-254.

[114] Steinbock, unpublished MS.

[115] John Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* **88**.12 (December 1991): 693-708. See also the response by Jonathan Adler, "Testimony, Trust, Knowing," *The Journal of Philosophy* **91**.5 (May 1994): 264-275. Hardwig's article is the more convincing, since Adler is mostly replying to an argument made by others that Hardwig need not endorse.

specific individuals."[116] Thus, one mode is the deeply interpersonal trust of which I have been speaking, in which I trust particular persons (or groups taken as persons). The other mode is a global, primitive trust in the world as a whole, beyond any given individual.

B) Primitive Trusting

Primitive trust takes as object the world as a whole, or better: what may come. It discloses me as *given over* to the world, and it does so in line with trusting's temporal meaning of extension indefinitely into the future.[117] Being given over in this sense, however, is twofold. First, basic trust is the kind of trust that we have in language as such, since this is how the world is given to us, i.e., the necessary mediation for there to be a world (structured and differentiated from me) at all.[118] That primitive trust allows us as infants to respond to language-speakers without a crippling skepticism; this is the only way we can eventually find ourselves no longer *in-fans*, but now submitted to language, bound to it by the same kind of trust that animates our relation to the concrete linguistic community.[119] If such primitive trust is broken, it is not that I have made a particular mistake in trusting; rather, I do not inhabit the linguistic world (on the basis of which reasons, explanations, mistakes, and successes are sorted out) adequately for 'making a mistake in trusting' to have any meaning.[120]

---

[116] Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope*, p. 181, original italics. A *prima facie* reason for interpreting them as modes of the same phenomenon emerges if we compare Godfrey's description of I-thou trust – "I am open in my whole person to the whole person of this other" – to his description of openness trust as "the human spirit's extended hand of greeting and exploration" (*Trust of People*, pp. 42 and 50, respectively).

[117] This is founded on Dasein's ekstatic structure. Thus, what may come includes the past as requiring some determinate adoption on our part – i.e., the past as approaching in terms of one's own future.

[118] Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tr. A.V. Miller (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977), Part A.1: "Sense-Certainty." See also Alphonse De Waelhens and Wilfried Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan on Schizophrenia, After the Decade of the Brain* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2001), pp. 143-149.

[119] This also means that primitive trust is founded on nonverbal communication, as Baier considers at length in "Sustaining Trust," (in *Moral Prejudices*, pp. 152-182), p. 176. For much more on the difficulty of accepting language, see below, chapter 6, section II.A.4.

[120] This point is from Phillips, "On Trusting Intellectuals," p. 44.

Thus, this second kind of trusting also goes beyond assuming. It functions similarly to assuming – as a background condition that enables particular, foreground trusts – but it does not share the character of deferred checking-up. It is something beyond the phenomenon of being able to delay an accounting when I am in a familiar context and so am confident that I can deal with however things may turn out. Instead, this kind of trusting partakes of the openness to the future and attentiveness to self-disclosure (in this case, of the world as a whole) that belong to interpersonal trusting proper. This is no accident, since both basic trust and interpersonal trust develop psychologically out of the relation to the primary caregiver.[121]

Earlier, I followed Wittgenstein in distinguishing a foreground mode of assuming from a background mode (i.e., empirical propositions from the *Weltbild*, or world picture). Now we need a second distinction to set apart background assuming from primitive trusting. Doubt, Wittgenstein claims, cannot be global without losing its sense; it is an essentially derivative phenomenon. "The child learns by believing the adult. Doubt comes *after* belief."[122] But this means that even the *Weltbild* (which is the basis for doubting) is learned from somewhere. How exactly is the "inherited background against which I distinguish true and false" inherited?[123] How is the river's very bedrock shaped, prior to being worn by the river itself? "I learned an enormous amount and accepted it on human authority" – note that this accepting could not yet have had the full complexity of a judgment, since what I was learning just was the language-game of judgment ("From a child up I learnt to judge like this. *This is* judging."[124]), and yet there was nevertheless also the possibility of rejection: "and then I found some things confirmed or disconfirmed by my

---

[121] Cf. Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), esp. chapter 7, along with Welz's careful criticism of Erikson in "Trust as Basic Openness," p. 48. See also part II of chapter 6, below.
[122] Wittgenstein, §160.
[123] Wittgenstein, §94. Cp. §150, where he asks, "Must I not begin to trust somewhere?" But this 'beginning' is only a limit to doubting, not an experienced initiation of trusting.
[124] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §128.

own experience."[125] That account seems basically right. I learn language through primitive trust – i.e., "the groundlessness of our believing"[126] – and language structures my *Weltbild*. The particular rules of my language-game then can be called into question (confirmed or disconfirmed) by experience without destroying the whole thing. Primitive trust is the atmosphere within which I can first take on the assumptions that structure my world.[127]

The second concrete way in which I am given over to the world in primitive trust is that it is the kind of trust that allows me to relate to myself in a stable way. In the experience of being given over to the world, *I* am given as both in relation to the world – i.e., I am a self and there is a world – and bound to the world – i.e., I am myself by being in that world, trusting in the consistency of its linguistic structure and in its self-disclosure to me as part of a community. On the basis of that primitive being-bound, I (as part of a shared world) can break the infinite regress of suspicion that otherwise threatens with every experience of betrayal. The snowball effect of a betrayal may extend to various networks of trust, I may wander in the disorientation brought on by ill-founded assumptions, my choices to rely may be reduced mostly to the mistrustful variety, and yet there can remain a backdrop of trust from which other trusts can again grow.[128] I do not have to regressively and fruitlessly question my own inclinations to trust, searching for a non-existent criterion by which I could know whom to trust. I *am* a self only as trusting the world through concrete others.

Primitive trust, then, is the foundation for all other trusts and mistrusts. Although it begins in infancy, unlike assuming (or Godfrey's security trust) it can never become "infantile" because psychic development is only possible on its basis. Godfrey calls it *openness trust*: a

---

[125] Wittgenstein, §161. Cf. the discussion of Lavoisier drawing conclusions based on the *Weltbild* that he "learned as a child" (§167).

[126] Wittgenstein, §166.

[127] Cp. Bernstein's claim that "trust is the condition through which we come to have a world in general, and to be without trust is to lose one's place in the world" ("Trust," p. 404).

[128] Cp. Baier, "Sustaining Trust." She claims that trust can only be built upon, not created, since it must be there in the first place.

readiness to receive from and be affected by the world.[129] It is the confidence that I can ask things of the world – above all: of others – and not simply be refused (though I may be disappointed).[130] But such trust is not simply an optimism, neither about my projects within the world, nor about the world itself. As regards my projects, basic trust is compatible with frustration, with disorientation, and even with some levels of despair. As regards the world, it is possible to embrace the world in suffering, to be given over to it in trust while recognizing the situation as not at all optimistic. (This is the tragic view of the world, the *amor fati* toward which Nietzsche and some of Dostoevski's characters urge us, among others.) On the other side, refusal (or foreclosure) of the world is not simply pessimism about it: it is, for example, possible to refuse to trust out of fear that the world is too good for me.

There are thus two modes of trusting proper, differentiated by their objects and by their phenomenological priority. Nevertheless, I maintain that both are experienced at the same level of complexity of betrayal. For although both can be betrayed, as indicated above, neither contains as a structural moment attention to that possibility of betrayal. Instead, there is necessarily a direction toward the object trusted. But what would be the experience of betrayal? How can we describe this third level of complexity?

C) Betrayal

First, although trusting another person is essentially an imposition, and thus calls for a response that takes up or takes into account my trust, I am not yet betrayed simply because the other person chooses to do something I do not like (or if the world counters my assumptions about it). If my trust did not weigh in her consideration at all, then I likely experience betrayal. But if in her consideration she merely took something else to outweigh my trust, then so long as

---

[129] Godfrey, *Trust of People*, pp. 49-51.
[130] St. Thomas Aquinas points out that asking is only possible on the basis of trusting. Cf. *In Ps.* 39, quoted in Marie George, "Aquinas on the Nature of Trust" (*The Thomist* **70** [2006]: 103-23), p. 104.

that weightier matter is not radically beyond the values that stabilize my world, the other person can still appropriately be experienced as trustworthy.[131] So, being disappointed or even disoriented is not yet being betrayed.

Secondly, Baier observes that not only is disappointment of expectations not necessarily betrayal, one who disappoints may be much *more* trustworthy than one who is mechanically reliable, particularly if the latter evidently confuses reliability with trustworthiness. She uses a short story by John Updike, called "Trust Me," as an illustration. In the story, a three-year-old boy is persuaded by his father to jump into the deep end of a pool, where his father will catch him. The child decides to rely on his father, whom he also trusts, but the father drops him, and the boy feels himself to be drowning before the father pulls him out again. The boy's mother, indignant, comes up and slaps his father. After this incident, the boy's trust in his father continues unabated (although he may not rely on him in that particular way again), whereas he begins to distrust his mother, "her swift sure-handed anger."[132] The story shows that part of trusting, as also part of trustworthiness – it is unsurprising that the two go together – is recognizing when to forgive and when not, when to distrust because of a broken promise and when not.

Baier sums up this complication elsewhere, writing that "one must be able to use discretion not as to when the promise has been kept or not but, rather, as to when to insist that the promise be kept, or to instigate penalty for breach of promise, when to keep and when not to keep one's promise."[133]

As an example of the latter case, consider someone who blackmails me by fulfilling a promise even though circumstances have changed. Say that because I trust him, I rely on him tactfully to spread the word to relevant people that I have broken off my marriage engagement. But then we get back together and the wedding is on again. He, however, knowing this, decides to

---

[131] This example is from Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," p. 8.
[132] Quoted in Baier, "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," in *Moral Prejudices*, p. 135.
[133] Baier, "Trust and Antitrust," p. 251.

continue telling people that my engagement is broken, that I and my fiancée are separately available, and so on. Word gets back to my fiancée, and now she has trouble trusting me. In this case, I am betrayed and can no longer trust my friend, even though he has done just what I initially relied on him to do. Thus, part of trustworthiness involves using discretion to know when to keep a promise, and part of trusting is finding oneself submitted to the other's discretion.

If such things as disappointing me, contradicting my assumptions, or making decisions that run counter to my judgment do not necessarily count as betrayal, what kinds of things *can* count? Some famous candidates: a kiss (Judas); kneeling bootless with a knife (Brutus); encouragement about an apple (Eve's serpent); an island that seems to satisfy all one's desires (the Lotus eaters or Calypso); mutual shelter inside a cave (Dido's Aeneas). Most of these, like the examples of keeping a promise reliably or of angrily defending one against incompetence, are remarkable precisely for their seeming harmlessness. Following Baier, we may add some less famous ones, organized as vices on either side of virtues. For the truster: demanding an account at the wrong time or too often (failing to rely) at one extreme, or fearing to request an explanation or to question the trusted person's discretion at all at the other. For the trusted: being "too adventurous" with discretionary powers, or on the other hand refusing to use discretion at all by simply reacting on the basis of a rule.[134] In other words, almost anything *could* count as betrayal, since the ability to betray requires a twisting of what would normally confirm or promote trust, but almost nothing necessarily *will* count that way.

With these examples in mind, let me outline some essential structures of personal betrayal. Since trusting someone is a gift of the self (albeit not directly voluntary), anything significant enough to be experienced as betrayal is felt as rejection of that gift. But the self-gift consists a) in being given over to the discretion of the other person and b) in being bound to the

---

[134] Baier, "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," pp. 136-39. It would not be excessive to say that much of my investigation in the first three parts of this chapter works out hints and suggestions from Baier that can be found in this essay and its companion piece, "Sustaining Trust."

other's emotional life. Hence, betrayal is felt a) as an abuse of discretionary power, whether by exceeding the limits of action (toward which trust is oriented), or by entirely refusing to use that power. Betrayal is also experienced b) as a separation from the other person that confuses the world, since my basic attunement and patterns of attention, which were partially organized by that person, now must change. That separation breaks the bond and throws me back on myself, leaving me on my own. But instead of severing it completely, betrayal refashions the bond into a fetter, so that my solitude is lived with reference to the other person, turning it into loneliness.

Furthermore, since trust is an involuntary gift, betrayal is experienced as unintegrable with my intentionally unified self. That means, on one hand, that the other person shows up as primarily at fault, as Lars Hertzberg points out.[135] But, on the other hand, part of the experience of world-confusion is a kind of helpless indication that maybe I should blame my own way of living (e.g., Why was I stupid enough to trust? Why do I always *do* that?). This inclination to blame some uncontrolled part of me, since it is a temptation not to trust anyone else, ever, is also a manifestation of the separation in which I show up as ultimately on my own. Thus, betrayal by one person can (though it need not) snowball, as Baier recognizes, into destroying a whole network of trusting relationships.[136]

Moreover, although *primitive* trust usually allows me to halt the snowball effect by recognizing that I am not ultimately alone, still it is possible for it to become so global an avalanche as to constitute a betrayal of primitive trust. For despite the latter's resilience, it too can be betrayed, and the experience of betrayal, although much worse, has characteristics close to those just described.

---

[135] "When someone's trust has been misplaced… it is always, I want to say, a misunderstanding to regard that as a shortcoming on *his* part. The responsibility rests with the person who failed the trust…" Hertzberg, "On the Attitude of Trust," pp. 128-9. Also quoted in Phillips, "On Trusting Intellectuals," p. 47. Cf. Steinbock's claim, cited at the beginning of the present chapter, that only another can betray my trust, and Luhmann's characterization of betrayal as crossing a threshold, which shows up as the other's fault ("Trust," pp. 74-75).

[136] Baier, "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," p. 149.

As Wittgenstein points out,[137] there are certain matters within any language-game that are constitutive for the use of that language-game; we do not ask for reasons for assuming these, and we would be confused by someone who asked for such reasons. We would wonder whether the person had understood what was being said; if he persisted, we would be concerned for his sanity. If, somehow, I were to become convinced that he was right to ask, this would summon questions (including from myself) about *my* sanity.

Any significant modification of such fundamental rules of the language-game (which were learned from caretakers on the basis of primitive trust) would require what might be called a change of grammar. For particular language-games, as we saw in the case of assumed contexts, such a change is possible, though it involves a moment of disorientation – this is what religious conversion or political radicalization are like. But for language as such, there is no other game; agreement and disagreement, indeed truth itself, will not be possible for the child who refuses to trust the language-speakers around it. *This* failure of trust opens the doors to psychosis.[138]

Hence, when Wittgenstein notes that "if someone gives sign of doubt where we do not doubt, we cannot confidently understand his signs as signs of doubt,"[139] we can recognize the experience of the psychotic, who cannot make herself understood because she does not play the shared game. For example, the paranoiac: "If someone said that he doubted the existence of his

---

[137] My discussion of Wittgenstein in this section draws on the considerations of D.Z. Phillips, "On Trusting Intellectuals," although the main burden of Phillips's argument in that paper is to show that primitive trust is not what trusting God is like. See esp. pp. 42-46.

[138] That is, refusal of language at the level of the structure of the subject. I do not mean that people with low mental capacities or the speaking-impaired are psychotic; they may still accept the structuring of language, even if their capacities for expression or understanding are out of the ordinary. The following characterizations of psychosis are from Alphonse de Waelhens' account in *La Psychose*, translated by W. Ver Eecke in *Phenomenology and Lacan on Schizophrenia, After the Decade of the Brain*. Cf. my discussions in chapters 5 and 6, below, for more detail.

[139] Wittgenstein, §154.

hands, kept looking at them from all sides, tried to make sure it wasn't 'all done by mirrors,' etc., we should not be sure whether we ought to call that doubting."[140]

Since, as indicated earlier, primitive trust is twofold, so also is its betrayal. Psychosis is, on one hand, a *foreclosure of language*, in which instead of accepting and responding to what my caretakers said, I refuse speech as that which both structures the world and necessitates the appeal to a third for confirmation of truth-claims.[141] Thus the experience of betrayal as an abuse of discretionary power is felt much more intensely here: there is no linguistic mediation between me and the world, or between me and my ego-ideal, so that the discretionary power granted by language is not available for my use. This may repeat the lack of mediation between my caretaker's desire and mine, in which my desire was slave to her whim. Regardless, in both cases, I am bound to that which I refuse as to a fetter: hence I may make use of language but only in the manner of imitation or simulation, in which words are used more or less correctly but their materiality is not lived through toward their referents.[142]

On the other hand, psychosis is also a *refusal of myself* as distinct from but related to the world, perhaps because my own rage is too terrifying to be endured. Thus the experience of betrayal as unintegrable with my unified self is pushed all the way to the splintering and foreclosure of that self. There is no center to who I am; my body is fragmented and alien, a set of

---

[140] Wittgenstein, §255. Cp. §217, where we would call crazy someone who supposed that *all* our calculations were in error; §420, in which others enter the author's room and give him 'proofs' that he is not in England, where he knows himself to be, with the result that either he or they must be mad; and §§570-572, where being wrong about one's own name implies insanity. (Indeed, many psychotics take themselves to be someone else.) In §74, he distinguishes a mistake from mental disturbance by saying that the former has a reason or ground (*Grund*) as well as a cause (*Ursache*), whereas the latter is only caused.

[141] De Waelhens follows Lacan in seeing schizophrenia as the refusal of language's law-like structure and paranoia as the refusal of the third as witness in my imaginary relation to myself. See *Phenomenology and Lacan*, chapter 6.

[142] One advantage of the distinctions developed here: the psychotic's relation to language could be characterized as mistrustful reliance, what I earlier called 'mere' reliance, the kind that discloses the subject as given over in the sense of dependence, but not necessarily in the sense of freely choosing, since the psychotic may not experience herself as a sufficiently distinct subject to permit free choice.

objects in the world like other objects.[143] The bond joining me to the world has here, too, become a fetter, since there is no longer any separation. Not only am I inclined to blame myself, but I do so to such an extent that I do not trust myself at all and so must be constantly suspicious.[144] This is why trusting oneself (having been shaped by others) as a kind of Wittgensteinian bedrock, as capable of halting the suspicious regress, is necessary for mental health, so long as it does not turn over into paranoia's perfect self-trust, in which the possibility of error (hence also of intersubjective truth) is refused.

It may be objected that, once formed, primitive trust cannot really be betrayed. It can only fail to form in the first place. But I think this is not quite right. The psychotic break often comes toward the end of puberty, suggesting that, whatever constitutional or infant-environmental factors may be necessary, they are not always sufficient. Something happens later that drives a person into what Baier has characterized as "sustained self-protective self-paralyzing generalized distrust of one's human environment."[145] Jones makes a helpful distinction along these lines in her account of basal security: in disappointments, in some disorientations, and to some extent in interpersonal trusting, the tendency to blame oneself and distrust one's own inclinations to trust can be remedied by changing one's habits of self-investment. "Thus, I might resolve never to tell John my secrets again, never to tell colleagues my secrets, or to be more circumspect in the telling of secrets, period." But some betrayals (or profound disorientations) leave us with no clear possibility of modifying our habits of trusting. "These are the betrayals that, if serious, shatter basal security."[146] In such situations, my ability to stop the suspicious regress – the snowball

---

[143] De Waelhens, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, pp. 153-179 and 233-4.
[144] This may also manifest (in paranoia) as simply identifying myself with the truth. That could look like complete self-trust, but it is not a trust of oneself that could survive any let-down at all, however minor. If I have no possibility of speaking anything but the truth, on pain of the world's collapse, I am not trusting myself in any sense that involves being given over to (as resting in) my own freedom.
[145] Baier, "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," p. 145.
[146] Jones, "Trust and Terror," p. 11.

effect – may fail globally, not only for a certain context (which latter would be disorientation), and so the shattering constitutes a betrayal of my primitive trusting.[147]

Because trusting (primitively or personally) is capable of forgiving or overlooking so many wrongs, and because one cannot determine beforehand what particular event or non-event may be felt as a betrayal – although I have tried to sketch the essential structure of the experience of such a betrayal – we have now reached the highest level of complexity. It may be some simple disappointment that is felt as the last straw, by reference to a whole (real or imagined) history; it may be a violent attack from someone previously trusted. It could be almost anything, and yet it is essential to trusting that one is not constantly checking-up, and that the one trusted is not constantly waiting for the hammer to fall. Together, these characteristics mean that betrayal at this level is analogous to what Aristotle says about a corpse in regard to the human body. That is, a corpse comes after a living body temporally but is not structurally part of it. The corpse marks an end in the sense of a limit, but not an end in the sense of a goal. The corpse indicates a break, but it is located already on the far side of the break.[148] Just as trusting is experienced as always already being given over, so distrusting (to say nothing of mistrusting) is lived as always already being broken apart or distanced from one another. That is why, as I said above, trusting does not essentially take into account the possibility of betrayal.

If I am right about this last characterization of betrayal, however, then we must turn to an examination of the genesis of trusting (and so also of distrusting) if we want to understand what factors are involved in the experience of that betrayal, beyond simply the emotional recognition that I have trusted this person previously and no longer can.

---

[147] Cp. "the end of the world" for Senatspräsident Schreber, emphasized in Freud's analysis (SE **12**:68ff.) and discussed below, chapter 5, sections I.B and I.E.
[148] Aristotle, *Metaphysics H*.5.

IV. Genesis and Conclusion

The final section of this chapter can be brief, since it mostly ties together things said along the way. I have emphasized the nonvoluntary and not-fully-justifiable character of trust in the previous section, but that does not mean that there is nothing to be said regarding how it comes about. So, I would like at least to break the ground for a genetic phenomenology of trust, one that would attend to the passive syntheses involved in what I have so far focused on as a momentary emotional insight. Moreover, perhaps showing the generative relations between the phenomena distinguished above can also serve as a kind of justification, before the tribunal of ordinary language, for privileging as the phenomenon of *trusting* only one experience among many that English-speakers would be inclined to name 'trust'.

I begin with another example from Karen Jones, who uses it to illustrate the point that "we are generally not aware of our trusting and seldom bring it sufficiently clearly before our minds to endorse or reject it"[149] – in other words, that it remains mostly unthematized. (Whether it could remain trust if it became clear enough to endorse or reject, she does not say.)

> Suppose I have a friend who is particularly charming and particularly irresponsible. Time and time again she lets me down, and time and time again I forgive her and resume the relationship, promising that this time I will be more cautious, this time I will not count on her, [etc.]. I won't trust her again. For all my resolution, I might nevertheless find myself trusting her. It's true that whenever I become aware of doing so, I will resist the impulse and will once again be on my guard. At one extreme, I might only become aware of my having again trusted when I am again let down. I would say of myself that I find myself trusting her, even though, when I think about it, I'm aware that I shouldn't.[150]

Here we have, I think, a rather common situation that points to three things. First, it makes clear the role of habit in the generation of what I have called 'the experience of trusting', not only in that of assuming. Part of being bound to someone is that it shapes the way the person is given to

---

[149] Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," p. 14. Anecdotal evidence of failing to attend to one's own trust clearly: when I mentioned to a casual acquaintance that I was thinking about trust, she immediately claimed *not* to trust anyone, to have given up on it. Her very volunteering of that information, along with the story she shared to justify it, showed that she could not be right about not trusting anyone.

[150] Jones, "Trust as an Affective Attitude," p. 13.

me in the future. Thus, unless it is fully betrayed – and sometimes even by overcoming such betrayals – trusting proper builds on itself. Similarly, since repeated reliance on someone can also become habitual, despite having the essential character of deciding in each case, relying that is minimally disappointed also builds trust, even if I do not initially trust the person on whom I rely. This is especially true in the cases in which I do trust the person and primarily on that basis choose to rely (what I earlier called 'reliance oriented toward trust' [section I]), for here it most directly reinforces my habit and supports the way I already see the other person and the world.

The second thing indicated by the example is a corollary of the first: my character deeply affects when and whom I will trust, as well as how deep that trust will run. Thus, in the example, the narrator wants not to trust and cannot help herself; she is not sufficiently self-restrained and is therefore likely to experience untrustworthy people as trustworthy (i.e., to trust them), even if she can occasionally catch herself and refrain from relying on them in particular situations.

Like any attunement to the world (including sense-perception), trusting discloses persons in a way filtered through my habits – that is, in light of my character. Just as I can be better and worse at hearing (either in my capacity or in my concrete practices, and the latter can change the former), so I can be better and worse at trusting. I claimed earlier (section II.B) that emotion harmonizes me with the world as I perceive it. Nonetheless, my emotion may be more or less appropriate; I may be generally out of tune, and so the attempts at harmony may still be jarring. Similarly, as St. Thomas Aquinas points out, if I am not very trustworthy, I will not be very trusting. More specifically, if I have treated another person badly, I am unlikely to trust her because I feel the effect of my previous actions on her motives.[151] This distrust is not a direct decision on my part (since trusting never is), but it is founded on many other direct decisions

---

[151] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ioan.* 13, lect. 5; 19, lect. 3. Quoted in George, "Aquinas on the Nature of Trust," pp. 112-114. George comments (p. 114): "At this point we are able to understand why people mistrust those who mistrust them. Those who are mistrusted surmise that the other's mistrust may well be the result of a projection made because of the other's bad character. Alternately or additionally, they may regard the other's mistrust as a kind of injustice … and people do not trust those they think are unjust."

about dealing with other people's trust, because of which the world now shows up for me affectively as an increasingly suspicious and suspect place.

Thirdly, Jones's example points to a distinction between momentary trusting and a trusting relationship. In the latter, the experience of trusting, while still not directly voluntary, tends to be more explainable. The other person's reliability, character, trust in me, and so on play a non-determinative but important role in whether or not I trust. So does our history of mutual trust and distrust, of built, rebuilt, and sustained trust, of many decisions to rely or not to rely – put simply, our intimacy. I say that this history is important but non-determinative because there is no calculation that could yield either the probability of, or ethical imperatives for, whether or not I trust this person. (I should be loyal to him, but that moral requirement cannot presuppose my trusting.) Nonetheless, when he is disclosed to me as trustworthy in the momentary experience of trust, that history will be included as a sedimented background in my insight. Thus, if asked, I could *after the fact* give real reasons for why I trust him, and they would not be either wrong or irrelevant. But they would be fragmentary and post hoc, since I would be analyzing out what was given as a whole in the insight.

Attending to the generative role of a trusting relationship should further remind us that formalized or public relationships weigh heavily in generating interpersonal trust. They do not guarantee it, as many a marriage has discovered, but they certainly aid it. Vows, whether blood-oaths or marriage vows, announce before witnesses a commitment to being trustworthy and to relying on the other person in some capacity. Although I may deeply mistrust the person even at the moment he swears, and thus not put much stock in his oath – think of peace treaties or pacts to oppose a common enemy, for example – the weight of his public commitment may still inspire in me some genuine trust. And although I indicated earlier that one can really only commit to be trust*worthy* or to rely, not to trust someone, it is still the case that one's own act of pledging plays a role in generating and maintaining one's trust of the other person. That role, it seems to me,

includes but also transcends the power of repeated decisions to rely in generating trust. Finally, in a different way, part of trusting one's parents seems to be the very publicity of that relationship. This is in part why being acknowledged as son or daughter of… is so important, even if one's parent is in other ways untrustworthy, and why being disowned is so devastating. It is thus clear *that*, even if not precisely *how*, acts of commitment or acknowledgment can help found the affective attitude of personal trust.

What I have followed Steinbock in calling the *imposition* character of trusting also plays an important role here, since the mutuality that is an essential moment of trusting shows up most clearly in an extended relationship. There are two well-attested, interrelated phenomena: first, my trusting tends to bring about the other's trusting, and vice versa (and similarly for distrust). Trusting demands a response, as I claimed earlier, but it does not only call for being trustworthy; it calls forth a response in kind. Second, my trust in myself, my self-confidence, presents me to others as trustworthy, and so helps to summon their trust. Furthermore, part of trusting myself is trusting the effectiveness of my trust, i.e., that it is likely to be reciprocated because others can hear and understand the call contained in it.

We saw that within the usual context of an ongoing relationship, personal trusting involves a disclosure of who the other person is, especially with regard to both her freedom and the central orientation of her assumptions. As I said earlier, it thus presupposes a certain amount of overlap in the values that anchor those assumptions and the values orienting my own, even if that overlap is primarily disclosed as such only in betrayal. This means, however, that undergoing a "betrayal" of my assumption-trust – my own disorientation and subsequent reorientation, which could be broadly labeled *conversion* – often precipitates a weakening of my trust in another person whose orientation in the world is now quite different from mine. This may show up as a betrayal, if he does something in line with his own assumptions that now looks quite different from my new perspective, or it may simply involve a waning of my feeling of trust in him.

But even if we grant the centrality of trusting relationships in generating further trust, we can still ask what is happening in the extreme case of momentarily trusting a complete stranger. Such a limit situation brings more sharply into view the other genetic components at work in the static experience of trusting or distrusting. For surely I *can* trust a stranger, and frequently I *do* genuinely trust (not only rely), although usually it is restricted to certain domains – say, I trust (or not) the homeless gentleman *as* a beneficiary of my money.[152] That very restriction to certain domains, in fact, indicates that part of what allows me to trust this person is my assumption-trust in the context, which both serves as a background to my encounter with the person and determines the domain of my trust. (I trust or distrust a person as a carpenter because I encounter her in the context of needing a carpenter – being introduced at a cocktail party leads to different modal restrictions.) There is a transitive relation between background and foreground trust here, by which my assumption-trust in the context can be transferred to the person (though presumably it undergoes a change in the level of self-investment corresponding to the shift in object).[153] But I can have no very robust confidence in contexts if I am not free for the world through basic trust, so that, too, is at work here as a kind of ur-background.

If trust is essentially transferable from the context to a person, it can also go the other way: trusting a person can carry over into assumption-trust of the contexts in which she belongs, or which she herself assumes as trustworthy. And, similarly, each experience in a given context can modify my assumption-trust in that context. I may feel perfectly confident on city buses until I see a man shot as he gets off of one; whether this constitutes a disorientation depends on the

---

[152] This does not require that I expect him to do anything in particular with it, nor that I am entrusting him with it in any strong sense like an investment (though either or both of these could also be the case); it merely requires that I have some cash and somehow feel that he is trustworthy.

[153] Fukuyama argues that the very basis of communal functioning (what he calls "social capital") is like this genetic relation between assuming and personal trusting. That is, a context of "prior moral consensus" – commonly shared ethical norms – "gives members of the group a basis for mutual trust," as well as a good reason for mutual reliance. My feeling of confidence in the organization contributes directly to my experience of you (who are part of it) as trustworthy; my self-investment in the group can move me to being invested in the individual. See *Trust*, chapter 2: "Scale and Trust," esp. pp. 26-27.

strength and specificity of my assumptions, as well as the possibilities for explaining the situation within their specific structure.

Furthermore, it has frequently been noticed in the literature that very surprising things present themselves as crucial, either in the insight that comes in (dis)trusting or in the decision to rely that is in creative tension with that (dis)trust. The person's deep or superficial resemblance to other (dis)trusted persons, her degree of correspondence to the context (out of place or belonging), the color of her clothing and level of self-confidence, where and how she stands, etc., all may be involved in the insight and the subsequent decision.

Hence it makes sense to say that the experience of trusting or distrusting really does disclose a relation between the stranger and me, one in which I – in who I am, with my assumed prejudices, history, and character – am given over to her, in who she presents herself to be; or perhaps I am not so given over, for I find her untrustworthy in the way the world shapes itself for me around her. Whichever way the situation shows up for me in my emotional insight, it remains for me to decide (on the basis of that insight or in the teeth of it) whether or not to rely on her for, say, directions to the bus station.

In this chapter, then, I have shown that the phenomenon of self-investment splits itself up into at least three levels, which in turn are both made visible through, and distinguished from one another by, the different kinds of betrayal belonging to each of them. Relying has the character of deciding in each case and the temporal structure of prior and future checking-up on its objects, which may be people, things, or statements. It may be carried out in the mode of being oriented toward trust, or in the mode of mistrustful, mere reliance. To it essentially belong concrete expectations, which are "betrayed" by being disappointed. Assuming, by contrast, has the character of habitual interpretation of the contexts in which I belong (or fail to belong), directed toward a feeling of confidence, and the temporal meaning of deferred checking-up on its objects,

which are systems, institutions, sets of rules, and other such abstracta. It may be carried out in the mode of explicitly taking up some assumption (foreground) or in that of displaying a set of assumptions in my life and speech (background). To it essentially belong particular forms of coherence for various contexts, which are "betrayed" when I find myself disoriented. Finally, trusting proper has the character of a personal emotion that yields an insight into myself and the object of my trust or distrust, which can only be a person in her freedom or the world as a whole. Its temporal meaning is indefinite openness to the future, directed toward trusting more fully. To it belongs a radical giving over of the self to the discretion of the other, which is betrayed suddenly and radically, when the one who was once disclosed to me as trustworthy is now given as untrustworthy, and the very evidence I previously took as corroborating her trustworthiness is reversed in its valence.

On the basis of this preliminary typology, I am suggesting that trusting proper also contains in itself two modes (primitive and personal) that are differentiated by their objects (world as such – what we will soon be calling *worldhood* – and another person, respectively). By 'contains in itself', I mean that these two modes of trust do not differ from one another in the kind of betrayal belonging to them. If I am right about that – and I will return to the question repeatedly in what follows – then primitive trust is phenomenally most similar to interpersonal trust, including in its vulnerability to radical betrayal.

By approaching the matter phenomenologically, the chapter has also opened the question of what generative influence these various levels of self-investment exert on one another in concrete situations. That question will emerge in its full importance much later in the course of the investigation, when I inquire about the development of primitive trust in the context of personal trust for one's primary caretakers (chapter 6, part II). More immediately, however, I turn next to working out the relation between primitive trust and the nature of truth.

<div align="center">

Chapter Two
The Freedom of Being Held in the Truth
wherein Martin Heidegger's Account of Originary Truth
is found to coincide with Primitive Trust
and yet, oddly, to anticipate its own Betrayal

</div>

> "[W]e all know […] that the truth can be a terrible thing,
> sometimes too terrible to live with."[154]

Introduction

From the perspective of our ongoing investigation, the main burden of the previous chapter was twofold: 1) to establish a phenomenal distinction between background assuming – the way we are invested in things like structures or systems – and personal trusting; 2) on that basis to show that, particularly in its mode of betrayal, primitive trust shares the phenomenal structure of personal trusting rather than that of background assuming. With this in place, there are likewise two things to be accomplished in the present chapter.

The first task is to make at least initially plausible a major claim of this entire investigation: that originary truth (the essence or nature of truth), is best thought in terms of the kind of primitive trusting laid out in the previous chapter.[155] This is the case even when originary truth is understood as unconcealment, what Martin Heidegger has called the happening of a "clearing for self-concealing [*die Lichtung für das Sichverbergen*]."[156] Heidegger himself comes close at times to thinking this originary truth as a kind of trust, but I will begin the work of developing that thinking more thoroughly.

---

[154] Gitta Sereny, *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killings to Mass Murder* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1974), p. 362. The book is an investigative history based around a lengthy series of interviews with Franz Stangl, *Kommandant* of Treblinka.

[155] In chapters 5-7, I will return to the discussion of primitive trusting to explain its genetic relation to personal trusting. I will also provide further evidence that originary truth should be understood on the basis of this primitive trusting, and I will argue that even what Heidegger calls the event of appropriation (*das Ereignis*) should be thought in this direction.

[156] Heidegger, GA 65:348. Translations from the *Beiträge zur Philosophie* are my own, but I have been greatly aided by consulting *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, trs. R. Rojcewicz and D. Vallega-Neu, *op. cit*. In the present case, see p. 275.

The second task is then to argue that Heidegger fails to carry through such thinking because he instead takes originary truth (unconcealment) to be something like what I am calling background assuming.[157] Here I bring to bear the analysis of the modes of betrayal from chapter 1: I show that Heideggerian unconcealment is a phenomenon that already incorporates and so ameliorates its own betrayal, whereas we have seen that the betrayal peculiar to personal trusting is less comprehensible because more radical. But this brings to light a basic tension in Heidegger's own thinking about what he calls "the danger [*die Gefahr*]," which he works out only uncertainly and in terms of both modes of betrayal. I will take up this immanent tension later (chapter 3, part III).

So, by introducing a distinction between background assuming and trusting proper into the context of Heidegger's thinking, over the course of the next three chapters I will try to show that a faithful interpretation of the essence of truth as our primitive relation to being requires a critique of Heidegger's truth-interpretation. My larger contention is that this rethinking can and should be carried out by beginning from the phenomena of trust. These chapters will serve that argument both by helping us get our bearings with regard to truth and by posing a question about just what kind of break from this truth we can suffer, or to what level of betrayal we are exposed.

I. The Parallel Between Primitive Trust and Originary Truth

Since it is on the basis of my trust analysis in chapter 1 that I intend to question Heidegger's account of the essence of truth, I need to begin by making plausible the relevance of a discussion of trust to an account of ontological or originary truth. Then, in part II, I will explain at some length how Heidegger's account of truth as unconcealment involves the sort of

---

[157] As we will see, Heidegger would think of background assuming as 'the essencing (*Wesung*) of beyng' or 'the history (*Geschichte*) of beyng.' See my discussion in section I.B, below, to which I return at greater length in chapter 3, section II.B.

reorientation by appeal to a wider context that we have seen to belong to background assuming (chapter 1, part II).

A) Trusting Without Guarantee

Earlier (chapter 1, part III), I emphasized that trusting proper is only indirectly voluntary. I can try to bring it about, and I can make decisions in order to maintain it, but I have no direct control over it. I simply find myself trusting, or I find myself at some level of distrust. We could call this the groundlessness or the *criterionlessness* of trusting proper. It applies to primitive trust more obviously, but also to interpersonal trust. The time has come to take up more explicitly what this might mean.

My claim can be put simply: at the end of the day, there is no sufficient external criterion (no justifying ground) to which the experience of trusting can be referred so as to secure it – i.e., to ensure that I am right to trust. There may be internal criteria, since trusting proper includes the disclosure of what is trusted *as* trustworthy, but this disclosure in trust takes place prior to any inference from external criteria.[158]

In the strictly interpersonal realm, trusting is not always ethically the right response, as Annette Baier has emphasized,[159] so it cannot be a categorically imperative maxim; it is not the kind of thing that can be fully submitted to another's judgment, since I would have to trust or distrust that person (and so on to infinity); it is not even the kind of thing that can be chosen on the basis of reason or passion (thus not exactly a virtue), for it is already a kind of affective

---

[158] Cf. J.M. Bernstein's account, on which trust "is subject to rational correction and modification, but not to rational installation"; it can only operate "as a baseline or primary attitude that does not require antecedent justification" (Bernstein, "Trust," pp. 404-5).

[159] Trust, like most good things, can be employed toward evil ends, as in the trust that allows a group of thieves to work together seamlessly, but the more concerning thing is that an atmosphere of trust can conceal exploitation. This point is from Annette Baier, "Trust and Its Vulnerabilities." Cp. Freud's concerns about loving strangers, and especially about the command to love everyone, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (SE **21**).

response.[160] Hence, I am *responsible* or answerable for it – that is, whom I trust is ultimately not up to anyone else or to any externalizable system of deciding – *and yet it is only indirectly up to me*. It is, irreducibly, a manifestation of the structure of the relation between me (in all my complexity and history) and the person I am trusting (modified according to the level of complexity in her to which I am open, including her trust or distrust of me). This structure is not always manifested to me – some third party may see more clearly the level of trust between my friend and me – but when it is manifested to me, it is in the personal emotion of trusting. That is why there can be no sufficient external criterion for whether I should trust given either before or in the event.

In the realm of primitive trust, at least, no sufficient criterion can be discovered through later, thoughtful analysis, either. For here we are asking after the very bedrock itself of Wittgenstein's river (chapter 1, sections II.A and III.B). 'Why should I trust this?' is not a question that can really be asked of the world as such, since outside of such trusting, there is no sufficiently stable and independent self to ask it. This is why René Descartes could only motivate his project by working backward from invented doubts, i.e., from what even his meditator acknowledged was a way of lying to himself.[161]

We *might* take this ultimate groundlessness to be more a feature of human questioning than of the world. Hannah Arendt, for example, claims that it is the lack of permanence inherent in *thinking* that means it must always start again from the beginning. That impermanence also means, for her, that thinking can go on asking 'why?' *ad infinitum*, seeking ever anew for a

---

[160] Cf. my chapter 6, part I, for an account of response as other than active or passive.

[161] "I think it will be a good plan to turn my will in completely the opposite direction and deceive myself, by pretending for a time that these former opinions are utterly false and imaginary." Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed./tr. J. Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. 15 (= AT VII: 22). In this way, the world does indeed come to be fundamentally deceitful: 1) what is knowable is what is re-presented to himself by a subject; 2) this subject has determined beforehand to lie to himself as a meditative exercise, that is, to re-present as a lie whatever is present; therefore, 3) everything that is present, that is 'known,' can be a lie!

beginning that would grant it permanence, in a kind of elaborate self-deception.[162] Aristotle, likewise, takes knowing when to stop asking backward – recognizing when one has reached the genuine sources (*arkhai*) – to be a matter of intellectual virtue.[163] Since what is real is so by being limited, one must halt the regress at a certain point. Nonetheless, our intellect's capacity to reach back to the sources remains also a capacity to try inappropriately to continue reaching beyond those sources. On either account, human questioning would be able in principle to artificially produce a certain groundlessness of our trust in the world, despite such primitive trust in fact being grounded.

Yet if we attend to such a regress as a possible first-person experience, as something *I* might endure, we find that precisely the 'I' cannot endure it. Aristotle himself indicates this in his discussion of the principle of non-contradiction by pointing out that someone who really thought that something could be both true and not true with respect to all of the same categories would be unable to function.[164] That is to say, the structure of our activity in the world displays the very sources on which it is based, so that this same structure of the self is what breaks down in the face of determined, inappropriately regressive questioning.

I tried earlier to indicate this relation between self and world through a discussion of psychosis, and I shall have to come back later to the justification of those claims.[165] For now, the crucial point is two-fold: first, that the self is constituted precisely by (or *as*) primitive trust, as a self-investment in the world that is concretely (if not always consciously) an investment in other people; second, that the *living individual* (perhaps even the *person*, in the Christian meaning of that word) can survive a very dramatic break with that primitive trust, although the *self* strictly

---

[162] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1 (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1978), chs. 7-10 (esp. pp. 88-89).
[163] Aristotle, *Metaphysics Γ*.6, *E*.1; *Ethics A*.3, *Z*.11.
[164] Aristotle, *Metaphysics Γ*.4.
[165] I began the discussion in chapter 1, section III.C, and I return to it briefly in chapter 4, section I, but the bulk of the work constitutes chapter 5.

speaking cannot.[166] For Heidegger, this break could only be understood as the dissolution of the self into inauthentic dispersal among things, wherein the individual is no longer self-governed because she is only oriented by what everybody (*das Man*) does. It would be the maximal fragmentation of being-there.[167]

Such a break, which psychiatry calls "psychotic," destroys the structured relation between self and world (which is, in the first instance, that between the self and others) and in doing so destroys both *relata* for the individual in question.[168] Hence what results from the break is very far from presenting a coherent alternative to primitive trust, as if psychosis were some kind of radicalized skepticism that could call into question the advisability or rationality of primitive trusting. Nor can psychosis serve, however, as positive evidence *for* the appropriateness of primitive trust, as if one concluded, *ad absurdum*, that if psychosis is the only alternative, trust is clearly justified. The problem in both cases is that no one is or could be in a position to make

---

[166] For more on the unity of the self and the individual, in light of the possibility of the former to fall apart without the latter (e.g., How are we to understand the phenomenon of people who report experiencing life without a core sense of self?), see chapter 5, below. Also cp. Rudolf Bernet, "The Traumatized Subject," tr. Paul Crowe, *Research in Phenomenology* **30** (2000): 160-179.

[167] See the introduction to chapter 5, as well as chapter 7, section II.A, for my discussion.

[168] Definitions of psychosis are much-contested in the literature. The DSM-V (from the American Psychiatric Association) and the ICD-10 (from the World Health Organization) both rely exclusively on symptomatology, except to say that psychosis involves a break with reality. Peter Buckley, in his introduction to a volume of *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, expands this slightly: "Accompanying the loss of a capacity to maintain links to reality may be disorganizations of cognition, language, and affect" (*Essential Papers on Psychosis*, ed. P. Buckley [New York: New York University Press, 1988], p. xii). Later in the same volume, Edith Jacobson claims that in psychosis "the realistic representations, not only of the object world but also of the self as an integrated unity, are apt to break down and to be replaced by distorted, unrealistic, delusional concepts. In fact, the psychotic is confused about both, about the objects and his own self" (Jacobson, "On Psychotic Identifications," in *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, p. 131).

One group of researchers has recently tried to clarify the *Gestalt* of psychosis as "being afflicted by a radical irrationality, i.e., a serious displacement out of the social consensus" (J. Parnas et al, "The Concept of Psychosis," in *Clinical Neuropsychiatry* **7**.2 (2010): 32-37, quotation from p. 35). We can find a summary description of this 'serious displacement' in Johan Cullberg's book *Psychoses*: "Acute psychoses imply a dislocation from the experience of the continuity of the self. The self tries to keep the anxiety-filled situation under control and to repair it, through creating a new state of consistency and continuity. [This new state is] known as a delusion." Furthermore: "Acute psychosis implies a linguistic relationship with the world [in which] the sufferer [is unable] to relate in the second person: [… t]his 'you' relationship, built on being able to experience oneself in a trusting relationship with the other, is lacking or denied. Instead, the psychotic person lives in a third-person relationship [and is] afraid of being tempted into a trusting relationship[,] which is thought of as a trap" (Cullberg, *Psychoses: An Integrative Perspective* [New York: Routledge, 2006], pp. 47-48).

such a decision, for the question is an ontological one. We are always[169] already constituted either as trusting or not, which is just to say that I find myself in every case as already a more or less integrated self – or else I do not find my*self* at all, and this (to varying degrees) disrupts my life as a living individual.[170]

Let me say, as a caveat, that I am not claiming that primitive trusting is a kind of belief by virtue of the absurd, as Søren Kierkegaard and others understand faith in God to be. The leap that constitutes trusting (whether primitive or interpersonal) has always already been made, and is not a relation to a paradox that could be laid before us. If it is an abyss, it stretches behind or below us, not ahead.

Furthermore, the fact that there can be no sufficient *external* criterion does not mean that there can be no sufficient *internal* criteria. There are, of course, many good reasons for me to primitively trust in the world and in other people, evidences given me in all of my experiences, and these are not just irrelevant. They really do justify my continued trust, albeit *post hoc*. The problem is that if I come under too much pressure, they may all take on a suspicious cast – and once they are given as lies, there is not much structural help (though there may be the possibility of behavioral modification) in appealing to their legitimacy as criteria. This is because even if they remain relevant criteria for me, their valence is now switched. What used to be reliable evidence of trustworthiness is now reliable evidence of betrayal.

---

[169] In the phenomenological rather than metaphysical sense of 'always': each time I take up the activity of investigation, I am already in one or the other.

[170] I do not mean to claim that no one can be in an existential or psychological crisis, so that reasons for trusting in the basic goodness of other people and in the coherence of the world might not be therapeutically or pastorally useful. This happens frequently, and if such reasons are not sufficiently provided, may lead even to the kind of break with reality that I am talking about – a psychotic episode in which I fail to find my *self* in the world. But those reasons can only serve to strengthen an already existing (if somewhat shaky at present) trust by calling me to rely in particular instances and then proving faithful. They cannot create such trust directly – for what could induce me to trust them (either the reasons or the people offering them) if I had no minimal preexisting trust in the world, in other people, and in myself? How would I feel their pull as a pull on *me*?

As a third and last caveat, let me insist that the absence of sufficient criteria for primitive trust does not imply the absence of normative value in trusting. I am trying to characterize a kind of trust that is ontological, but this does not mean either that the failure of such trust (psychosis) is somehow equally as valuable as health, or that interpersonal trusting is not of high moral worth.[171] Rather, primitive trusting (including its essential bond with trusting at least some persons) is the *basis* for normative value, that which allows for anything else to be coherently valuable.

To put it another way: in what could we be more invested than *that there is value in the world*? Is this not what makes possible any other self-investment?[172] And could there have been a point at which we laid out the possibilities side by side – there is value, there is no value – and chose one?[173] It seems to me, *contra* Nietzsche, that there could not have been. Instead, in any given encounter with particular entities, they are given in terms of their (un-)trustworthiness, and this can only show up against the background of primitive trust or distrust. The closest I might come to such a decision would be the question whether to *transfer* my trust in a particular person to trust in the world as such, as I will revisit in more detail later (chapter 5, part I, and chapter 6, part II). Even if that situation places at the core of psychosis some choice to affirm or reject trusting, it still presupposes an existing (unchosen) trust, since if I do not trust any person, I cannot trust the world.

---

[171] Though it is not as unambiguously good as some might at first think.

[172] For Friedrich Nietzsche, perhaps, it would be an error that our kind of life needs. Or else it is due to a faith in grammar, in the world as ordered like Western European languages, that holds out the illusory promise of genuinely normative values (i.e., a real world-order). Cf. *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 1st essay, §13, and "'Reason' in Philosophy," §5, in *Twilight of the Idols*. See also my further discussion in chapter 5, below.

[173] Cp. Nietzsche's claim in *On the Genealogy of Morality* that we would rather will nothingness than not will (3rd essay). Since all willing is for him evaluation, positing of values, this is as much as to say that we are structurally invested above all else in the project of valuing, i.e., of self-investing in things (or, at the limit, in nothingness). Although I do not agree with him that our being is basically willing, nonetheless he seems to me to be on to something crucial.

But then we can say that primitive trusting is trusting that entities will somehow show up as they are, i.e., in their being. I do not mean that primitive trust forgets about deception or falsity – indeed, it is only on the basis of such trust that truth and falsity show up as importantly intertwined[174] – but merely that primitive trust, like trusting a person, survives through an indeterminate number of disappointments and failures without feeling itself *betrayed* in the strong sense. If there can be no sufficient external criterion for primitively trusting what is, and if trusting proper discloses both my relation to the one trusted and discloses that one as trustworthy, then primitive trusting involves disclosing what is (either as a whole or particular states of affairs) as basically trustworthy, as unable to completely dissimulate, even though there is no way externally to guarantee this.[175] We could specify this by saying that such trust opens me to what-is in a way that lets entities be both minimally coherent (ordered into a world) and yet somehow independent of me (not requiring my control). Hence, one can know what is real, but this requires allowing things to show *themselves*, in their ordered relations, rather than measuring them against an external standard.

In other words, primitive trusting means finding oneself already invested in the self-showing of what is, not only *relying on* but genuinely *trusting* being to show up in what is (at minimum, as a certain kind of order and independence of those entities). It is an unthematized recognition of being as not wholly self-concealing, and it is necessary for any coherent activity in the shared world.[176] It impels us into experiencing things (since we cannot determine them in

---

[174] The paranoiac speaks the truth and regards all opposition as intrinsically false or irrelevant, since there is too much at stake if he could be wrong; for the schizophrenic, there is not enough distance from the world for truth and falsity (which assume mediation) to matter. Cf. Alphonse De Waelhens, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, pp. 236-243.

[175] I think something like this is what the ancient Greeks and the medieval Latins meant in tying together being and goodness.

[176] Here I think Heidegger is just right that our everyday activities contain a preliminary understanding of being. I think this is also true of the psychotic's everyday activities, to the extent that they are integrated, but that for her the relation to being is the same as the relation to language – both are taken up as a kind of game, in which she is not fully invested. Hence, as will become crucial below (chapter 5, part I), she loves,

advance), and that experience is primarily given as non-subjective (whatever our subsequent doubts may be).

But the ordered relations between things that primitive trust discloses allow us to understand things by referring them to one another or to a whole context in which they belong. In other words, such trust opens up *meaning*. And to be involved with things in a way that allows them to serve as normative standards for our interactions with them – such that we can get those meaningful referrals wrong but cannot get them wholly wrong – is to be open to those interactions as faithful or unfaithful to the standards, as *true or false* to the things.

So, one way to put all of this would be to say that primitive trust is what lets one stand "in the truth,"[177] what lets one be a part of the shared world that grants common, meaningful access to particular entities. Primitive trust would then turn out to be a question of the *essence* (or nature) of truth, that which puts us in the truth game, allowing the real to matter to us in terms of truth and falsity. It is a question, in other words, of what opens up for us a sufficiently coherent world in which we can experience entities (including assertions) as true and false.

So far, then, it looks plausible to think that primitive trust names a phenomenon that could be called 'the essence of truth.' But is this the same phenomenon that Heidegger is after?

B) Truth Without Guarantee

I think that it is. Heidegger understands originary truth along lines very similar to those I laid out above for primitive trust. Already at the end of §44 of *Being and Time*, he engages the question of an external criterion for truth when he confronts the problem of skepticism. He has just been giving a phenomenological account of the experience of propositional truth and asking

---

hates, and acts, but finds these investments inadequately structured to constitute a trustworthy, shared world.
[177] Heidegger, *Being and Time (BT)* 221-2/263-5.

after its ontological ground, when he pauses to ask whether such an investigation does not illegitimately presuppose that there *is* such a thing as truth.[178]

Although Heidegger himself does not in this text, we might distinguish here two different levels of skeptical question. One would be: 'Why should we think that anything at all is true?' Another would be: 'Why should we think that we could ever tell if *this* (statement, say) is true?'

The latter is a theoretical question about the existence of a criterion for particular situations or judgments, though not yet the relatively practical question of what that criterion might be. It is epistemological, like asking whether we could ever *know* a sufficient criterion for trusting particular persons. Like Descartes's meditator, it thus assumes that there is something that could justly be called 'truth' but worries that we may not have access to it. Falsity might carry the day from the outset.

The former question, by contrast, is much more sweeping. It asks for evidence or argument to show that we can and should use 'true' itself as a measure for sentences, beliefs, or objects. This version of skepticism is ontological,[179] like asking whether there *is* any sufficient justification (i.e., criterion) for trusting primitively. It resembles Nietzsche's movement from concern that truth might be founded on lies (metaphors) to concern with the *value* of truth in the first place (i.e., with the will to truth).[180]

Heidegger's answer (it is primarily the broader question with which he is concerned) turns out to be very similar to the one I gave above for trust: we can only pose such a question from the hither side of a fateful (rather than subjective) *decision*. This involves understanding 'decision' not as something made or taken by a conscious subject, but rather as a crucial parting

---

[178] *BT* 226-7/269-70.

[179] There is also a semantic version that makes (as far as I can tell) no ontological commitment. This is the deflationary (or at least disquotational) claim that the predicate 'is true' is only a semantic trick of one kind or another, since '"Snow is white" is true' has the same fulfillment conditions as 'Snow is white.' I have addressed similar positions briefly in the Introduction.

[180] Cp. Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense," with the third essay (especially §§24ff.) in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*.

of the ways (a scission) that, in our experience, we only encounter as either already having happened or not (hence, as 'fateful'). "It is not we who presuppose 'truth'; but it is '*truth*' that makes it at all possible ontologically for us to be able *to be* such that we [stably] 'presuppose' anything at all. Truth is what first *makes possible* [*ermöglicht*] anything like presupposing."[181]

Heidegger must mean that presupposing (*voraussetzen*), the setting out of principles beforehand, only makes sense if there is already a "subject" (who can do the supposing) within a world (a meaningful place into which it can be set). But the "subject" within a world, according to Heidegger, is not most fundamentally a subject; it is, rather, being-there (*Dasein*), the entity that belongs to being as the place at which the latter shows up or displays itself. And this showing-up of being, the opening of a world (i.e., of all-that-is as an intelligible, if not yet fully understood, whole), is what Heidegger means by 'truth' when it is understood ontologically.

That is why he claims in the *Contributions to Philosophy* that this ontological version of truth, 'the truth *of* beyng' (which is no longer truth in the sense of true propositions *about* beyng, but rather truth in the sense of beyng's self-showing), admits of no external determination (or external criterion). "But from where is the essence of *this* truth [of beyng] *and with it the essence of truth as such* supposed to be able to be determined other than from out of beyng itself?"[182] This claim requires quite a bit of explanation, some of which cannot be fully developed until we have established more context (chapter 3, section II.B). Let me begin with the term 'beyng,' in its archaic spelling.

---

[181] *BT* 227-8/270-1, original italics.

[182] Heidegger, GA 65:92, my emphasis. Cf. *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, p. 73, trans. mod.
    Along with some sections of *Meditation* (*Besinnung*, 1938-39), the *Contributions* (1936-38) are the most controversial and interesting of Heidegger's many engagements with the nature of truth between *Being and Time* (1927) and the publication in 1943 of a much-reworked essay, "On the Essence of Truth." I deal with the latter essay at some length later in the present chapter (section II.C, below) and more briefly with the relevant discussions in the *Nietzsche* lectures in the next chapter. I also make occasional reference to Heidegger's other major discussions of the problem in the intervening years: "The Origin of the Work of Art" and "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," as well as lecture courses on *The Essence of Truth* (delivered twice), *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"*, *Parmenides*, and *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*.

I follow Richard Polt, among others, by interpreting being (spelled in the usual way) as the *patterned givenness* of the whole of what is. He calls it "the difference it makes that there is something rather than nothing,"[183] or the *import* of things – where 'import' sums up both the meaning (i.e., in-principle intelligibility) of those things and their importance (i.e., they matter; they are not nothing).[184] If, in an everyday way, we encounter the whole of what is as a kind of element in which we move, a space of familiarity,[185] then that space is articulated according to more and less crucial differences. Being is the pattern according to which we always already find some differences marked as (obviously) mattering more and others less; it is the particular, *a priori* way in which what is can show up compellingly. It thus makes things accessible as things that *are* (in the double sense just given to 'import'), i.e, as entities.[186]

As the double sense of 'import' shows, being for Heidegger is not reducible to meaning, since something can matter to me precisely as exceeding my understanding, and indeed every real thing is given as resistant to my understanding it, even if also as, in principle, partially intelligible. By the same token, however, being is not simply independent of meaning, since the *way* something matters to me is schematized through what Polt names the 'pattern' of my understanding.[187] Even things that are given as mattering but beyond my understanding show up in a negative relation to that pattern, as exceeding it.

Furthermore, this *a priori* pattern, which is the source of things' meaningfulness, can itself be given to us in a thoughtful experience, as happens when philosophy considers the

---

[183] Richard Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, p. 28.

[184] *Ibid.*, p. 60. Polt also coins the term 'ways-of-sense' and refers us to the ancient Greek word '*dynamis*' to try to say what Heidegger is getting at with 'being.'

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

[186] 'What is' (*das Seiende*, 'entities,' or 'things' in a broad sense), according to Heidegger, includes "not only the actual of any sort, but at the same time the possible, the necessary, and the accidental, everything that stands in beyng in any way whatsoever, even including negativity and nothingness" (GA 65:74/*Contributions* 59). I mostly write 'what is' (and sometimes hyphenate it to avoid syntactic confusion) to preserve its singular, collective sense.

[187] See chapter 4, section III, below, for more on this as a contentious reading of Heidegger. Richard Capobianco and Thomas Sheehan have been the major players in a debate about the meaning of 'being' for at least a decade.

metaphysical categories within which it moves. We can then – although mostly we do not – ask about the source of *this* givenness, what could be called being's own givenness. That source, the *giving* of being, is what Heidegger names 'beyng' (*Seyn*), making use of the older German spelling of 'being' (*Sein*) in order to indicate that asking about beyng requires asking "further back," as it were, but does not thereby require asking about something else.[188] (Heidegger also refers to this giving as 'being itself.') As Polt puts it, beyng names "the contingent happening of […] import […] – the *making* of the difference between something and nothing – the *giving* of the being of beings."[189]

We might say, then, that being, the patterned givenness of what is, designates in part what the discipline of metaphysics primarily investigates. It is, for example, what marks out essential traits from incidental, focuses on *things* as primary over relations, and attends to modality, realness, and so on. Translating Aristotle's *ousia* quite literally (the abstract version of the participle for 'to be,' *ousa*), Heidegger refers to all of this as the *beingness* of what is (*die Seiendheit des Seiendes*).

In contrast to the metaphysical tradition, Heidegger asks about the source of this givenness, which is also necessarily a question about the source of our receptivity to it. How is it that we can be struck by this patterning itself as strange or – most especially – as changing through different times or cultures? Why is it not simply always obvious? What unifies the various categories, modalities, and so forth in which being shows up? In what light (or, rather, in what cleared space that first lets in light) can being show up as such, and not only as the *a priori* structure within which what is can matter to us? He refers to this source variously as the *meaning*, the *essence*, the *truth*, or even the *place* of being, as well as naming it 'beyng.'

---

[188] *Ibid.*, p. 58. We can imitate Heidegger by using an archaic spelling of being in English: namely, beyng.
[189] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

We shall have to come back to all of this in more detail (chapter 3, section II.B), but for now let us simply assert that Heidegger finds a hidden unity in the various *a priori* patterns that have unfolded in Western European history. (These would include understanding the being of what-is as *logos* or *idea*, understanding it as being-created by God, or understanding it as merely the value of a variable in a logical expression.) He then tries to interpret this historical unity as being's own "essencing," by which he means its essence (*Wesen*) inflected verbally: understood as a sort of essential unfolding (*Wesung*) or a unify*ing* that cuts across chronological history. It is simply the concealed, structural unity of these different ways in which things can be understood as essential, but that unity is itself interpreted as happening in history, indeed as forming a kind of alternate history. We could say that it comprises what most importantly or most really *happens* (*Geschehen*) in chronological history (*Historie*), and therefore name it, following Heidegger, simply 'history' (*Geschichte*).[190]

For Heidegger to say, then, that both the essence (or, verbally, the essencing) of the truth of beyng and the essence of truth itself must be determined (*bestimmen*) from out of beyng, this cannot mean 'derived from,' as if we had a conceptual grasp of beyng which then yielded a coordinate concept of truth. Instead, it means something more like a structured link or relation between beyng (as the historical transformations of the basic meanings of being) and the correlative transformations of the essence of truth as a manner of disclosure.[191] This, too, I will develop later (chapter 3, section II.B). For now, let me say something about how Heidegger understands essences, since we have begun speaking of 'the essence of beyng' (which seems at

---

[190] *Geschichte* also means 'story,' so there is a sense here of locating the "plot" in history. For more on this alternate history, see chapter 3, section III.D.3.

[191] Being-there (in my usage, at least) is thus the place at which beyng shows itself in some one constellation or pattern for what is – i.e., shows itself as being. Beyng is not just the same as the belonging-together of being and thinking (that would be too easy), but it is what is granted to thinking in the event (*das Ereignis*) that allows being and thinking to belong together (by appropriating them to one another). See chapter 3, part II, for further elaboration.

first nonsensical), and since such an investigation will make clearer why he thinks there can be no external criterion for the essence of truth.

According to Heidegger, phenomenological inquiry (and especially the inquiry into the essence of truth) shows us that essence is only derivatively *what* something is, as answering Socrates' question, *what is it?* (*ti esti*). Primarily, the 'essentiality' of essence refers to *how* a phenomenon shows up. So, instead of looking for some permanently enduring thing (a universal kind, a form, a common property holding of various instances, or even the Neo-Kantian transcendental condition of possibility[192]) to which we should refer this particular as its essence, phenomenology would have us look for the modes of unfolding that emerge as central to this particular phenomenon (one might say: *how* it essentially unfolds). "If we speak of the 'essence [*Wesen*] of a house' and the 'essence of a state,' we do not mean a generic type [*das Allgemeine einer Gattung*]; rather we mean the ways in which house and state prevail [*walten*], maintain themselves, unfold and pass away – it is how they essence [*wesen*]."[193] From this verbal sense of essence, we can in many cases derive a general kind, but that is not the primary meaning of 'essence.' Instead of looking to something permanent that governs the thing's movement, then, Heidegger locates the essence of the phenomenon in the unity internal to the movement itself.[194]

For this reason, Heidegger can claim that the history of beyng (*Seynsgeschichte*) is not something other than beyng itself in its essencing (*Wesung*), its essential unfolding or happening.

---

[192] Cp. Heidegger's marginal note from 1954, situated at the beginning of "On the Essence of Truth": "Essence: (1) *quidditas* [quiddity] – the 'what' – *koinon* [what is common]; (2) enabling [*Ermöglichung*] – condition of possibility; (3) ground of enabling." Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 136/GA 9:177.

[193] Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, tr. W. Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 30, trans. mod. Hereafter: *QCT*. Cf. GA 7:31. Heidegger adds here that the verbal sense of *wesen* includes lasting or enduring (*währen*), which ancient Greek philosophy interpreted as permanence rather than as *verweilen*, tarrying for a while, and so looked for essences that could not be subject to becoming.

[194] Cf. Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 114-15: "Heidegger […] equates the operation of essence with movement as such" and "shift[s] the questioning from the *what* of metaphysics to the *how* of pre-metaphysical thought. For this is how verbs are qualified: not nominally, but adverbially."

Beyng is not an entity *to which* history could happen; it is not a substance persisting through change. Beyng becomes available only *as* history, as the immanent phenomenological unity of being's own transformations. Thus, "the truth of beyng is nothing at all distinct from beyng, but rather its ownmost essence [*Wesen*]."[195] There is no *external* essence, no criterion, that could be given independently of that history, or against which moments of that history could be measured.

But how a phenomenon shows up (or is enabled to show up) is not only dependent on that phenomenon itself; it depends also on us, and indeed on our own modes of openness. Thus the being or essencing of a thing may change chronologically, albeit within certain bounds set by the thing itself (the moon appears quite different to us now than to the ancients who thought it a goddess, but it is not as if they lacked experience of the moon itself); thus also our access to the thing's being is irreducibly conditioned by our disposition, our (historically and culturally conditioned) familiarity with or way of encountering phenomena. This is why Heidegger can refer to essence as "a way of disclosing that destines [*eine geschickhafte Weise des Entbergens*]"[196] us to identify certain features of phenomena as essential. As Mark Wrathall articulates it, "the essence of a thing is given by that in the light of which it is brought into unconcealment."[197]

It seems to me that this is what licenses Heidegger's frequent 'negative mode' analysis – wherein a phenomenon can belong essentially to that of which it is a privation – and even opens the door to what he calls "the proper non-essence [*das eigentliche Unwesen*]"[198] of a phenomenon. Our preliminary investigation of trust by way of betrayal (chapter 1) provides a good example here. If there is a mode of disclosure within which a phenomenon belongs – its

---

[195] GA 65:93/*Contributions* 74. For more explanation, see section II.C of the present chapter and chapter 3, section II.B, below.
[196] GA 7:30/*QCT* 29, trans. mod.
[197] Mark A. Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 31.
[198] GA 9:194, 197/*Pathmarks* 148, 150.

essence – there will also be a peculiar mode of concealment for that same phenomenon. This concealment is the non-essence that belongs to it, as the various kinds of betrayal belong to the various phenomena of self-investment. Betrayal is precisely *not* trust, and yet, as nonetheless proper to trust, it indicates the field in which trust can appear essentially.

What falls out of all of this is that Heidegger claims that we do not come to know essences primarily through definitions, or really through learning any kind of proposition at all.[199] Nor do we get there by abstracting such a definition from various examples. How would we decide what counted as an example if we did not already have some glimpse of the essence?[200] Instead, he describes grasping an essence as a kind of bringing-forth (*Hervor-bringung*) or productive seeing (*Er-sehen*), without thereby understanding it as arbitrary (or as a product of social agreement). It must somehow be limited by the matter (*die Sache*) being grasped, but it cannot be compared to any external criterion. The bringing-forth of the essence is precisely what first sets up a standard or criterion, against which purported examples can then be measured. It is the recognition of a central pattern in experience.

Heidegger clarifies: "The essence is not manufactured [*angefertigt*], but it is also not randomly encountered [*angetroffen*] like a single thing at hand [*ein vorhandenes einzelnes Ding*]."[201] The originary grounding of the essence is, rather, a seeing that leads what is essential to the phenomenon out of its concealment, i.e., it uncovers the phenomenon as such. Crucially, this means that "knowledge of essence, if it is to be communicated [*zur Mit-teilung kommen*], must itself be accomplished anew by the one who is to take it up [*aufnehmen*]."[202] In order to grasp the essence, I must have an insight, *get it* for myself, and this is an unconcealing of what was previously hidden from me. We may do this in a way that soon subsides into the background

---

[199] What Heidegger does with tautologies is rather different, but I cannot go into it here.
[200] Heidegger works out this argument in *Basic Questions of Philosophy*/GA 45, §20-24.
[201] GA 45:85-6/*Basic Questions* 77.
[202] GA 45:87/*Basic Questions* 78.

of our activities, in which case it is the gaining of a certain familiarity (*Kenntnis*) – thus we all are familiar with the essences of any number of entities that we learned as children and/or deal with frequently. But we may also do it more explicitly, thoughtfully, and then we gain knowledge (*Erkenntnis* or *Wissen*) of the essence.

Here, especially, is where phenomenology finds its work. And because the essence must be posited anew for each thinker, seen in a way that brings forth what was unseen, the productive seeing of an as-yet-unseen essence may also be called 'thinking the unthought.' From this perspective, we may understand why Heidegger spends so much of his work asking about the essence of this or that phenomenon: that is precisely the task of the philosopher, who "is a thinker only if he is this kind of seer."[203]

But if all thoughtful grasping of essences happens in this way, does not the criterionlessness I have claimed for primitive trust simply place it among the ranks of any number of other phenomena? It does not. Primitive trust, which discloses a minimal, mind-independent order among phenomena, is what enables us to bring forth the essence as stable. It opens the space in which such essences can be productively seen (*Er-sehen*). By attending to its betrayal, we can address this trust as if from the outside, encounter it as a phenomenon with its own essence, but we always do so already from within it, since it is that by which phenomenality can occur.

Finally, since bringing forth a previously unseen essence is a way of belonging to being,[204] and since it involves precisely drawing something out of concealment (i.e., un-concealment), we may also understand, at least preliminarily, why Heidegger claims in the *Contributions* that "the truth of beyng is the beyng of truth."[205] In other words, beyng's essence,

---

[203] GA 45:94/*Basic Questions* 84.
[204] "Knowledge of essence [*Wesenswissen*] creates precisely belonging to being…" GA 45:87/*Basic Questions* 78.
[205] GA 65:95/*Contributions* 75.

that in the light of which beyng may be experienced, is nothing other than the essencing of truth as unconcealment, i.e., as the concealing/revealing interplay according to which unconcealment happens.

C) Truth and Trust for Heidegger

But if I am right in proposing that what I describe as primitive trust is the same phenomenon that Heidegger names 'truth' (or: 'the essence of truth'), i.e., that which opens a minimally coherent world without appeal to an external criterion,[206] my proposal should be borne out by his explicit discussion of truth in terms of something like trust. The bulk of this discussion also takes place in the *Contributions*, at the end of a long portion devoted to thinking the essence of truth.[207] In §237, he looks for the appropriate way to speak about our essential standing in the truth: is that stance a kind of faith or belief (*Glaube*)? Or a kind of knowledge (*Wissen*)? Is the tradition (e.g., Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, Kierkegaard) correct to assume that faith and knowledge are both ways of possessing what is true, so as then to argue about which way is better or more basic? Or are belief and knowledge at this fundamental level less like possessions and more like ways of belonging?

In the previous paragraph (§236), Heidegger has already indicated the level at which he wishes to inquire: how is it that we come to stand in the essence of truth? *Is* there such a thing as truth? If so, why and how?[208] The paragraph, as I read it, attends carefully to the reflexive question that bedevils any account of truth – is this account of truth (as, say, the clearing for self-

---

[206] Note that the question of a coherent world is ontological, not primarily about the ontic coherence of one's beliefs, which is why Heidegger's account cannot be straightforwardly a coherence theory of truth.

[207] There are a few other scattered mentions of trusting with which I will deal at various points in the course of the larger investigation. See chapter 3, below, for discussion of "The Question Concerning Technology," the lecture course *Basic Concepts*, and "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking." See chapter 7 for discussion of the *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* and "A Dialogue on Language." Finally, see both chapters 3 and 7 for discussion of the lecture courses *Nietzsche* and *What Calls for Thinking?*

[208] "*Warum ist die Wahrheit? Ist sie denn und wie?*" (GA 65:367).

concealment) itself true?[209] We saw an example of this just above: if I claim that knowing the truth means getting it right, how can I ever know that I have gotten this claim itself right? What could provide a criterion?

As we saw in *Being and Time*, Heidegger again locates the difficulty in discovering what such a question presupposes, on what basis it rests. It seems, as Heidegger points out, that any why-question (including: 'Why think that truth exists?') rests already on the assumption that there *is* some truth – whatever its character may be – something to be found out by the questioning. It is also motivated by some investment in this thing to be found out. We could ask, in other words, "whether it is not the case that in the question 'Why truth?' truth lets itself unfold as the ground of the 'why' and thus lets itself be determined in its essence."[210] In asking 'why,' we already assume certain criteria for what could count as an answer. But that means that *we already know* what truth is, even if only imprecisely, since we have already determined what kind of thing can count as a true answer.

Heidegger does not wish to break out of this circle since, as I argued earlier (section I.A), it is not the kind of circle that could be escaped. Rather, he wants to figure out how to understand that knowledge (*Wissen*) of truth that must be already assumed in any question about it. Is it really knowledge? Although whatever is happening here remains obscure, nevertheless it is clear that there is *something* going on: as he puts it, there seems to be something like a "between" (*Zwischen*) unfolding between us and beyng, some realm in which we stand that is external neither to beyng nor to us, but essentially belongs to the very occurring or happening of beyng.[211] This is a way of saying that in our activities amidst things, our dwelling in language, our

---

[209] Cp. the various paradoxes, especially (but not only) the Liar, around which so much theorization of the truth-predicate turns in the contemporary analytic philosophical discussion. I have addressed these briefly in the Introduction, part II, above. See Kevin Scharp, *Replacing Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), for reflections on such paradoxes and their consequences for theories of truth.
[210] GA 65:367/*Contributions* 290.
[211] GA 65:368/*Contributions* 290. See also the discussion of possibility in chapter 3, section III.C, below.

perceptual sensitivity to both the visible and the invisible (where the latter is the context for, or what is implied in, the visible), and our affective attunement, we seem to have access not only to things but to their being. Our very involvements in the world already provide questions with a space within which they can move; this space is both the friction that lets them grip things at all and their necessary orientation toward the specific phenomena in question. We find ourselves receptive to being, which means that we and being's source (beyng) somehow belong together, as if we dwelt within the same element. It is only from out of this "between" that may or may not be "knowledge" that we (quite innocently) can ask our questions about truth, no matter how skeptical those questions may be.[212]

I take this to mean that Heidegger himself is looking for an appropriate way to name our most fundamental receptivity to what-is in its being. We should not fail to appreciate that in this context he directly considers something akin to trust.

To find an answer to his question, he begins with a fairly typical characterization of believing as holding something to be true or deeming it true (*Für-wahr-halten*). To "believe" in this sense, then, is to adopt (*aneignen*) for oneself whatever is true so as to concur (*zustimmen*) with it.[213] It deals with things that are true (propositions, sentences, particular beings, etc.) rather than truth itself as such.[214]

This first sense of 'belief' is often governed by a particular conception of knowledge as a kind of possession, the constant or consistent having of a (correct) mental representation

---

[212] Plato's Socrates occasionally (cf. *Meno*) characterizes this "between" as, on one side, the participation (*metexis*) in the Ideas of everything that in any way is, and, on the other side, our having been exposed to the Ideas in their purity before this life – although the trauma of birth was such as to make us forget that pure exposure. (We might ask, with Freud, whether this would be a simple forgetting or an anguished refusal to remember, but that is for chapter 6.)

[213] Notice that Heidegger does not speak here only of beliefs *about* things, or, in other words, only of beliefs as propositions or mental representations. The possibilities of intentional comportment that would count as believing are left open in this regard, so that although Heidegger's goal does seem to include persuading us to stop philosophically thinking of knowing as a form of correct representation, he need not also claim that we should stop taking everyday beliefs as ways of holding things to be true.

[214] GA 65:368/*Contributions* 291.

(*Vorstellung*) of a state of affairs. I say 'governed by' because belief here turns out to be one form of knowledge, even if (as on Plato's divided line) it is a deficient form. On this account, we merely *believe* that for which we do not or cannot have proof; or, in more contemporary language, each of us possesses a whole range of beliefs (or views), some of which are true, and some subset of these latter count as knowledge because they are properly warranted or justified.

'Knowing,' in this initial sense of having the right representations for the right reasons, likewise deals only with *things that are* true (*die Wahren*: in this case, representations). It must assume some prior familiarity – though this need not be explicit – with the criterion for truth so as to be able to deal with truths. From this perspective, Heidegger acknowledges, the phenomenon of our primitive relation to the truth "is obviously not a 'knowing' but rather a 'believing'."[215] We merely *believe* (also in the initial sense) that there must be truth and that it has a certain character, beliefs that certainly cannot be proven.[216]

Nonetheless, Heidegger claims, this familiarity with the nature of truth can also be considered a deeper, more authentic (*eigentlich*: in the sense of 'more appropriate for our way of being' or 'more our own') knowing (*Wissen*), the kind of knowing that the whole of the *Contributions* is trying to work out.[217] Such knowledge "knows the essence of truth and consequently, in the turning [*Kehre*], is first determined from out of this essence itself."[218]

---

[215] GA 65:369/*Contributions* 291.

[216] In Aristotelian terms: there can be no demonstrative knowledge (*epistēmē*) of the first principles (*arkhai*), but there must be some other way of knowing them (*gnorizein*) [Aristotle, *Metaph.* E.1, *Post. An.* A.10, B.19]. That is, we have to get our initial premises from somewhere, and it cannot be from the conclusion of some other argument.

It is not yet clear to me whether Aristotle would agree with my attempt to characterize this originary openness or receptiveness as a particular kind of trust, *pistis* (on this, see Claudia Baracchi, *Aristotle's Ethics as First Philosophy*, in which she claims that for Aristotle we must *trust* both sensation and the apparent teleological structure of the world), but Aristotle is certainly after the same phenomenon in his account of *nous*, the capacity to receive what is evident.

[217] Cf. §2, among other places: "the truth of beyng – for the thinker [*denkerisch*] it is indwelling/enabling knowledge [*inständliche Wissen*] of how beyng essences [*west*]" (GA 65:6-7/*Contributions* 8, trans. mod.).

[218] GA 65:368/*Contributions* 291.

Knowledge in this second, more originary sense does not deal with what is true (*das Wahre*) but with the essence or nature of truth itself (*die Wahrheit*).[219]

I shall return to how Heidegger thinks this essence in my discussion of unconcealment (part II, below), but for now the crucial thing is that truth for Heidegger is not primarily a criterion that could be applied (like correspondence, coherence, or even correctness more generally). It is, rather, a receptivity that must be lived: a familiarity with the criterion for truth and with the phenomena that can be compared with that standard. This trusting receptivity can then be taken up authentically – we might say, thoughtfully – in which case it becomes knowledge in the second sense, or it may be simply lived through thoughtlessly, as we mostly do (inauthentically). But then any explicit knowing of this essence of truth first requires being tacitly determined by it, being invested by it, so that what it is to be myself is determined (*bestimmt*) by that essence. Rather than holding some *thing* to be true ('belief' in the sense of *Für-wahr-halten*), this second kind of believing is holding oneself and being held (*Sichhalten*) in the essence of truth. More briefly put: it is abiding in the truth.[220] This abiding, as tacit familiarity, is thus more originary than any particular belief, and attending to it explicitly is more originary than any other knowledge. For how could one hold a belief about the truth of this or that claim without tacitly *assuming* some meaning of 'true'? And how could one hold any belief (where 'belief' is still understood as a comportment: a holding to be true), regardless of its content, without tacitly *assuming* that truth and falsity (in the sense of getting it right) *matter*, that they are of essential import?

What I proposed in my first chapter to call 'assuming' (chapter 1, part II), Heidegger thinks here as a sort of persistence or endurance, a holding-out (*Aushalten*) against the intrinsic tendency to cover up or forget about the essence of truth in favor of attending to what is true.

---

[219] GA 65:369/*Contributions* 291.
[220] *Ibid.*

Such persistence is knowledge not in the sense of a mental representation but in the sense of staying with a given projection despite or in the midst of realizing that the projection is ungrounded – that it has and can have no external criterion.[221] (A *projection* in this sense is a meaning or a pattern that I do not project as a subject but into which I find myself thrown as the basis of any 'subjective' activity.)

Heidegger admits that *knowing* in this second sense (explicitly abiding/persisting in the face of the ungroundedness of the essence of truth) could also be called *believing* or *faith* (if we wished to humor the perspective of the first kind of knowledge),[222] since it cannot be demonstrated or secured – but this would have to be 'belief' in a second sense, as well: believing as holding oneself in the truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*).[223] Thus, we can see that his strategy turns out to involve working out two phenomenologically distinct senses for each term, 'believing' (*Glauben*) and 'knowing' (*Wissen*), with an eye to their dependence on one another and their relation to standing in the truth. Knowing and believing, at a sufficiently fundamental level, are seen to be the same: a certain way of abiding in or belonging to the world as ordered.

The specific way in which we can explicitly abide, he thinks at this point – the way in which we hold ourselves or are held in primitive receptivity to the essence of truth – is by questioning any particular determination of that essence that would claim to be grounded (rather than without ground, i.e., abyssal). Hence, we could say that "[q]uestioners of this kind are the originary and authentic believers": they are those who take truth itself seriously "*von Grund aus*,"[224] which means taking the essence of truth as the (itself ungroundable) ground of particular truths, understanding truths from out of that essence rather than generalizing from particular truths to a common 'essence' of truth. Heidegger claims that this persistent attending to the way

---

[221] *Ibid.*
[222] Compare Merleau-Ponty on perceptual faith in *The Visible and the Invisible*, esp. pp. 3-6, 11-14.
[223] GA 65:369/*Contributions* 291.
[224] GA 65:369/*Contributions* 292.

that truth unfolds, without trying to ground it or explain it away, is precisely a continual stance of questioning, an abiding or dwelling 'in the truth.'[225]

II. Concealment as both Constitutive of and Subversive of the Truth
"Yet the decisive question must search for the originary unity of disclosure and concealment."[226]

It should by now be at least plausible that both primitive trust and Heidegger's 'essence of truth' name immersion in (and receptivity to) the self-showing of being. As the foundation for all other comportments that are organized within the world, this phenomenon cannot be guaranteed by any external criterion, nor can it be appropriately conceptualized as a generalization from particular truths.[227] It is, rather, our access to the minimally coherent, shared world as such. But this seems to make it very hard to talk about. How do we have any access to what in the first place grants access of any kind – i.e., to the truth as a phenomenon? Is the supposed perspicuity of being in fact inaccessible from the start?

Let us take our cue from the beginning of this investigation, in which the peculiarities of primitive trust showed up through our attention to modes of betrayal (chapter 1). This suggests that we take the seeming *inaccessibility* of the truth phenomenon as an initial clue. In this, we follow Heidegger's own attempt to let things show themselves: in *Being and Time* (1927), the matter provoking Heidegger's thinking is the perpetual overlooking or forgetting (*die Vergessenheit*) of the question of being. By the time of "On the Essence of Truth" (written 1930, revised and published 1943), he ontologizes this very forgetting: truth contains a negation, a not-

---

[225] See below, chapter 7, for my discussion of Heidegger's realization that originary receptivity must be listening rather than questioning. Both questioning and listening are ways of taking *as* granted rather than only *for* granted.

[226] Heidegger, *Basic Principles of Thinking*, in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, tr. A.J. Mitchell (Indiana University Press, 2012), p. 130/GA 79:138. This text includes two lecture cycles referred to in what follows: *Insight Into That Which Is* – for which I will simply refer to the individual lectures – and *Basic Principles of Thinking (BPT)*.

[227] Cp. Tarski's Convention T and most of the analytic philosophical literature on truth, which begins from instances of true (often tautological) assertions in an attempt to arrive at the relation common to all of them. Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **4**.3 (March 1944): 341-376.

character, within itself,[228] which he elsewhere calls 'abandonment by being' (*Seinsverlassenheit*). Let me concentrate on what can be drawn from these two sources.

One way in which we experience this negation is in precisely the forgetting that Heidegger had investigated earlier (which he now calls 'errancy,' *die Irre*).[229] This forgetting turns out to be more than a merely accidental error on our part; rather, just avoiding erring altogether is impossible, as we shall see, since errancy marks the finitude of being. Forgetting is thus a necessary part of the unitary phenomenon that he names 'unconcealment.' That phenomenon, in its most originary unfolding, includes both light and dark, both truth and untruth; that is, it essentially includes both un-concealment (*a-lētheia*) *and* the concealment to which it refers (*lēthē*), from which it is drawn.

How can Heidegger say that both hiding and opening up are essential to truth? By demanding that we think *from* and *continually along with* a first-person experience of the matter at hand, Heidegger seeks the *phenomenological* essence of truth (cf. section I.B): not a common and peculiar property of all truths – not even their common Idea as revealed by imaginative variation – but rather the unity from which or in light of which the phenomenon of truth becomes available for experience.

Here a reminder is in order. One of the basic tenets of (and motivations for) phenomenology is that phenomena are wholes irreducible to their constituent parts. Another is that the parts may or may not bear a causal relation to the whole. Thus, for example, the layered phenomenon of hearing a bear growl is not reducible to raw sense data plus a causal process of

---

[228] "The concealment of what is as a whole, un-truth proper, is older than every openedness of this or that entity. It is older even than letting-be itself, which in disclosing already holds-concealed and comports itself to concealing." GA 9:193-4/*Pathmarks* 148, trans. mod. See also: "Truth, in its essence, is un-truth" ("The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings*, rev./exp. edition, ed. D.F. Krell [San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993], p. 179; GA 5:41); the claim is repeated in the (roughly contemporaneous) *Contributions*, "The essence of truth is un-truth," with the clarification that "*negativity* belongs to [*gehört zu*] truth" (GA 65:356/*Contributions* 281).
[229] The word recalls knights errant. From Latin *errare*, 'to wander.' Thus, and only derivatively, 'to make an error.'

compilation or organization into the meaning of a bear's growl. Nor is it reducible to apprehension of a background situation (campsite in the woods… food not yet hung from a tree… night falling…) plus a foreground noise, which I would again put together into understanding the whole as a bear's growl. Rather, what is given in the experience – what I nervously hear – is already as it were synthetic: I hear a bear's growl (or, perhaps, something that I can't quite identify but that sounds uncomfortably like a growling bear). That remains the basic phenomenon, even though I can also analyze it into parts: for example, what makes it possible (the background of the situation, including my expectations), with what moods and emotions it is shot through (fear, excitement), the particular tonalities of the sensory input (pitch, length, nearness to my tent), and so on. Above all, it is not the case that there is first a fully independent object upon which I would then layer a set of background conditions, a mood, and an interpretation, as if these latter could be removed and something intact left over for me.[230]

When I speak of a *phenomenological structure*, then, I mean this given unity of multiple moments that can be encountered by attending to what unfolds in one's experience. Heidegger, for example, characterizes his account of being-there (from *Being and Time*) as the articulation of just such a structure. In the *Zollikon Seminars*, he claims that Kant's 'analytic' in *The Critique of Pure Reason* "is not a reduction into elements, but the articulation of the unity of a composite structure [*Strukturgefüge*]. This is also the essential factor in my concept of the 'analytic of

---

[230] This is in no way to say that I create the bear or its growling. Indeed, the ways in which the bear *is* independently of my presence in its terrain show up all too clearly, precisely in the phenomenon of its growl – the noise is given as the noise of a powerful, potentially dangerous thing with its own desires and tendencies of movement, both of which are mostly unknown to me. I even experience, with trepidation, the difference between my imaginative projections (about what the bear must be wanting or is likely to do) and whatever it really *is* wanting and likely to do. In short, what is real is given to me *through* this fear, through the typical ways of making camp, through my relative inexperience with bears, through my sense of hearing that has been sharpened by a few days out in the woods, etc. These are not optional addenda to the situation, though any of them could of course be different – in a different situation.

Dasein.'"[231] Phenomenological analysis, in this sense, maintains a reference to the whole in every articulation of the separate moments.

This must be kept in mind in the following analysis of unconcealment. The basic phenomenon, according to Heidegger, is a complex but irreducible happening, in which an entity (a situation that matters and is perhaps accessible to interpretation) is made available, opened up for my comportment toward it, precisely *through* the withdrawal (or self-concealment) of what makes it available. This relation of withdrawal is not a causal relation, since it must be already in place if we are to discover any causal relations. (The entity toward which I am able to comport myself could, for example, be itself a causal relation.) It is, rather, a phenomenal relation, one that need not be posited or presupposed because it can be allowed to show itself.

Heidegger's strategy of attending to what withdraws will be clearer if I crystallize it around a couple of everyday phenomena that are central to his work. Jean-Paul Sartre has left us a beautiful example in his description of entering a café:

> I have an appointment with Pierre at four o'clock. I arrive at the café a quarter of an hour late. Pierre is always punctual. Will he have waited for me? I look at the room, the patrons, and I say, "He is not here." […] When I enter this café to search for Pierre, there is formed a synthetic organization of all the objects in the café, on the ground of which Pierre is given as about to appear. […] I am witness to the successive disappearance of all the objects which I look at – in particular of the faces, which detain me for an instant (Could this be Pierre?) and which as quickly decompose precisely because they "are not" the face of Pierre. […] But now Pierre is not here. This does not mean that I discover his absence in some precise spot in the establishment. In fact Pierre is absent from the *whole* café […, which] makes itself ground for a determined figure; it carries the figure everywhere in front of it, presents the figure everywhere to me. […] It is an objective fact at present that I have *discovered* this absence, and it presents itself as a synthetic relation between Pierre and the setting in which I am looking for him. Pierre absent haunts this café and is the condition of its self-nihilating organization as ground.[232]

Sartre captures rather well the sense in which an absent person or thing is not simply statically gone, but rather *absences* in a verbal sense, withdraws from my searching glance. Yet this very absencing of the thing or person is itself in some way present for me, indeed, more

---

[231] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 150/115.
[232] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, tr. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956), pp. 40-42.

present than the other people around me, who in a different sense might be presumed to be 'really' present.[233]

Our ability to make sense of this phenomenon arises from thinking negation as privation, rather than as utter non-being. It is, in other words, the recognition that presence and absence (position and negation) are not simply binaries; things *presence* (in a verbal sense) in a way that is co-constituted by absence, and they *absence* in a manner co-constituted by presence.[234] For the moment, let us call this phenomenon the *interweaving of presence and absence*.[235]

It is in this sense of important or significant presence and absence that Heidegger often speaks of 'nearness' and 'distance.' Pierre can genuinely distance himself (absence) only through being already near (present) in my concern.[236] His merely physical remoteness from or proximity to me is not determinative, since I can be intentionally brought near him on the other side of the world in a thought, mood, or name, just as I can be distant from him when he is physically right next to me. Thus, no thing or person can be fully present ('just there') because full presence would have no sense, no import: things *are* by belonging to contexts, and this belonging can be articulated as an interweaving of presence and absence. Heidegger at a certain point calls this interweaving 'the juncture' (*die Fuge*),[237] and I shall borrow his name for it.

---

[233] 'Really' here means: if the structure of my attention is radically altered so that I experience the café in terms of a set of bodies – for example, if I wish to count them to ascertain compliance with fire code. Alternatively, if I have reason to suspect that the other patrons of the café (or some of them) are responsible for Pierre's absence (What have they done with him?!), they may present themselves (i.e., they may *presence*), but precisely on the ground of his absence.

[234] Recall the structure of *disorientation* as the betrayal proper to assuming in chapter 1, part II.

[235] Notice that, *pace* Sartre himself, this interweaving is not a dialectical oscillation.

[236] Cf. Heidegger, "Positionality," in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, p. 24, trans. mod./GA 79:25: "Everything that presences or absences bears the character of concern. Distance lies in concern. Concern lies in nearness." Cf. "What absences is also present, and, *as* absencing from it, presences in unconcealment" (Heidegger, "Anaximander's Saying," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trs. J. Young and K. Haynes [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002], p. 261/GA 5:347; hereafter, *OBT*).

[237] "What presences [*Das Anwesende*] is what stays awhile [*das je Weilige*]. The while [*Die Weile*] essences, as the transitional arrival, into departure [*Weggang*]. The while essences between coming hither and going away. The presencing [*das Anwesen*] of everything that stays awhile essences *between* this two-fold absencing [*Ab-wesen*: to essence away from]. […] This between is the juncture [or joint, joining: *die Fuge*] [. …] Presencing is, in both directions, enjoined into [*verfugt in*: disposed toward] absencing.

But the juncture is founded on a deeper phenomenon, one generalized from the phenomenal relation between figure and ground in perception. We might call it *constitutive concealment*. In order to *be* as a juncture of presence and absence, an entity must both find some *place* against a background structure of intelligibility (including non-reflective practices) *and* assert its sheer thatness, its singularity, by resisting this background in its own peculiar way. (If it resists entirely, it shows up as important but unintelligible.)

Sartre's example is helpful here, too, since it emphasizes the relation between Pierre and the context in which I expect him. Thus the other people and things in the café are given as obstructions or reminders, as possible Pierres or uninteresting non-Pierres, or as smaller groups of people among whom he might be found. They must (and do) recede in the face of Pierre's all-too-present absencing, concealing themselves in all their other possible significations in order to show up first as not-Pierre and then as the 'synthesized ground' of which Sartre speaks.[238] Nonetheless, there remains peculiarity even in their withdrawal from my attention – some people are more obstinately intrusive than others, some signify contexts more or less related to Pierre. This resistance (*self*-concealment) indicates both that it really is *their* other possible ways of showing up that are concealed here, not only my own inventions, and that those possibilities are not simply secret. Instead, in the very style of their concealment, these other significations show their distinctiveness as possibilities belonging to particular persons.

There are thus two sorts of concealment that constitute the thing as what it is: 1) the background structure of intelligibility that determines how things can show up for us (which

---

Presencing essences in such a juncture. […] The while essences in the juncture" (GA 5:354-5/*OBT* 267, my italics to convey German grammatical emphasis). Notice that the juncture is explicitly temporal here. For a beautiful reading of this joint or juncture as central to Heidegger's work, see David Nowell-Smith, "The Art of Fugue: Heidegger on Rhythm," *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* **2** (2012): 41-64, esp. pp. 44, 47, and 50.

[238] Lest the example be thought limited to sight, we could carry out very similar analyses for the other senses. The children's game "Marco Polo," taste-testing foods, or distinguishing perfumes might be fruitful examples.

Heidegger names 'world') must recede toward the horizon, appearing in the being of the thing as only the background upon which that thing emerges; 2) the entity's peculiar way of resisting this structure (which Heidegger names 'earth') must conceal the multiple other ways it could belong or fail to belong – the multiple other contexts in which it could be encountered. The struggle (*der Streit*) between world and earth is what allows something to be and makes it necessary that its being is marked by both presence and absence.

I find these two ontic phenomena helpful in understanding the ontological phenomena as Heidegger interprets them. Let me just indicate this with a last observation about Sartre's example: This present absencing of the expected friend – which may even be quite painful; let us say that he is leaving the country tomorrow, and this was my final opportunity to talk with him in person – is neither something in my head nor something only abstractly related to him, but a state of affairs that I genuinely *discover* (in the sense of *un-cover*, *entdecken*), one that emerges with some gradualness (perhaps more and more quickly as I grow frantic) from being covered over by the café's crowdedness. The matter of his absence is, in other words, *disclosed* (*erschlossen*) to me; it becomes *unconcealed* (*unverborgen*). Furthermore, the matter that is disclosed includes both the fact *that* Pierre is absent *and* the meaning (or unintelligibility) of that fact, since these two are not separable in the experience.[239] Thus the search for the friend displays ontically (i.e., at the level of entities) something like the juncture and the constitutive concealment that are at work in phenomenality itself, if we consider phenomenality itself as a phenomenon – as originary truth.

Let us now begin the analysis of unconcealment, guided by the question of what it would be like for one's originary holding oneself/being-held in the truth to be betrayed, and trying to understand it by transposing the two ontic phenomena just outlined into an ontological register.

---

[239] Even if I do not at first recognize what it means (indeed, I cannot recognize *all* that it means), his absence nevertheless concerns me *as* intelligible or not. There is no fact of the matter except against a meaningful context.

A) Truth and Falsity of Assertion

Truth has most often been philosophically understood in terms of the truth or falsity of assertions, so let us begin there.[240] We know in an everyday way what it is to be betrayed by an assertion: a claim turns out to be false. But what happens experientially, phenomenally, in this turning out to be false?

I say to my friend, 'There's a bear outside the tent!' What am I doing?[241] According to Heidegger,[242] I am pointing out a particular, now-salient feature of the situation in which my friend and I find ourselves. I do so by relying on our shared language and shared orientation to the circumstances (although one or both of us may have been asleep, we are now awake and not dreaming, inside a tent in an area natively inhabited by other animals, with some knowledge that bears are often wild and in various ways dangerous animals, etc.).[243] We could say that I am cognitively interpreting the otherwise pragmatic situation, restricting our view of it in order to

---

[240] Or statements, or propositions, or sentences… this aspect of the question about truth-bearers is not crucial to our investigation, since the truth-bearer in which we are ultimately interested is being-there itself.

[241] The usual analysis would go something like this: the statement has some propositional content (in addition to its illocutionary force) to the effect that there exists a bear with a certain extrinsic relational property, namely that of being currently located outside of our tent. We may ask whether this assertion is true. We would normally say that it is true iff there really is a bear within a reasonable range outside of the tent, assuming that the sentence is contextually appropriate and well-formed. (If I am dreaming and muttering in my sleep, the situation is a bit unclear. If neither I nor my friend understands English, the analysis will likewise meet some difficulties.)

According to many accounts of propositional truth, then, we may go on to ask *in virtue of what* this assertion is true, and the answer will be in terms of a certain relation (called 'correspondence') between my statement and the facts of the matter, or the state of affairs that includes bears and my tent. The difficulties of specifying this relation beforehand, so as to yield all and only the sentences we would normally wish to recognize as true, are well-rehearsed. But the intuition involved *seems* a fairly straightforward one: my sentence purports to represent a state of affairs in the world, and truth (or being-true) is a property of those sentences that accomplish this representing accurately. Such sentences, just in consequence of their possessing such a property, (mostly) do not mislead those who hear them.

Mark Wrathall has persuasively argued that Heidegger's disagreement begins, not with denying propositional truth, but by arguing against representational *theories* of propositional truth. For Heidegger, it is just wrong to think that there are three present-at-hand objects (speaker, sentence, and state of affairs) among which a relation would need to be defined. See Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, pp. 21-26, 47, and Wrathall, "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence," in *Heidegger Reexamined, Vol. 2*, eds. H. Dreyfus and M. Wrathall (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 1-20. See also Heidegger's own explicit (albeit not entirely clear) treatment of the question in GA 45/*Basic Questions*, especially §§12-13, 15, and 19-26.

[242] *BT* 196-199/154-157.

[243] Heidegger summarizes as follows: "asserting is 'pointing-out that communicates by giving something a determinate character' [*mitteilend bestimmende Aufzeigung*]" (*BT* 156/199, trans. mod.).

make it explicit according to a certain definite pattern, namely, as shaped by ursine nearness, which is either threatening or wondrous or both, depending on my tone.[244]

In making the assertion, then, I foreground one part of the whole situational context and make it central, bringing it up for predicative attention. This may aid our joint comportment toward the (pre-predicative but already meaningful) situation, or it may distract us; but it also means that my friend and I can now comport ourselves toward my claim itself. For example, we can ask whether my assertion is true, maybe by straining our ears and peering out carefully through the tent-flap (empiricism), or maybe by debating whether or not bears can live this high up in the mountains (rationalism). Regardless, in successfully asserting, I uncover as particularly salient (or disclose for conceptual thought) part of the structure of pre-predicative involvements (i.e., the situation) in which we live. I orient myself and my friend toward the the situation *as* something determinate.

Thus, the criterion of truth for my assertion will be to what extent my conceptualization of the pre-predicative situation is genuinely oriented by the situation it aims to highlight – i.e., whether or not my comportment has uncovered a bear outside the tent. We could call this 'the correspondence of my assertion to what really is,' or, following Mark Wrathall, "being successfully directed toward the world in a propositional attitude."[245] Heidegger designates it 'correctness' (*Richtigkeit*), since it is a question of orientation (*Richtung*) toward a matter (a situation or state of affairs): allowing the matter to accurately or correctly orient my speech. The truth of assertions is not originary truth, which is why it admits of a criterion at all, but at this level it *is* appropriate to say, for Heidegger, that the essence or measure of truth is correctness.

---

[244] My example uses an assertion of existence in order to emphasize that what is pointed out (*aufgezogen*) in asserting is a state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*), a predication or something determinately taken-as (*bestimmt*), rather than just an object (a variable). It would be simpler but less wide-reaching to take a more classical example of predication, e.g., 'Snow is white.'

[245] Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p. 12.

If that is what happens in asserting, then when my assertion fails to be true, there are two different kinds of thing that could be going on. It could be that I have just failed to *make* an assertion. My utterance does not have the ontological character of assertion, either because it does not point out (it fails to be *about* anything in the right way: e.g., 'One time I caught a fish *this big*,' when uttered evidently only to impress), or because it does not make the situation definite *as* something (commands, among other utterances, do not predicate, although they may point out: e.g., 'Look!'), or because it does not communicate (if the other person does not get what I intend, is not directed toward it in the way that I am, then communication fails: e.g., misunderstood sarcasm or insufficient language competence).

Alternatively, I may have made an assertion (conceptually disclosed a situation) but not done so in accordance with the situation as it really is. Then the claim is false. It really does uncover the situation in some way (otherwise it could not be either true or false), but it misdirects the hearer, whether purposely or by mistake. The pre-predicative situation does involve something that can sound like a bear's growl, but it is not a bear.

It is especially clear in the case of purposeful misdirection (lying) that *I must have some access to the situation other than what is given through my assertion*. This need not amount to conceptual knowledge; I need not be able to assert correctly in order to willfully assert what is incorrect. But it does require that what I am talking about be somehow available to me. Similarly, the experience of being lied to and recognizing it makes evident that I am involved with the situation in some way other than only through the liar's assertion.[246]

---

[246] There is a complication here that comes to light in trying to explain Heidegger's constellation of terms. Many assertions (perhaps most) are uttered in the mode of idle conversation (*Gerede*), conversation that does not do much work. (Cf. Wrathall, "Social Constraints on Conversational Content," ch. 5 in *Unconcealment*, for the translation and the explanation.) Such assertions can still be correct or incorrect (i.e., propositionally true or false), but only for someone who is sufficiently competent to meaningfully disclose the situation. Thus, I may claim that Fermat's last theorem remains unproved. I have been told this, and I do not really know what it means because I am not sufficiently conversant with mathematics. My claim, then, insofar as I make it, is neither true nor false. But insofar as someone with sufficient

Thus, in the "Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger says:

> Yet why should we not be satisfied with the essence of truth that has by now been familiar to us for centuries? Truth means today and has long meant the conformity of knowledge with the matter. However, the matter must show itself to be such if knowledge and the proposition that forms and expresses knowledge are to be able to conform to it; otherwise the matter cannot become binding on the proposition. How can the matter show itself if it cannot itself stand forth out of concealment, if it does not itself stand in the unconcealed? A proposition is true by conforming to the unconcealed, to what is true. Propositional truth is always, and always exclusively, this correctness.[247]

To allow the matter (*die Sache*) to orient my speech (or to fail to do so) requires already having meaningful access to that matter.[248] But we do not just *have* this independent access; we must both gain and maintain it. We must, in other words, cultivate a practice that allows the situation to open up for us. This is a kind of disclosure (*Erschliessung*) of the situation, a discovering (*Entdeckung*) or un-concealing (*Entbergung*) of the context within which an assertion fits, even though no such unconcealing can be complete. It is what allows different truth-values for the same sentence in light of changes in time, speaker, tone, place, and so forth.

To sum up: an assertion is propositionally true (= correct) when it verbally discloses a situation as that situation is in its unconcealment – when it lets itself be fully oriented by what it speaks about. An assertion is propositionally false (= incorrect) when it conceptually discloses a situation but *not* as that situation is in its unconcealment – when it leaves the situation (as it is in

---

competence hears it, it will be true or false. So while idle conversation involves assertion, it does not rest primarily on the *speaker's* prior disclosure of the situation; this means that it is only vaguely oriented toward that situation, except insofar as the situation is disclosed by the hearer. Cf. GA 65, §36.

 Oddly enough, speaking in the mode of idle conversation does not prevent me from attempting either to lie or to tell the truth. If I am clever, I can purposely speak only to those without the relevant competence, thus attempting to mislead (lying) *without saying anything either true or false*. The name for this is 'sophistry.'

[247] GA 5:38/*Basic Writings* 176-7.

[248] Cp. Donald Davidson, "True to the Facts," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 37: "The chief difficulty [for correspondence theories of truth] is in finding a notion of fact [i.e., state of affairs, matter at issue] that explains anything, that does not lapse, when spelled out, into the trivial or the empty." In the balance of the essay, Davidson argues that truth is a relation between sentences, speakers, and dates – a three-place predicate that would allow an analysis entirely (and only) from the third-person perspective.

its unconcealment) covered up while still in some manner uncovering it.[249] Thus, propositional truth *depends on* or is *referred in its essence to* unconcealment.

But because we have spent so much effort in the history of philosophy trying to say how truth is correctness, we have forgotten, according to Heidegger, to think about unconcealment. And as mentioned at the beginning of this section, such forgetting is not incidental to the essence of truth. There is a danger inherent in the way truth is (i.e., in its very being): the danger "that in the midst of all that is correct what is true (*das Wahre*) will withdraw."[250] But what is this 'what is true'? How could there still be correctness if what is true withdraws? What is unconcealment, and how do we experience it?

B) Excursus on Terminology

Here we open up a rather difficult problem. We are asking for the ontological ground that enables truth as correctness (and in the course of our analysis we will be pushed even beyond such a ground). We are, in other words, asking about the nature or the essence of truth, how something can be *as* true – its being-true (*Wahrsein*), in Heidegger's formulation.[251] Should we still refer to this deeper ground of correspondence truth as 'truth'? Although Heidegger thought differently about this at different points,[252] I think there are three good reasons to speak of

---

[249] Cp. the phenomenological dictum that being must show itself: just as perception may be deceived only within certain constraints (I may mistake a garden hose for a snake, but not for an elephant, because of the essential properties of the garden hose), so there are constraints placed on the content of a lie by the being of the situation. I cannot deceive by simply talking about something else (that is distraction, not deception). I must disclose the matter in what I say, but I can disclose it precisely in a way that mis-directs you toward it. Thus the lie of the serpent in Genesis 3 ("You will surely not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from [the tree] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil") relies on the tree's real relation to the knowledge of good and evil but conceals the character and consequences of this knowledge. It also trades on God's really being wise (again, concealing the nature of this knowledge), so that Eve can be directed toward the tree as "desirable to make one wise" (quotations from the New American Standard Bible).
[250] GA 7:27/*QCT* 26.
[251] *BT* 218/261.
[252] Cf. Heidegger's famous retraction in "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" (GA 14:76/*Basic Writings* 446-7).

unconcealment (*alētheia*) as truth, so long as we keep in mind that it does not mean propositional correctness.[253]

According to Heidegger, truth happens as history,[254] and we only have conceptual access to it by retrieving this history. This gives rise to my first two reasons.

1) *Alētheia* (unconcealment) named the broader, more fundamental phenomenon for the ancient Greeks, not simply correctness. This is especially important with regard to Aristotle, with whose work Heidegger's account is purposely contrasted. In the final chapter of *Metaphysics θ*, Aristotle differentiates the truth of speech from a (more originary) truth of being, which is a kind of intuitive contact or touch (*thigein*) by which we know essence (*ti esti*; *to ti ēn einai*). This latter kind of truth, the "most governing"[255] meaning of being (*to on*), does not admit of falsity – one either makes contact or not.[256] Heidegger, by contrast, precisely wants to admit the non-essence of truth (i.e., concealment, which is something more than either simple failure to make contact, since that would be my fault, or propositional falsity) into the essence of truth itself.[257]

   If, as explained earlier (section I.B), essence is taken verbally, as that which prevails in a phenomenon, in the light of which the phenomenon is primarily experienced, then discussion of the essence of truth must transcend propositional correctness toward the ground of our experience of it, while remaining a discussion of *truth*'s essencing, not of something *else* that would be a common property of particular truths (e.g., reference).

2) Again, in conversation with the Western European philosophical tradition, it makes a lot of sense to call being's self-showing 'truth,' and being's concealment or disguisedness

---

[253] For further discussion of the problem, along with an argument for taking unconcealment to mean 'truth' that is mostly unrelated to my reasons, cf. Wrathall's responses to Ernst Tugendhat (in "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence," *op. cit.*) and to Cristina Lafont and William Smith (who both defend Tugendhat) in the appendix to chapter 1 of *Unconcealment*. For a more thorough argument in favor of originary truth as genuinely *truth*, also in response to Tugendhat, see Daniel Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth*, chapter 5.

[254] " 'History,' grasped essentially, and that means thought from out of the essential ground [*Wesensgrund*] of being itself, is the transformation [*Wandel*] of the essence of truth." "History 'is' the transformation of the essence of truth." Heidegger, *Parmenides*, trs. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 54-55/GA 54:80. We should hear in this transformation (*Wandel*) a kind of wandering (*Wandern*) of what counts as truth, what standard enables propositional truth. See section I.B, above, and chapter 3, section II.B, for further discussion.

[255] Aristotle, *Metaphysics Θ*.10, 1051b1, reading *to de kuriōtata on* (most governing [sense of] being) with Jaeger, against Ross's rather arbitrary bracketing of *kuriōtata*.

[256] *Ibid.*, 1051b21-27. Cf. Heidegger's commentary on the passage, GA 45:97/*Basic Questions* 86, in which he calls this more basic meaning of truth an "unconcealing" (*Entbergen*) of what is. But Heidegger takes the concealment from out of which unconcealing draws what is, i.e., the ground of the unconcealedness of what is, to remain unthought for Aristotle (cf. §27).

[257] For an account that stresses the centrality of this move, see John Sallis, "Deformatives: Essentially Other Than Truth," in *Double Truth* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995). The only way to make Aristotle's account approach this would be to read the failure of contact as some kind of being led astray. See chapter 3 of Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth*, for a careful account of Heidegger's reinterpretation of Aristotle on truth.

'untruth' or 'falsity.' Heidegger's efforts from early on lie in the direction of finding the unified source from which both propositional truth and meaningfulness or significance arise. He later speaks of this attempt to overcome the fact/value divide in terms of *belonging* ('property', or, more literally, 'own-dom': *Eigentum*, like kingdom): In what way do things belong to us and we to them? Why can we own or disown the importance of something? In other words, how are we to understand what makes things matter to us, what makes us care so deeply about speaking correctly? From whence arises our will to truth? Karsten Harries has shown that this latter question arises at the heart of Heidegger's search for the meaning of being.[258]

But meaningfulness or significance is part of what I have been calling 'import,' which in turn is how Heidegger thinks being,[259] so holding together truth and meaning is part of what allows him to follow the tradition in holding together truth and being (although it is not just the same). For Heidegger, truth as unconcealment names a relation to the happening of import – i.e., to beyng (section I.B, above). Unconcealment is the 'there' of beyng, the place and moment (*Augenblickstätte*) at which it shows up.

Moreover, we have Heidegger's own pronouncement on the matter from 1958, published in "Hegel and the Greeks."

3) "If the essence of truth that straightaway comes to reign as correctness [*Richtigkeit*] and certainty [*Sicherheit*] can subsist only within the realm of unconcealment, then truth indeed has to do with *alētheia*, but not *alētheia* with truth."[260] I find this to be a helpful formulation. Heidegger wants to think an unconcealment that is not dependent upon propositional truth and metaphysical interpretations of being,[261] one that is more originary, as the element within which both (propositional) truth and (metaphysical) being take place. It seems to me that this way of understanding the matter easily survives his claim in 1964 that it is untenable to translate *alētheia* as 'truth.'[262]

For these reasons, I shall continue, following general practice, to refer to the phenomenological essence of truth as 'truth,' distinguishing it primarily from 'what is true,' and using 'correctness' or 'propositional truth' to refer to the truth of assertions.

---

[258] "In asking for criteria of a meaningful life, we raise a question of value; in asking for criteria of meaningful sentences [i.e., sentences that can be true or false], we raise a question of logic. Is this ambiguity simply a sign of an unfortunate lack of precision, or does it perhaps point out the way towards a more fundamental analysis which will enable us to escape from the bifurcation of fact and value, of logic and ethics, by exhibiting the common root of both in meaning?" Karsten Harries, "Martin Heidegger: The Search for Meaning," in *Existential Philosophers: Kierkegaard to Merleau-Ponty*, ed. G.A. Schrader (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 164.

[259] We could even, with Harries, understand import simply as 'meaning,' so long as we maintain its twofold character "of being a claim [i.e., mattering] and an essential structure." *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[260] GA 9:442/*Pathmarks* 334.

[261] Here he terms it "released from its reference to truth and being" (*Ibid.*), but of course this cannot mean that it is unrelated to them, only that it is not to be thought as dependent on them.

[262] For a clear account of the circumstances surrounding this famous retraction, see Christopher Nwodo, "Friedländer versus Heidegger: A-letheia Controversy," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* **10**.2 (May 1979): 84-93.

C) Truth as Unconcealment

But if we are now asking about truth as what makes correctness possible, we shall have to follow Heidegger's directive that being-true (ontologically) is unconcealing (*entbergen*, *alētheuein*, 'truth-ing'), i.e., being-uncovering (*Entdeckendsein*) in the sense of 'to be as uncovering.'[263] *Dasein*, 'being-there,' *is* as the one who un-covers: this way of being is what Heidegger names *freedom* (or 'being-available': *Freiheit*). His account of freedom forms a kind of hinge between two principle layers of unconcealment (at the level of entities and at the level of being). Since this is not easy to keep in order – what constitutes concealment at one level is precisely *un*concealment at another level – I shall first think through it in terms of a concrete example, then propose a more schematic account that attends to Heidegger's own terminology.[264]

If we are to unpack Heidegger's analysis through the concrete example of the bear outside the tent, we must attend to the concealment that is revealed at each level by failure (i.e., by a certain mode of betrayal). In this way it will become clear that these 'betrayals' are constitutive, included in the very structure of the truth phenomenon – in other words, that untruth belongs essentially to truth.

---

[263] *BT* 218/261.

[264] As a shorthand anticipation of the schematic version, we can draw on Wrathall's model of four "planks" in what he unhappily names Heidegger's "truth-platform" (*Unconcealment*, pp. 12-14). My account is heavily indebted to, though not simply a rehearsal of, Wrathall's admirably clear summary.

> Plank 1: propositional truth (correctness, *die Richtigkeit*)
> Plank 2: truth (uncoveredness, *das Entdeckendsein*) of what is
> Plank 3: truth (unconcealment, *die Unverborgenheit*) of the being of what is (*des Seins des Seienden*)
>> Subdivided into a) disclosure (*die Erschlossenheit*) of being-there and world, of what is as such or as a whole, and
>> b) truth of essence (*die Wahrheit des Seins /der Sinn des Seins*, in which what is gets carved up according to patterns of import that mark certain features as essential, others as impossible, etc.)
> Plank 4: truth as clearing (*die Lichtung*)

Heidegger speaks of unconcealing (*entbergen*, *die Entbergung*) in relation to all four of these at various times.

First: the truth of what is.

Entities (= what is [*das Seiende*]) are unconcealed when they fit within my world, becoming meaningfully available for my comportment (*Verhalten*) toward them. This takes place on the basis of a two-fold concealment: the covering-up of both their independence and my *a priori* patterns of involvement with them (i.e., the covering up of their being). This means that they conceal themselves by resisting my practical comportment (i.e., resisting my understanding), but they do so yieldingly, extending the promise of further intelligibility as they become more familiar to me within that comportment.

The noise outside my tent shows up for me *as* a bear growl (rather than merely as an unknown disturbing entity) on the basis of my previous practical experience with sleeping in the woods at night, camping in areas where bears live, occasionally chasing them off with rocks and noise, etc. My pre-thematic, learned competence, my sense of knowing my way around in this kind of situation, is the comportment that uncovers this entity (the bear's growl) as something definite, something that has a place in a more or less familiar set of references. It is also what allows me *verbally* to uncover this state of affairs as a meaningful one, i.e., to say, 'There's a bear outside the tent!' As we have noted, this assertion can then be true or false (= correct or incorrect), depending upon its agreement with the state of affairs made available through my comportment.[265]

Still, of course I *can* get it wrong – not only the statement, but also the prior uncovering (*Entdeckung*). My comportment can uncover the entity (the matter at hand) as something other than what it is. I cannot be completely wrong – there cannot fail to be any trace of the way of

---

[265] Cf. Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" (GA 9:186/*Pathmarks* 142): "The openness of comportment [*Verhalten*] as the inner condition of the possibility [*Ermöglichung*, enabling] of correctness is grounded in freedom."

being of the real entity in that as which I disclose it, or else my sanity comes into question[266] –

but I can of course mistake the groaning of a tree in the wind for the growling of a bear, even at a

pre-thematic level. Here it is clear that something normative is at stake in our pre-predicative

involvements, as well as in speech: if I run screaming from the tent when I hear what is really the

groaning of a tree, I have not made any assertions, and yet the disconnect between my meaningful

comportment and the situation will be clear to someone more experienced, for whom the sound is

evidently only a tree in the wind (and for whom it is also obvious that running away is among the

worst possible responses to the approach of a bear). The entity uncovered by the more-competent

comportment of such a person will be more fully discovered, i.e., not disguised (*verstellt*) as

something that it is not, even if never completely uncovered. The situation itself will make more

sense to my companion, who will experience the inappropriateness of my comportment (both my

situation-specific inexperience and the awkwardness of my current action) as *untrue* to the

situation – as failing to be oriented by the proper discovery.

Now, we have to ask what allows me to get it wrong. In other words, keeping in mind the

distinctions drawn in my previous chapter, we might cautiously ask: by what am I "betrayed"? I

am not completely incompetent in the situation; I did not mistake the singing of crickets or the lap

of water against the nearby shoreline for bear noises. But I also have much to learn, both about

uncovering situations that involve bears and about uncovering proper responses to such entities.

In other words, the state of affairs remains disguised (partially covered-over) for me because I do

not yet have the appropriate skills. I am only partially initiated into the practice of camping in

bear-country, so I can make a certain level of mistake – be deceived in certain ways – in

uncovering the entities involved in that practice.

---

[266] Cp. Wittgenstein on making mistakes. If I genuinely think that my hamburger is the square root of 3 (and am making neither a philosophical nor a mystical claim), then I do not even succeed at being mistaken – something much more serious is going on.

That I must learn implies that the ways of being, the varied import, of entities are not simply dependent on me. Heidegger's account is far from solipsism. Indeed, the independence of bears and their habits from my understanding of them was already painfully clear in my fright (if the bear were purely my positing, as in Idealism, it would not frighten me in the same way). But that independence becomes clear again in a different manner when I sheepishly return to the tent, out of breath from sprinting away. The situation is now evident to me as well: it is *not* one that includes a real bear.

We should notice something strange here. For an entity to show up meaningfully in my world, it must precisely resist that world, holding itself (on the one hand) somehow independent from my system of familiar references, without (on the other hand) being so foreign that I do not even notice it. This is what we spoke about earlier as the juncture between presence and absence.[267] What is it that allows entities to do both? How can I discover them as *both* independent (i.e., themselves) *and* meaningfully located within the field opened up by my comportment? In other words, what constitutes my exposure to them, the relation (*Verhältnis*) that enables all of my more particular conduct (*Verhalten*)?[268]

The hinge: freedom.[269]

Freedom is how Heidegger rethinks intentionality. What is can be free (importantly available) for me because I am free for (open to) it. But my freedom here is to be understood in an ontological sense; it does not consist in willing. It means that I am *not* free (in a more everyday sense) to close myself off. I do not choose to be open to the bear; in one way, I would much

---

[267] See the example from Sartre in the introduction to part II of the present chapter.
[268] "All comportment [*Verhalten*] is grounded in this bearing [or relationship, *Verhältnis*] and receives from it directedness toward beings and disclosure of them" (GA 9:194/*Pathmarks* 149). In such a relationship of openness, I have "already attuned all comportment" to a meaningful, more or less ordered world, i.e., "to what is as a whole" (GA 9:192/*Pathmarks* 147).
[269] "The essence of truth, [if truth is understood] as the correctness of a statement, is freedom" (GA 9:186/*Pathmarks* 142, italicization of the whole sentence removed).

rather not be open to it at all. Then there would be no possibility of my suffering from it. But since I am *already* ontologically open to it by being somehow attuned to it – perhaps in part by regretting that I do not have the expertise needed to be *more* open to it, more confident about what to do – I must then choose freely (in a more common or ethical sense of 'freedom') how to order my comportments, which claims on my attention and skills I will honor. For example, will I attend primarily to the bear, or instead to my verbal assertion about its presence? The bear is certainly given as much more urgently important, but I *can* comport myself toward it by trying to ignore it.

Again, ontological freedom does not consist in indifference, according to Heidegger.[270] It is not as if I become free for the bear (i.e., open to it) by ceasing to care about it or to care what it does. Nor do I become any more free by attempting to dictate its reality arbitrarily. Rather, I find myself engaged with, let into (*sicheinlassen auf*), the open region of the whole context. This being-invested is *freedom*, whose essence is what Heidegger calls ek-sistence, "exposure [*Aussetzung*] to the disclosedness [*Entborgenheit*] of what is as such."[271] It is in accord with this ontological exposure, with my being right out amongst things, that I am a sensitive body, an entity that can feel pain, rather than a subject irrecoverably distant from an objective world.[272] As that body, I can be ontically torn open precisely because I am (ontologically) already one who is open to other things. I *am* my body, I do not merely *have* a body, because I can bleed.

I may, on the *basis* of this ontological freedom that I am (i.e., the freedom of being-there, intentionality), try to let my ontic comportment be as open as it can be. I may (both metaphorically and literally) step back in the face of the bear in order to see what it will do, to let

---

[270] See his explanation of freedom as letting-be of what is (*Seinlassen vom Seienden*) (GA 9:188/*Pathmarks* 144).

[271] GA 9:188/*Pathmarks* 145. Cp. "[F]reedom is engagement in the disclosure of what is as such" (*Ibid.*).

[272] Cp. Andrew J. Mitchell, "Entering the World of Pain: Heidegger," *Telos* **150** (Spring 2010): 83-96. Cf. Heidegger, *The Event*, tr. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), p. 166/GA 71:194, where he understands "pain as the essence of the experience of being."

it show itself so that my responses (both pragmatic and assertoric) may be oriented by the way it is uncovered, and so that this uncovering itself may be appropriate to the situation (as given by my broader understanding of being).[273] This would be to attend to the things themselves, to let what is presencing (*das Anwesende*) go ahead and present itself, without "importing anything else in addition into it."[274]

But my particular comportment is only open to what is *by concealing* my background understanding of being. (This concealing of the role of such understanding is what Heidegger calls *errancy*.) Freedom can seem like nothingness, a lack or an emptiness (e.g., arbitrariness as non-determinism), precisely because it *does* in a way negate: it conceals the general patterning of import in favor of some *thing* that is thereby disclosed as important.[275] I am open to something (there is something that reaches me within an open region) only in that I temporarily forget the particular structure of that openness itself. Freedom is what allows me either to seek an open involvement with the things uncovered, or to forget that both their independence and my involvement are at work in unconcealment.[276]

It is by such a "forgetting" that I can become the measure or criterion of what is.[277] Instead of needing to learn about how to comport myself appropriately toward bears so as to be the site for their unconcealment *as* bears (in all their glory), I understand the bear in terms of the security of my life. Rather than abiding in exposure to what is, I try to persist through securing myself, ascertaining the optimal management of resources so as to convert the bear into yet

---

[273] "[E]ngagement [with the disclosedness of what is] withdraws [*entfaltet sich zu einem Zurücktreten*] in the face of what is in order that [the latter] might reveal itself with respect to what and how it is, and in order that [propositional] correspondence might take its standard from what is" (GA 9:188/*Pathmarks*, 144).

[274] See Heidegger's marginal note to the 1943 edition (GA 9:188/*Pathmarks* 144), "*nichts anderes dazu und dazwischen bringen*."

[275] GA 9:193ff/*Pathmarks* 148ff.

[276] We will shortly come across one more level of constitutive concealment: that I am thrown into this particular background understanding, that it does not originate with me, must remain in concealment if any entity at all is to be disclosed as a distinct thing, having genuinely essential properties.

[277] GA 9:195-6/*Pathmarks* 149-50.

122

another resource. Here it is the truth of essence that is concealed: I think the bear needs *converting* into a resource ('Why don't the park rangers *do* something about this?'), without realizing that my background understanding of being has already allowed the bear to appear primarily in that light, as 'not yet a resource' or as 'hazardous to my resources.'

Second: the truth of essence.

Heidegger maintains that I am always *disposed* (*gestimmt*) in some way or other. This is in part the pre-cognitive mode (literally: mood, *Stimmung*) in which *things* are given to me as mattering, even if they are as-yet unintelligible; it is also in part the basic cognitive structure by which I understand *certain ways of being* as obviously definitive or essential (i.e., as mattering most). Thus, my possibilities of comportment – the structures within which what is can be uncovered for me – are themselves unconcealed through my fundamental disposition (*Grundstimmung*). These ways of being are taken to be most important and thereby set the parameters within which I can experience the import of what is (i.e., that it matters and what it could mean). This takes place on the basis of a second two-fold concealment: the tendency to attend primarily to *what* is unconcealed covers up the process of and constraints upon unconcealing itself, and the disposition to take certain ways of being as essential covers up other possibilities of comportment, other patterns of essentiality.

So as to remain in line with Heidegger's portrayal of the contemporary understanding of being (as positionality, *das Ge-Stell*),[278] let me caricature the example a bit. I encounter the bear, or perhaps what I mistake for a bear, as a kind of unwanted and maybe unwarranted (but nonetheless in some way planned-for) interruption in the construction of my wilderness vacation. My camping trip is carefully organized to yield maximum relaxation and experience of natural beauty within the confines of a long weekend. I encounter it as a rejuvenating break, allowing me

---

[278] See chapter 3, section III.A, below, for an account of *das Ge-Stell*.

to return to work re-energized. In addition to taking out a permit for hiking, picking out an already cleared campsite in an approved area, and finding out whether the use of fire is permitted in pre-constructed fire rings or only in portable camp stoves, I have planned for bears as a certain kind of calculated risk, against which I am carrying along barrels specially designed and mass-produced for the stashing of food in bear-country. The bear does not show up for me as potential food, as I carry no weapon and have brought with me pre-made, freeze-dried meals. Nor do I experience myself primarily as potential food for the bear – although what fear I do have of being eaten is not due to having some great work in life that would be cut short or to letting down something much greater than I, but only to a kind of offense at *my* life being cut off. If anything, the bear shows up as something I must restrain myself from feeding (according to various posted placards), either voluntarily or involuntarily, from out of my own stock of supplies.[279]

Let us say that there really is a bear in this scenario, and that it in fact succeeds at making off with some of my food. I am outraged, but this, too, is according to certain patterns. Given my background understanding of being, the situation does not show up as a personal struggle between the bear and me;[280] nor is it just one more movement of fate, to be accepted like all others. Rather, it is more centrally an inexcusable interruption of order – nature ought not interfere with my enjoyment of it! Once I am over the fright, the bear shows up in my reflective thought not as a potential oracle or source of clothing ('I let it get away!'), but as a kind of troublesome intrusion driven by instinct ('It got away *with my stuff!*'). His raiding of innocent campers appears as the effect of a set of determinable causes (too many people in the wilderness, some of whom intentionally feed the wildlife and some of whom spoil bears' natural food sources

---

[279] As will become clear below, these ways of encountering the bear are neither simply false nor simply projections. *In context*, the bear really is something I should not feed. Heidegger's point is a) that there is a lot of context going into letting this count as one of the most important real features of the bear, and b) that it is a *constitutively* limited view – so we can adopt new perspectives and compare them, but we can never have a whole story in which all the real features of the situation are equally compelling, since some things must always appear as more important.
[280] Cp. William Faulkner's "The Bear" in *Go Down, Moses*.

by sport fishing, etc.). All of this is shaped, if Heidegger is right about our current understanding of being, by the horizon of orderability.

The resulting situation, too, is a question of exchangeability, and shows up as a problem to be solved (rather than, say, an opportunity for a religious experience). How do I obtain supplies basically like the ones I just had? Do I have enough food to carry on with my planned excursion? Or will I need to return early? Other means of procuring food, either hunting or gathering, probably do not occur to me. Why not? Not only because I am not good at or equipped for either activity (unless I have brought along a fishing pole), although this is true, but in the first place because food comes from grocery stores. My life (along with that of most others in my world) is structured so that hunting and gathering are leisure activities for the privilege of which we pay money earned through jobholding. They are not themselves primarily functional activities for me, which leaves me more or less unprepared to survive through them. Experiencing them as the primary work of daily life is something I could read about or hear stories about from other parts of the globe (or other strata of society), but I cannot live it as my reality. Survival through hunting and gathering is somehow closed off as an existential possibility *for me*.

Third: the clearing for self-concealing.

To see the positive character of this concealment of certain ways of life as existential possibilities, we have to recognize that what Heidegger calls the *clearing* is not a "gallery of possibilities," in the sense of an art gallery that would keep "different determinate ways of being in the world locked in the back room, while exhibiting one at a time."[281] This is because there could be no possibility-space that encompassed many different clearings *as clearings*, i.e., as what opens the import of the world (i.e., being, which is itself the very horizon of possibility). The only way I can encounter different clearings is historically, and that means in their

---

[281] Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p. 34.

withdrawal from my own clearing – as *not* making compelling sense but feeling like maybe they should.[282] To put it another way, *existential* possibilities, unlike logical possibilities, cannot be laid one beside the other, since they are potential ways of being exposed to things; living through any one of them changes the structure within which all the others show up.

This limitation also arises in the phenomenon's mode of availability for thinking. Although I can in some ways experience a shifting of, or a difference between, various dispositions to what-is as a whole, if I try to attend to what governs this shift, I am quickly in very deep water without a stable place (such as my comportment to the bear's growl) from which to examine. Let me try to say why.

First of all, even though whatever entities I uncover (bear growls, toothbrushes, a mother's love, or the revolt of the proletariat) show up for me in terms of the prevailing understanding of being – the ways of being that I, situated in a certain community belonging to a certain period of history, am disposed to regard as essential – nevertheless this 'in terms of' does not wholly determine the valence of that uncovering. It may be that what is shows up in a negative mode, like a jammed nail gun in the midst of a building project. When things show up this way, it provokes questioning: 'What is wrong with this thing?' Or, in various contexts of failure: 'Why does love so stubbornly refuse to be a good resource?' 'Why does evil seem like it both is and yet cannot be a creation of God?' 'Why are we not yet thinking?'[283]

Second, in reflecting on my experience of the bear in conversation with others who are either culturally or historiologically remote from me,[284] I may catch some glimpse of the

---

[282] I do not have time to address it here, but art can do a lot of work toward granting us a kind of problematic receptivity to the claims of other clearings, precisely because the artwork opens up and holds open a world to which I may not belong.

[283] These three questions are some of those that arise repeatedly at the limits of various clearings. They mark central weak points for, respectively, the contemporary Western clearing, the medieval theistic clearing, and Heidegger's futural or event-oriented clearing.

[284] Hence the impulse to refer to other, chronologically contemporary peoples in historiological terms, i.e., as 'primitives' or 'pre-modern,' 'pre-industrial,' etc. Even here, we cannot grasp a broader possibility-

constitutive concealment at work in the clearing, but this will only show up as a kind of curiously obtrusive absence (an absenc*ing*). The bear is not a god for me, nor is it the judgment of the gods or of the fates upon me karmically, nor do I feel myself secure in my immortal soul against whatever it may do to my body. Here it becomes evident that groups to which I do not belong inhabit very different fundamental attunements to what is and hence experience different features of the (partially shared) world as mattering most (i.e., as essential). Indeed, this is an experience *of* my not belonging to these groups, an encounter with the difference between us. While I can recognize these other positions abstractly and try to feel their pull, they will not shape my primary attunement, the most compelling way in which I encounter the bear, unless I undergo a complicated conversion of my way of life.[285] I can choose to see from different perspectives, but that does not mean I can inhabit them at will. Instead, my very access to other perspectives is opened by my own fundamental attunement to the independent entities that we share.

Third, if what counts as the being of what is changes over the course of history,[286] then not only may I realize, in a genuine conversation with writers from the past, that there have been other basic ways of understanding being (though I may be unable to inhabit them), it might also happen that I live amidst the shift between epochs. This would mean not that I would have a kind of pluralized basic disposition (*Grundstimmung*), but that I would experience the distress of the difference between two such dispositions, find myself adrift more often in deep water. I would feel somehow untimely, out of joint – disoriented.

That experience, which is also available within the phenomenological step back, according to Heidegger, would be akin to how one discovers the different basic tones

---

space, except negatively – the concession that 'there are many right ways' to do something, varying across cultures, does not remove their strangeness and lack of pull on me; it only signifies abstractly that 'my way is not exclusively right.'

[285] Not even all of these are open to me. I as Western European cannot simply *convert* to an ancient First Nations way of experiencing the world.

[286] If, indeed, this *is* the unfolding course of history (*die Geschichte*) as the differences between destined basic dispositions (*die Geschicke*)…

(*Grundtöne*) governing the stanzas of one of Friedrich Hölderlin's poems. These tones shape their respective stanzas, but are experienced as such only in the movement from one stanza to another (hence, in the shift of tones), which is also the only way to identify them rightly, since they follow certain patterns of change but are only inadequately determined *within* any given stanza. Put in terms of unconcealment, the discovery of this shift would be an experience of the clearing as such, of the opening up of one understanding of being *rather than* another – i.e., of the clearing for concealment.

This may sound as if a magician is opening a door to one room by closing a door into another, or stashing a rabbit in one hat so as to leave another hat empty, but that would be right only if the clearing itself, the particular configurations of being, and the self-concealing were precisely entities, like hidden rabbits and empty hats. On Heidegger's account, this would be to think metaphysically, to assume that there is one realm of beings (bears growling and proletarian revolts) grounded by or referred to another realm of super-beings (clearings, senders of being, and something hidden that we never quite get to see).[287]

If, instead, we try to think away from rabbits and hats, and even to think unconcealment away from *what* is unconcealed in its unconcealedness (by analogy with what is in its beingness), we encounter the two-fold or internally conflictual (*innig-strittige*) essence of the unitary phenomenon of unconcealment. That is, every unconcealing necessarily involves (and indeed stems from) a concealing.

---

[287] The justification for this metaphysical way of thinking, which Heidegger thinks is a mistake but far from a stupid one (or even one that we can simply leave behind), is the assumption that everything either is or is not. If it is, it's a being (i.e., a thing that is); if it isn't, it's a nonbeing. Heidegger thinks this fails to express our experience, so he tries to organize some other options: some entities exist (*ek-sist*: in the sense of being intentionally directed toward or exposed to other beings), while most entities do not, strictly speaking, exist. Some 'things' essence (*wesen*) and can be said neither to be a being nor to be (or not be) a nonbeing. Even the term 'nothing' is ambiguous: not being a thing (i.e., a no-thing) differs essentially from empty nothingness. This is not a word-game but an attempt to think in a way faithful to experience. See Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" tr. D.F. Krell, in *Pathmarks*, pp. 82-96.

We should try to make sense of this in terms of the clearing. If we ask who or what decides which basic disposition will prevail, who or what governs the history of being, we are left with no answer other than 'it takes place' so (*es ereignet sich*). But properly considered, according to Heidegger, this answer is neither a problem of limited knowledge nor even a merely negative phenomenon (as it inevitably seems when we try to move toward it starting from truth as correctness).

It is not a problem of limited knowledge because there is not some hidden *thing* that we are lacking.[288] We might think that we are only failing, constitutively or accidentally, to know the real author or maker of the history of being – the magician who directs the changes of basic disposition. But Heidegger thinks that this history shows itself as the kind of thing that is neither written nor made at all. In other words, the internal strife of unconcealment is not an incompleteness of human knowledge, although this is evidently incomplete. Truth would not lose its two-fold character even if in principle knowledge could be arranged like a set of objects, all of which we could someday possess.[289]

But Heidegger claims more than that. *Lēthē*, the concealment inherent in and constitutive for all unconcealment, is not even the negative side of the phenomenon. (Recall Heidegger's consistent emphasis that *a-lētheia* is a privation of more originary *lēthē*.) It is the non-essence (*das Unwesen*) of truth, the un-truth, but it is not falsity. Rather, it is a kind of rethinking of Aristotelian potency (*dunamis*), something other than current actuality (*energeia*) that is also not simply lack (*sterēsis*), a positive condition that enables (*ermöglicht*) freedom (in the sense of

---

[288] "The concealment of beings as a whole does not first show up subsequently as a consequence of the fact that knowledge of beings is always fragmentary" (GA 9:193/*Pathmarks* 148). "*[N]egativity* belongs intrinsically to truth, by no means as a sheer lack but as resistance[…]" (GA 65:356/*Contributions* 281, trans. mod.).

[289] This is what some pragmatist, Idealist, and coherence theories of truth seem to imply.

openness to what is).[290] As that which first makes possible any comportment to what is, it could be called an ontologization of Nietzsche's sense of forgetting as necessary for health.[291] For it is the clearing away of other possible understandings of being so as to grant a space for one such understanding to prevail; thus, that clearing away (the non-essence) is essential to any unconcealing (the truth). As Heidegger dramatically puts it, "truth, in its essence, is un-truth."[292]

By now, it should be clearer how Heidegger's account of truth relies on the two phenomena with which I began this part of the chapter. The juncture, or the interweaving of presence and absence into presenc*ing* and absenc*ing*, governs the way that Heidegger thinks of freedom as openness (exposure). Similarly, his attention to betrayal as one part of a unified phenomenon relies on constitutive concealment, in which "the unconcealment of what is, the brightness granted it, darkens the light of being."[293] But in order to see this a bit more directly, let me turn from my description in terms of an example to a more terminologically careful (and hence more schematic) version of the same account.

First of all and most of the time, we are caught up in the particular things that are. These entities (i.e., situations, the facts of the matter, states of affairs, beings, what is = *das Seiende*) show up as meaningful items, things with a certain importance, within our comportment, whether that comportment be theoretical or practical. It is a certain kind of involvement with (i.e., openness to) the matter at hand that accomplishes this unconcealment of particular entities: hard-won experience with this type of situation and conversance with the contexts in which it belongs.

---

[290] Heidegger speaks of concealment or untruth as what is most proper (*das Eigenste*) to truth (GA 9:193/*Pathmarks* 148). *Die Eignung* ('appropriateness') and its cognates serve as Heidegger's translation for *dunamis*, explicitly preferred over *das Vermögen* ('capacity'); cp. "On the Essence and Concept of *Phusis* in Aristotle's *Physics β.1*," *Pathmarks*, 211, 214, 218ff/GA 9:277, 280-1, 285ff.
[291] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 2nd essay, §1.
[292] GA 5:41/*Basic Writings* 179.
[293] GA 5:337/*OBT* 253.

Even so, it is never a complete nor an infallible unconcealment; we often fail to uncover what is in a manner that is appropriate to it or to our projects.

Such *failure* shows a concealing (absencing) at work in the unconcealment (the truth or presencing) of what is. And this concealing turns out to be constitutive of the unconcealment. Although what is cannot show up as such (i.e., in its being) without being-there (*Dasein*), it must nevertheless be independent of being-there.[294] That independence – what I called earlier (at the beginning of part II) 'self-concealing' or 'earth' – shows itself whenever what is fails to be meaningfully available for me in the right way. Initially, I encounter it as a certain manner of resistance to my context of meaningful involvements (my comportment), as well as a certain weight or wear on my lived body, and this resistance never goes away. Thinking ontologically, we can say that the thing captivates (*berückt*) and transports (*entrückt*) me (i.e., alters originary spatiality and temporality for me), precisely inasmuch as it is, properly speaking, a *thing* (*Ding*) to which I am exposed: a place that conditions (*be-dingt*) me by gathering temporality and spatiality.[295] Thinking ontically, we may point out that the thing requires a certain amount of energy and attention to engage with it, making certain demands on my body and my thinking.

Thus, I can only understand things or situations by becoming familiar with them (learning), locating them within my world of referential meanings and coming to know my way around them, but that process is constitutively incomplete. Things in their independence are only uncovered through the strife (*der Streit*), the competition, of earth and world: my world of given meanings encounters the sheer thatness, the resistance to intelligibility, of what is. Were this not

---

[294] Heidegger says at various points that what is (*das Seiende*) would still somehow *hang around* without being-there (*Dasein*), although being (*Sein*) would not, so what-is would not, strictly speaking, *be*. See, for example, *BT* §43, esp. 212/255; *BT* 183/228, 230/272-3; "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?'" (GA 9:306/*Pathmarks* 233). See also Heidegger's discussions of the being-less (*das Sein-lose*) and the nothing-less (*das Nichts-lose*), what-is as it would 'be' independent of being, in GA 70.

[295] See Heidegger, "TheThing," in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*/GA 79, on things as places that condition and gather, as well as Andrew J. Mitchell, *Heidegger Among the Sculptors* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2010), pp. 74-77, and Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), esp. chs. 4-5, for commentary. On originary time and space (i.e., transport/ecstasy and captivation, respectively), see *Contributions to Philosophy*, as well as Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, pp. 180-192.

the case, there would be no friction; meaning could get no traction on the things. For example: we familiarize ourselves with individual entities by referring them to types, locating them within common patterns, but the excess of what is means that it does not fit neatly within them. This is the condition for entities that have been freed through particular comportments still to show up as what they are not, to remain covered over.[296]

That constitutive concealing, the resistance of what is to the opening that we are, lets what could be called the hinge of Heidegger's analysis, especially in "On the Essence of Truth," come into view: freedom. This has two senses – both of which differ from the usual concept of freedom as a property of a subject – and the ambiguity is what allows it to be a hinge upon which the analysis (and being-there itself) turns.[297]

In the first and ontological sense, freedom is a structured and engaged openness, a certain receptivity that requires a coherence and stability of world, which allows me to involve myself in comportment. Heidegger calls freedom in this sense the essence of propositional truth. This engaged openness is an openness to what is there, but also necessarily one that is engaged with the open region as such. John Sallis expands this formulation by reading the first (1930) version of "On the Essence of Truth" along with the later one (1943). The comportment involved in making a true assertion, Sallis explains (following Heidegger), is twofold: it must reveal things as they are, make them manifest (*Offenbaren*), and it must be bound by those things, let them be binding on its assertion (*Verbindlich-sein-lassen*). The first fold involves presenting things by setting them within the open region (*das Offene*) of my comportment; the second involves

---

[296] Polt emphasizes the *excess* of what-is in "Meaning, Excess, and Event" (*Gatherings* **1** (2011): 26-53); Wrathall emphasizes its *independence* in *Heidegger and Unconcealment*, pp. 24-25. (Cp. Wrathall, "Unconcealment," in *A Companion to Heidegger* [Blackwell, 2005], p. 350: "The question of the disclosure of being or essences is the question of how there can come to be modes of being or essences which are independent of us in the right sort of way." This is cut from the version of the essay reprinted in *Heidegger and Unconcealment*.)

[297] "Yet turning toward [what is most readily available] and away from [the mystery of unconcealing] is based on a peculiar turning to and fro proper to being-there" ("On the Essence of Truth," GA 9:196/*Pathmarks* 150).

maintaining a pre-given directedness toward the things that lets them be presented as they really are. "Thus, the openness of comportment requires a certain *engagement* in the open region and a certain *openness* to what is opened up there, namely, to the beings to which speech would submit. Such engaged openness is to be called: *freedom*."[298]

This first sense of freedom is thus oriented by and toward what-is as a whole (*das Seiende im Ganzen*, which is the open region), but since what is can only be unconcealed particularly, by particular comportments, unconcealing entities requires forgetting, turning away from, the structuring coherence of that whole. We could hardly feel the urgent pull of some particular situation if we were always attentive to the structure that allows us to experience situations as urgent. 'Errancy' (*die Irre*, or *Irrtum*), a sort of wandering or adventuring among what is, is the name Heidegger gives to this tendency to take what is as just obviously available, open on its own, rather than as having been opened up through our disposed involvement. In this necessary erring, being is disguised (*verstellt*) as reducible to what is – things wear their being on their sleeves, as it were – so it is just this errant way of assuming that finds itself betrayed when what is *resists* uncovering. The resistance *per se* is not the problem; rather, that resistance makes possible the realization that it is our freedom that first opens up what is. And errancy, finding itself referred back to its own cleared freedom, discovers that being must be something irreducible to what is.[299] This presents being-there with a call, a demand for response.

---

[298] Sallis, *Double Truth*, pp. 93-4, original italics.
[299] "The inordinate forgetfulness of humanity persists [… and] this persistence has its unwitting support in that *relationship* [*Verhältnis*] by which being-there not only ek-sists [i.e., opens up what is meaningfully] but also at the same time *in-sists*, i.e., holds fast to what is offered by what is as if it were open of and in itself. […] Errancy is the free space for that turning in which in-sistent ek-sistence adroitly forgets and mistakes itself constantly anew" (GA 9:196-7/*Pathmarks* 150, trans. mod., original italics).

"This erring itself is the clearing (openness – truth) of beyng. Errancy does not set itself against the truth; errancy is not sublated [*aufgehoben*] and made to vanish by the truth. Rather, errancy is the appearing [or the manifestation, *das Erscheinen*] of the truth itself in its own essence. Errancy: in which the prevailing [*jeweilige*] interpretation of beyng must wander [*sich verirren*], but which wandering alone thoroughly measures [*durchmißt*: stretches through as a diameter] the clearing of refusal in a truthful manner [*wahrhaft*], i.e., according to the clearing of what is cleared" (*Besinnung*, GA 66:259, my translation).

In the second sense, then, freedom is a name for authenticity, which would be less like the essence of truth than like truthfulness, responding appropriately to the freedom that is the essence of truth. It means explicitly belonging to the open realm, *dwelling thoughtfully* in the truth by being attentive to the structure that mysteriously lets us be involved in opening up what is. This sense of freedom is closer to the traditional concept, but Heidegger wants to mark it specifically as an active response to finding myself already thrown into a clearing. He puts it this way in "The Question Concerning Technology":

> The unconcealment of what is always goes upon a [peculiar] way of revealing. The destining [*Geschick*: i.e., the given structure in which one just finds oneself] of revealing always pervades humanity. But that destining is never a fate [*Verhängnis*] that compels. For the human being becomes truly free [*frei*: open or available] insofar as he belongs [*gehört*] to the *realm* of destining [i.e., to beyng] and so becomes one who listens [*ein Hörender*], not only one constrained to obey [*ein Höriger*]. […] Freedom is what conceals in a way that clears [*das lichtend Verbergende*], in whose clearing [*Lichtung*] shimmers that veil which veils the essencing [*Wesen*] of all truth and lets the veil appear *as* what veils.[300]

Freedom in its second and fullest sense, then, involves abiding within a certain tension or in relation to a certain mystery: namely, that precisely a *concealing* is what opens up, even though it is not a concealing of some definite things to which we could in principle have access. Such freedom requires letting the "veil" that covers over other possible essences of things appear *as a veil*, which means recognizing that removal of the veil makes no sense here. By contrast, any attempt to avoid concealment, to reach absolute transparency by removing the veil, necessarily ends up in a blind reductionism, since it must take all clearings as fundamentally reducible to its own.[301] In this sense, freedom lies in recognizing the peculiarity of one's own structured openness – the fact that the clearing belongs to me, historically, and not only I to it – without demanding some further criterion that would guarantee this structure of openness as the only objectively right one. But this same freedom also calls for me to own up to my responsibility for the blindspots in my own openness.

---

[300] GA 7:25-6/*QCT* 25; emphasis added and trans. mod.
[301] Cf. the discussion of danger, and especially of the leveling-down of all modes of disclosure, in chapter 3, section III.A.

Since freedom in the first sense is oriented by and toward (*sich richtet auf*) what-is as a whole, and this (precisely as forgotten or concealed) is required for the unconcealing of particular entities, there is always the possibility of turning (*kehren*) back toward the structuring that first opens up what-is as a whole. This structuring, the patterns of import that allow what is to matter in certain ways and not others, is the being(ness) of what is. In the distress of what I have been calling *disorientation*, when the structures we had assumed come into question (when the world performs a transcendental reduction on itself, as it were), we can step back from our fascination with particular entities and recognize that what is only shows up (in its intelligibility *and* in its independent resistance to intelligibility) on the basis of a grounding disposition (*Grundstimmung*). That structuring disposition is a coherent way of being moved by what is, allowing things to matter relative to one another. It is a particular attunement (*Stimmung*) to essences: we always already encounter certain ways of being as definitive, as mattering the most. Our understanding of being, in other words, requires a determinate patterning (*Bestimmung*).[302]

We might think that we had reached firm ground here. But precisely the determinacy of a given understanding of being, precisely the structuring that allows for unconcealment, means that it, too, can be betrayed. The specificity is historical; what shows up as essential for the ancient Greeks or the early Christians was not the same as for the medieval Europeans, nor as for the modern Europeans, nor as for us in the 21st century. The unified *meaning* (or truth) of being (*der Sinn des Seins*) is multiple and unfolds historically.[303] This does not mean, for Heidegger, that there is some entity, being, which shows itself in different ways; being is neither an object that presents various features at various times, some of which are more essential than others, nor an

---

[302] Cf. Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, pp. 31-34, and my further discussion in chapter 3, section II.A, below.

[303] Meaning and truth are not usually the same, even for Heidegger, since truth includes a sense of belonging, and since the unconcealing of something may not be the same as the *Dasein*-projected horizon that gives its sense. But the answer to Heidegger's initial question about the meaning specifically of *being* – by which he meant the unity of the various ways in which being is said – turns out to be the same as the answer to his later question about the truth of being. See the "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'" GA 9:377/*Pathmarks* 286.

essence that lies always beyond a series of illusory appearances. Being, Heidegger says, *is* not, but rather essences (*west*), unfolds essentially in the way a phenomenon does. The phenomenality of being (which, as we have seen, he calls *beyng*), being's appearing or givenness, which itself structures the unconcealment of what is, essences as an interiorly structured happening irreducible to any of its moments (i.e., it is unified), but not as some *thing* over and above those moments. Beyng 'is' its appearing-as-concealed (being), and every appearance is constituted by reference to (against the background of) the whole series, but no single appearance is or could be sufficient to present the whole all at once. Being itself (= beyng) cannot be fully unconcealed; full presence is denied (*versagt*) when it comes to beyng's truth.

We could say, then, that our sense of the stability and inherent rightness of our basic disposition toward essences – i.e., our confidence in the unconcealment (the truth) of essence – is constitutively betrayed. It is not the sort of thing that admits of ground (i.e., an external criterion) because it is itself the ground, and yet it happens historically. It changes, yet without an 'it' (something underlying) there to change.

This negative or dark moment of the phenomenon is what Heidegger calls the mystery (*das Geheimnis*), the finitude of being (*die Endlichkeit des Seins*), and being's abandonment (*die Seinsverlassenheit*). It is the clearing (*die Lichtung*) as a clearing-away (*lichten*) of all other possible understandings of being, in order to let what is show up according to a determinate pattern. Since what is cannot show up except according to some determinate pattern or other, it is also the event (*das Ereignis*) that appropriates being to being-there and vice versa. As the full thinking of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), it is unconcealment (*Alētheia*) thought originarily (*ursprünglich*), the clearing that gets its peculiar shape – its proper openness – precisely from concealing (*das lichtende Sichverbergen*). It cannot itself be unconcealed in terms of some other movement – it has no essence but itself – yet it can be experienced in the way that Pierre's absence can be experienced: as a withdrawal.

Tom Sheehan puts it this way: "We do have a relation to the intrinsic non-disclosure of mind [his term for the unity of being and thinking], but that relation is between our ever-possible *im*possibility of minding things (*Sein zum Tode* [being toward death]) and mind's *im*possibility of being disclosed, i.e., its intrinsic *Verbergung* [concealment]."[304] That is to say, our finitude is not only the fact that *we* will die but the finitude of being (i.e., import) itself, which not only will "die" with the human race but changes across human history, without appeal to any external anchor. There is something about ourselves that we ineluctably cannot get behind or determine (our thrownness as mortality), but this is not simply a failing on our part – it is, rather, the cost of the world's being-opened for us, our being-invested in it, which takes place according to some determinate structure that we likewise cannot get behind or determine (our thrownness as the site for being).

Such, then, is the schematic version of the account. We can track it quite precisely through the text. Heidegger mentions at a certain point in "On the Essence of Truth" that he is no longer speaking of essence "in the sense of what is general (*koinon*, *genos*), its *possibilitas* and the ground of its possibility."[305] We can line up these three levels with Heidegger's own progressively deepening analysis in the essay: the general account of truth is adequation or correctness (section 1); the possibility of or what enables (*ermöglicht*) adequation is open comportment that gives a standard for correctness (section 2); the ground of this enabling, the transcendental condition of possibility, is freedom (section 3). But freedom is ek-sistence, being exposed to what is, and this means exposure also to untruth, which must bear some essential relation to the truth (section 4). This untruth (concealment) turns out to be the other side of a unified phenomenon (section 5). But now if we attend to freedom as exposure from the side of

---

[304] Thomas Sheehan, "Facticity and *Ereignis*," in *Interpreting Heidegger*, ed. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 42-68. Quotation from p. 58, original italics.
[305] GA 9:194/*Pathmarks* 148.

concealment (which requires a *leap*), we realize that *un*concealment is the privative side of the phenomenon (sections 6-8). Asking after the essence of truth has thus run us up against the truth of essence, of being (in Heidegger's 'Note'), and we realize that "sheltering that clears" (*das lichtende Bergen*, 'the truth of essence') "lets unfold essentially" (*läßt wesen*, 'is' in a transitive sense) "the correspondence between knowledge and what is" (*die Übereinstimmung*, 'the essence of truth').[306]

Most simply: the freedom into which we are thrown opens up the truth of what-is on condition that being-there's own dispositional relation to the truth of being (i.e., of essences) remain concealed. Indeed, being disposed in some particular way just is such a concealment. That truth of being, in turn, is not quite originary, but rather rests in the clearing that specifies (and thus unconceals) it precisely by closing off other options, i.e., by concealing the historical character and particularity of its own essencing (i.e., by concealing itself). Originary truth, for Heidegger, is the clearing of or for self-concealment.

III. Conclusion: On Investment

Let us return to Heidegger's discussion (in the *Contributions*; see section I.C above) of unconcealment as holding oneself in the truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*) and, more specifically, as the event (*das Ereignis*) of clearing or the happening (*das Geschehen*) of truth that is the most important part of chronological history. We can now see that abiding or being-held in the truth is a kind of freedom (as two-fold openness) and that in Heidegger's thinking it inclines toward what we have designated as a second, more ethical sense of freedom – one which Heidegger elsewhere says "fulfills [*erfüllt*] and consummates [*vollzieht*] the essence of truth in the sense of the unconcealing [*Entbergung*] of what is."[307] Although we always in fact belong to

---

[306] GA 9:201/*Pathmarks* 154. Cp. the end of section I.B, above, especially the closing quotation from *Contributions*.

[307] GA 9:190/*Pathmarks* 146, trans. mod.

being, for Heidegger, the second sense of freedom is to be found in belonging explicitly: in owning up to this belonging, experiencing the event *as* an event on the basis of an experience with the historicity of being. In other words, freedom in the second sense is an explicit investment or involvement *both* in the open region (recognized as finite) *and* in what is, instead of our usual investment primarily in what is, which covers up our always-underlying investment in the open region. At the same time, our affective responses show that this freedom is a *being-invested by* the clearing that gives meaningful access to what is.

We could say, therefore, that for Heidegger ontological belonging is a kind of investment. When this belonging is explicit (or owned, *eigen*), it is authentic (*eigentlich*): a freedom (or, as we saw in section I.C, a knowledge) constituted by working to preserve our attention to the concealing that is constitutive for unconcealment, by letting the mystery remain as mystery, rather than trying to force beyng into full presence.

But to preserve or endure in this sense requires a certain kind of experience; it is something one must journey through (*er-fahren*). It means encountering withdrawal (*Entzug*) or refusal (*Versagung*), i.e., the presencing of beyng's absence, as a *positive* phenomenon. To undergo such an experience, Heidegger emphasizes,[308] requires a risk. So long as we remain within the third-person perspective, our very distance (as avoidance of investment, the search for a prior external guarantee) keeps us from interpreting absencing as constitutive concealment. But when we go along a way – leap into a particular, first-person horizon within which what is can show itself – we are exposed to the danger of being upended (disoriented) by that which draws us onward through its withdrawal. We might, for example, assume both that truth was primarily a

---

[308] See "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way to Language*, tr. Peter Hertz (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1971), p. 57/GA 12:149 (hereafter: *OWL*), and *What Calls for Thinking?*/GA 8, lectures 1-4. Cf. *Zollikon Seminars* 143/110, trans. mod.: "it seems necessary to characterize our […] method under the name 'express engagement [*Eigens Sich-einlassen*] in our relationship to what we encounter,' in which we always already sojourn. In a certain sense, what is characteristic of phenomenology is the act of will not to resist this engaging-oneself."

matter of assertions and that it was crucially important. In our very attempt to explain the nature of truth, however, we might discover that if it is only about assertions, then we cannot retain its importance, except as a semantic device. We would feel ourselves drawn on by the promise of truth's importance, only to be upended along the way of understanding by its seeming unimportance.

If, instead of fleeing from this experience, we remain with the disorientation, Heidegger claims that we can discover, in the encounter with concealment as what cannot be overcome (and thus cannot itself be fully unconcealed), an unexpected proximity to real things. For *they* are independent of us precisely as what resist or withdraw from us in their own peculiar ways. Herein arises the possibility of becoming at-home in the uncanny (i.e., in the disruptive, in what withdraws as refusing to be integrated), if we exercise our freedom in the second sense and let things be *as* withdrawing, preserving their independence rather than demanding full presence or control. And this is an existential possibility – one that cannot be embraced in advance or without the risk of going wrong.

Such reorientation by remaining with the disorienting encounter is very close to what I have previously characterized (chapter I, part II) as one way to deal with the "betrayal" of assumption-trust. There, we saw that I can reorient myself by reinterpreting both my previous assumptions and their betrayal within a larger context. This reorientation would remain at the level of assumption-trust, since the broader context remains a unified structure whose coherence and resilience I assume. Through a reading of Heidegger's various interpretations of originary truth as a phenomenon, I have tried to make it plain in this chapter that his account of truth as unconcealment that includes concealment is a way of reorienting us by taking up new assumptions about the broader context. What seemed like betrayal (untruth) is reinterpreted as the very essence of truth (in the *Contributions*), or at least incorporated into truth's own structure as its proper non-essence (in "On the Essence of Truth").

140

This kind of reorienting move – which Heidegger usually calls a leap – orients itself toward what I would like to name a *complex phenomenon*. This would be a phenomenon with multiple essential aspects that remain distinct from one another, united but not dialectically synthesized. Heidegger refers to such phenomena as Janus-faced, looking both directions, to indicate the distinctness of the essential aspects.[309] One ontic example he uses is that of a staircase, which at once goes both up and down. The staircase holds together vertical ascent with horizontal landing in what Heidegger calls a "dynamic configuration [*bewegtes Gefüge*]."[310] The landing, as Bret Davis points out, is both the place where one stands and the place from which one reverses direction;[311] it is thus also the place from which one can experience positively the unity of the two directions.

For phenomena given as perceptually real, their unseen aspects (the "back side") are partially given as implied in my perception of the aspect facing me. Taking our cue from the staircase example, we could say by contrast that a complex phenomenon is one whose other side is discovered only in privileged moments of insight that also constitute a turn from one essential side to the other.[312] Although I can grasp truth and lack of truth together, I cannot authentically encounter the privation as itself a positive phenomenon, as an essential aspect of the structural unity of unconcealment as a whole, unless I invest myself in walking the meditative path that Heidegger walks. This path involves becoming disoriented in my assumptions about truth, then reorienting through a kind of leap that allows me to hold together concealment as ineliminable and unconcealment as clearing a place where things can show up.

---

[309] Heidegger, "Summary of a Seminar," in *On Time and Being*, tr. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 53/GA 14:63.
[310] Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, tr. B.W. Davis (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), pp. 108-9/GA 77:167-9. Hereafter, *CPC*.
[311] See the translator's footnote on *CPC* 168.
[312] The fourfold and the belonging-together of being and thinking would be other ontological examples in Heidegger's work.

Quite generally, for Heidegger, the freedom of being-invested lies in experiencing truth in terms of a finite venture like this. Truth is a contest between earth and world, an intrinsically unfulfilled intention, or the undecidability and impossibility of a guarantee that *this* is the correct basic disposition by which to encounter things. Holding oneself in the truth (or being-held in…) is therefore, according to Heidegger, not at all a "self-serving snatching up of a self-made certitude [or security, *Sicherheit*]."[313] Instead, as David Krell puts it rather dramatically: "truth, the unhiddenness of beings, […] is not normative but disclosive; not eternal but radically historical; not transcendent but immanent in the things wrought; not sheer light but chiaroscuro."[314]

Nevertheless, as I will argue next, standing "in the truth" is in fact still more precarious than Heidegger allows. In the end, on his account, such standing is still self-assuring; for although there are indications that he would like to take a different path, he ends up characterizing it still in terms of assumption-trust. Thus, any betrayal (concealment) of the truth is always incorporated into the structure in advance, even if this can only be recognized from the other side of a disorientation.

---

[313] GA 65:370: "*eigensüchtiges Erraffen einer selbstgemachten Sicherheit.*"

[314] D.F. Krell, "Analysis" of Heidegger's *Nietzsche I*, in Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1, p. 256. I would add that it is not *primarily* normative, since I think propositional truth and the truth of entities do remain normative, even though originary truth does not because it is what enables normativity at all. See *BT* 217-18, 223-6 / 260-1, 266-9; Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, p. 37; Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth*, chapter 5.

Chapter Three
Self-Certainty Yields Only to Reassurance
wherein Thoughtful Exposure to Self-Concealment
is seen to be the Hope of Humankind

Introduction

I argued in my previous chapter that it is at least plausible, both on independent grounds

and on the basis of evidence within Heidegger's own corpus, to understand primitive trust and

originary truth as interpretations of the same phenomenon: namely, the phenomenon always

privileged by Heidegger and always difficult to glimpse, that of phenomenality itself.[315] From

there, I examined Heidegger's account of that originary truth as *unconcealment* and showed it to

be, for us, a phenomenon of self-investment that incorporates its own complex betrayal – 'the

clearing for self-concealment' (*die Lichtung für das Sichverbergung*) or 'self-concealing that

clears' (*lichtendes Sichverbergen*), as he variously names it. In other words, I showed that he

interprets the phenomenon of holding oneself in the truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*) in terms

of what I earlier called *background assuming* (chapter 1). The structure thus assumed is the unity

of truth and untruth, unconcealing and concealing, as which being is always *given*, even if only in

its withdrawal.

But now I must ask: to what extent is Heidegger right? What if the kind of betrayal to

which we are exposed by our primitive trust in the world cannot be incorporated into the

phenomenologically encountered structure of concealment and unconcealment? What if the threat

involved in beyng's default is less like disorientation about an essencing that "is" always already

at work, and more like the betrayal of a personal trust? In such disorientation, beyng's structural

withdrawal would repeatedly overturn our metaphysical assumptions about it, but would also

---

[315] Were it not for Heidegger's explicit privileging, we could put 'phenomenon' here in quotation marks, to indicate that for the most part it does *not* appear. See *BT* §7 and the seminar in Zähringen (*Four Seminars*, trs. A. Mitchell and F. Raffoul [Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 2003], p. 80/GA 15:399) for Heidegger's discussions of a phenomenology that would attend to the non-apparent. See also my chapter 7, section II.B.1, below.

enable Heidegger's step back into a broader, reorienting set of assumptions. In a more personal betrayal, my self-investment in the world would be susceptible to such fragmentation that both myself and my being-in-the-world could lose their coherence. In the latter case, recovery would be "possible" in a way similar to the possibility of restoring trust in a person: sometimes it happens, but its happening is quite unpredictable, despite our best efforts.

Eventually, I want to suggest that such a personal betrayal, undergone with regard to the world as a whole, is a kind of disintegration that should be associated with what psychiatry calls 'psychosis.' But before doing so, let me make clear what is at stake by showing that the very possibility of a betrayal that cannot be integrated – and thus the possibility of radical disintegration – can open up for us a far-reaching difficulty within Heidegger's own work.

This path toward clarifying the stakes of my overall project will help us in three other ways. First, the work carried out here will serve to support my preliminary phenomenological typology of trust (chapter 1) by showing its fruitfulness for thinking both with and against Heidegger. Second, along this path we will open up the question of trust for Heidegger in a broader sense. We have looked at that question rather intensively so far by examining the unity of faith and knowledge at their root (chapter 2, section I.C), but Heidegger's interpretation of our self-investment in the world, though only obliquely addressed as trust, ranges more widely than that one section from the *Contributions* can indicate. Finally, my approach to the immanent critique of Heidegger's thinking – which involves attending to the differences in kinds of betrayal that I laid out in my first chapter – will illuminate a problem that has been noticed by several commentators in different ways but not yet worked out thoroughly.

Those are the tasks before us; now let me trace the path a bit more concretely. In order to present an immanent critique of Heidegger's thinking, I will begin by showing (part I of the present chapter) that Heidegger wants to give us a way out of the subject-centered trust in reason that has marked the metaphysical tradition. This trust, he claims, is really a kind of self-assurance

– a way of making-oneself-certain, a "self-serving snatching up of a self-made security"[316] – that has come to the fore more and more strongly in the history of Western philosophy.

Heidegger's proposed way out (part II) involves interpreting the essence of the human being as being-there (rather than as a subject possessing properties): something that exists as already *en*trusted *to* the historical, structured unfolding of access to being, released into it rather than fundamentally estranged from it.[317] To put it differently, then: Heidegger re-thinks *reason* – understood as the primary faculty of the rational animal, thus as a system projected by and centered on the human being – as only a particular, historical (*geschichtlich*, i.e., involving phenomenological rather than chronological history) interpretation of a broader relation that is *not* human-centered. That broader relation he interprets as *logos*, the self-articulating of the whole. Not simply reason but the structured, historical *granting* of various particular patterns of what is governs the relation between being and thinking. That relation, which he names beyng, is thus not something we can master; rather, we are mastered by it and can only be appropriately or inappropriately receptive to it.

But in being mastered by it, we nonetheless belong to this relation inextricably (part III). It is thus not something we could ever completely lose or forfeit; we never simply cease to be in the truth, any more than we ever completely escape being in the untruth. I will argue that since his attempt to twist free of metaphysics is carried out by interpreting ontological danger and salvation as unified in a complex phenomenon, he nonetheless continues to reserve a certain self-assurance for thinking. Thinking, even as response to what we cannot master, remains at the level of

---

[316] GA 65:370/*Contributions* 292.
[317] For my discussions of what Heidegger means by history, see chapter 2, section I.B, and sections II.B and III.D.3 of the present chapter.

assumption-trust, finding itself given over to a stable structure. That structure is, as he puts it, one within which any genuine seeking of beyng simply *entails* already having found it.[318]

Here the tension will become apparent within Heidegger's own work. Most often, he is concerned merely that we in fact are *not* seeking ("not yet thinking"), and the danger is that it becomes harder (but never impossible) to realize that we should or even could think (rather than merely calculate). This reading of the danger takes it to be constitutive; it is contained within the secure limits of beyng's givenness. We can never fully think, nor can we ever fully lose the possibility of thought. One cannot avoid recalling Hölderlin's dictum from the opening of the poem "Patmos": "But where danger is, / Saving also grows."[319] In other words, although errancy is a permanent feature of our world-relatedness, that world-relatedness itself is always available, even (or perhaps most especially) when we are so deeply astray in forgetting that we have forgotten the question about the truth of being.

By contrast, Heidegger sometimes seems to interpret the danger more apocalyptically. He seems to claim that we might become *unable* to seek, *unable* to dwell within the questioning of being – for example, if the patterns of comportment or the language for such thinking were to be irrecoverably forgotten. He writes at these moments of the historically possible "annihilation" of the human essence, which would seem to be the removal of *any* possibility of an authentic relation to being.

---

[318] "[T]he unique and therefore singular goal of our history […] is *seeking* itself, the seeking after beyng. Such seeking occurs and is itself the deepest discovery [*Fund*] whenever the human being decisively becomes a preserver [*Wahrer*] of the truth [*Wahrheit*] of beyng [….] The seeking is itself the goal" (GA 65:17-18/*Contributions* 16).
Cf. "Seeking after beyng? The originary finding [*Fund*] in the originary seeking. […] *The one who seeks has already found [*hat schon gefunden*]! And the originary seeking is that grasping [*Ergreifen*] of what has already been found [*des schon Gefundenen*], namely, the grasping of what is self-concealing as such*" (GA 65:80/*Contributions* 64, trans. mod., Heidegger's italics).
[319] Friedrich Hölderlin, "Patmos: Dem Landgrafen von Homburg," in *Sämtliche Gedichte: Text und Kommentar*, hrsg. J. Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005), p. 350: "*Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch*." My translation.

I take this tension between two paths to indicate a failure to think through the apocalyptic version of the danger sufficiently. As evidence, I propose to marshal a series of openings onto the problem of trust within Heidegger's work – openings that nonetheless fail to thematize trust as such, and thereby also fail to recognize the two different kinds of betrayal involved.

To put it quite simply: I want to show that, for Heidegger, despite all his talk of danger, our relation to being is quite stable. The unity of being and thinking is well-guaranteed; it is not nearly as precarious as he sometimes makes it sound. He has, as I will show, proposed a change in focus for self-assuring trust (the turn from an *entity*, reason, to *being*'s peculiar givenness), and he no longer assures himself via correct representation, the way the metaphysical tradition does. Yet, for all of that, he has not sufficiently described an experience of primitive trusting – an account of our relation to being in its unconcealment – that is *other than* such self-assuring, one that would give our vulnerability to radical betrayal its due. Heidegger's accounts of the self-giving of beyng and of originary truth thereby remain paths toward self-assurance, even they are paths for phenomenologists rather than metaphysicians.

I. Truth's Self-Betrayal in Metaphysics

Philosophical accounts of the nature of truth and of epistemology, especially since the late medieval period, have been heavily oriented toward both defeating the skeptic and dealing with paradoxes of self-reference. Of course, both have been concerns in some form since the very beginnings of Western philosophy (between Plato's sophists and Sextus Empiricus, there was plenty of work to go around). But somehow the concern with ever more-thoroughgoing skepticism acted as a focal point for modern philosophy in a way that has left its mark on our contemporary intuitions and ways of posing problems.

It is just this historical influence that interests Heidegger, especially in his ongoing confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with Nietzsche, for whom "[t]ruth is the kind of error without

147

which a certain species of life could not live."[320] On its face, this is a kind of pragmatic account of the truth-relation, but the characterization of truth as "error" presupposes a relation of adequation (whether correspondence or coherence) between us and the real world, a relation that admits of correctness or error. In one way, then, Heidegger takes Nietzsche to be advocating a thoroughly extreme position: Nietzsche's ability to recognize truth as a mistake means that 'truth' has betrayed itself in the course of metaphysical inquiry; it has come to be disclosed as a fiction, a linguistic game, or a metaphysical error. But in another way, Heidegger thinks that even Nietzsche's inversion of Platonism and attempted destruction of the metaphysics of the beyond discloses an underlying *univocity* about the essence of truth. This would be the univocity that has given rise to modernity's fascination with skepticism, as well as to more recent deflationary accounts of the truth-predicate.[321]

In order to see that Heidegger makes sense of the modern problem by invoking a certain kind of trust (along with the disorientation of its betrayal), we need to be clearer on just how he understands the human being as affectively given over to the world. To begin, then, let me expand on my earlier discussion of being-disposed.[322]

A) Disposition (Mood) and Affectivity

In *Being and Time* §29, Heidegger attends especially to two ontic observations: first, at any given time, whenever I try to re-collect myself from the things with which I am involved, I inevitably find myself (*sich befinden*) in one mood (*Stimmung*) or another; second, I am so thoroughly delivered over to this mood that it structures my experience of both the things and myself. Furthermore, I cannot simply change my mood directly. It is as if something has me in its grip, and all I can do is to alter the situation or the way I am thinking about it, hoping that this

---

[320] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trs. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), §493, p. 272.
[321] See my discussion in the introduction to these investigations.
[322] Cf. chapter 2, section II.C, beginning with the discussion of the truth of essence.

will indirectly alter my mood. It is thus one concrete way in which I encounter my thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), the fact that I cannot get back behind myself or fully take myself in hand.[323]

Heidegger names the existential structure that gathers up these ontic phenomena *Befindlichkeit*: 'dispositionality' or 'affectivity.' Along with projective understanding (*Verstehen*) – in which we are always prepared (or perhaps doomed) to encounter things *as* something more or less determinate,[324] i.e., to interpret – affectivity forms the base pair of existential structures that come to be united in *Rede* ('talk' or 'telling [differences]': *logos*). Thus things can show up for me *as* important and meaningfully articulated only against the backdrop of my current mood (*Stimmung*), which attunes (*stimmt*) or disposes me to them and so determinately structures (*bestimmt*) the possibility of our encounter.

Further attention to mood as a phenomenon of attunement or disposition shows that this structuring occurs on what might be called different levels: some affective attunements run deeper than others, some can be modifications of others, some are enduring and some quite changeable. Heidegger is primarily concerned that we not write them off as inconstant and fleeting things that somehow arise in the soul.[325] "Attunements are not something that is just at-hand [*nur vorhanden*]; rather, they themselves are precisely a fundamental manner and fundamental way [*eine Grundart und Grundweise*] of being, and indeed of being-there, within which always immediately lies: of being with one another [*Miteinandersein*]."[326] Each disposition is thus a way of being invested *in* the world as given over to or invested *by* it, a specific 'how' or shape of transcendence that modifies the structure of being-there-along-with (*Mitdasein*) another.

---

[323] Recall my account of the possibilities for voluntarily bringing about personal trust in chapter 1, part IV.
[324] Recall my bear example from chapter 2, part II: I never just hear 'a noise' (sheer sense-data) which I then work up into a bear or a creaking tree branch; I hear a bear (even if I am wrong about the source of the noise), or (if I am not sure) a movement that sounds troublingly like a bear.
[325] Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trs. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 65-66/GA 29/30:99. Hereafter, *FC*.
[326] GA 29/30: 100-101/*FC* 67.

As Michel Henry has articulated it, in each disposition, being-there "originarily reveals itself to itself as handed over to the world and bound to it."[327]

That is why Heidegger compares mood to an atmosphere in which being-there is immersed, one that thoroughly pervades and disposes (*durchstimmt*) our being. "[B]ecause attunement is the originary way [*Wie*] in which every being-there is as [*wie*] it is, attunement is […] that which gives being-there subsistence and possibility [*Bestand und Möglichkeit*] in its very ground [*von Grund auf*]."[328]

Disposition (or, more fundamentally, the existential called 'affectivity') is therefore the determinate way in which what is fits together for me (or fails to) as a whole. The contextual connections between things – their possibilities of unity and diversity – are what I project in understanding (interpretation), but the pull they have on me, the how of my being addressed by them, is given by my concrete disposition(s).[329] We might say that it is by my affectivity that the world weighs upon me, and that in the change of dispositions (*Umstimmen*) I can note changes in the pressure that make the world lighter or heavier. Of the experience of such modifications, Heidegger says, "everything is just as it was and yet different."[330] Its salience for me has been altered.

Heidegger is thus insisting that being-there (*Dasein*) is only *there* in a way determined affectively as well as interpretively. This means that whatever thinking I do about the nature of truth or the being of what is (i.e., whatever accounts I try to give of the articulate unity of the whole) must also take place from out of some mood. There can be no affectively neutral account

---

[327] Michel Henry, "The Power of Revelation of Affectivity According to Heidegger," tr. by G.J. Etzkorn, in *Heidegger: Critical Assessments*, vol. 1., ed. C. Macann (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 356-7.
[328] GA 29/30:101/*FC* 67.
[329] Again Henry, p. 359: "To put existence in the presence of itself, to confront it with itself in such a way that this 'bringing-in-the-face-of' does not merely mean 'to reveal' in some undetermined manner, but designates the mode according to which this revelation takes place and also its internal structure as constituted by transcendence, this is the fact of affectivity in general."
[330] GA 29/30:99/*FC* 66.

– or rather, affective neutrality is also a mood (whether indifference, collected calm, or distanced curiosity), one that is not necessarily appropriate to the issue at hand.[331]

Now that we have developed the sense of affectivity (*Befindlichkeit*) for Heidegger, we need to see how he reads the history of philosophy as grounded in modifications of our basic dispositions (*Grundstimmungen*) – or, as we could also say in light of my first chapter, modifications of the *self-investments* that provide the orienting background for philosophy.

Heidegger consistently interprets the Platonic-Aristotelian claim that philosophy begins in wonder in the light of his own work on affectivity. I will take as exemplary his 1955 presentation on the nature of philosophy, titled *What is Philosophy?*.[332] There, he notes that if our receptivity to the whole inescapably ties together both cognitive articulation *and* affective exposure, we cannot take Plato and Aristotle to mean that wonder (*thaumazein*; Heidegger translates as *Erstaunen*, astonishment) serves initially as a kind of propulsive cause (*Anstoß, Antrieb*) of philosophizing, but then disappears.[333] This would be to understand wonder as an efficient cause, but not yet as a governing beginning, an *arkhē*. Such a beginning is rather a source or principle that "pervades"[334] the activity of philosophizing – or, we might even say, 'guides and undergirds.'

Heidegger emphasizes that wonder is understood here explicitly as a *pathos*, a way of being affected.[335] Wonder or astonishment, as one *pathos* among others, lets us be attuned to

---

[331] Cf. Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* trs. W. Kluback and J.T. Wilde (New Haven, CT: College and University Press), p. 91, trans. mod./GA 11:24-5: "even the coolness of calculation, even the prosaic sobriety of planning are characteristics of an attunement." See also *Zollikon Seminars* 252/203, where Heidegger designates the mood proper to research as 'equanimity' (*Gleichmütigkeit*), "in which nothing else is able to address me but the matter being researched."

[332] The presentation was made at Cerisy-la-Salle in France and thus originally titled in French ("Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?"); the English translation consists of alternating pages in English and German.

[333] GA 11:22-3/*What is Philosophy?* 80-83.

[334] *Ibid.* The German is *durchherrscht*: literally, rules throughout.

[335] This he understands in light of the Greek *paskhein*: to suffer (*leiden*), to endure (*erdulden*), to undergo (*ertragen*), or to carry to term and deliver, as with child-bearing (*austragen*). In line with the discussion of affectivity just above, Heidegger further interprets this enduring or undergoing as 'being carried along by…' or even 'letting oneself be carried along by…' (*sich tragen lassen von*) [GA 11:23/*What is*

things. But a certain basic kind of wonder (a *Grundstimmung*) is peculiar in that it gives rise to and governs philosophy, the love (*philein*) of wisdom (*sophia*). Heidegger understands this to mean that astonishment is a kind of self-restraint (*Ansichhalten*) or retreat (*Zurücktreten*), a phenomenological step back before what astonishes us. We should not fail to hear in this an echo of holding oneself in the truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*); nor should we mistake this attunement, into which we may or may not be thrown, as something I willfully accomplish as a way of correctly coloring my world. Rather, we should attend to the phenomenon: in astonishment, what-is shows up as a whole (we are amazed by the *being* of what is), and we are drawn toward (*hingerissen zu*: as if by a rip-tide) and gripped by (*gefesselt durch*) this whole.[336]

Heidegger turns to Heraclitus, the first to speak of the *philosophos*, for an understanding of our relation to the whole as glimpsed in a philosophy attuned by wonder. This relation is one of *philein*, loving, which he says that Heraclitus already interprets as *homologein*, a way of belonging by saying the same as or corresponding (*entsprechen*) to the *Logos*, the structure of the world (and hence of entities within it). Such a correspondence is an accord (*Einklang*) or harmony (*harmonia*) in which things are reciprocally and originarily joined (*sich fügen*) with one another "because they are at each other's disposal [*zueinander verfügt*]," are accessible to or open to each other.[337]

Philosophy? 82-83]. We can gloss this as follows: undergoing, as experiencing in the sense of traveling through (German: *er-fahren*) or out among what is (Latin: *ex-peri-ens*), involves being carried unto the things, which themselves are never simply neutral but deeply concern us. This gloss clarifies, in terms of phenomenological intentionality, the final translation Heidegger offers in this series: 'to let oneself be determined or attuned by…' (*sich be-stimmt lassen durch*); we may thus interpolate: 'by… the things as they show themselves.'

Another principal meaning of *austragen* is 'to stage,' as of a competition or a battle. The connection between such 'staging' and intentionality will become important for my discussion of desire and the event (*das Ereignis*) in chapter 7, section III.

[336] GA 11:23/*What is Philosophy?* 85.

[337] GA 11:14/*What is Philosophy?* 47. Here we have a recapitulation of the truth-analysis from the previous chapter: correspondence of speech and thing presupposes a more originary openness, figured here as love: being joined in *logos* (something prior to speech, *legein*). I pass over questions about the faithfulness of Heidegger's Heraclitus interpretation.

What is loved in such philosophy – that to which we are originarily joined – is the *sophon*. Heidegger tries to stay with Heraclitus in articulating this as *hen panta*, "one is all," which is to say that being unifies or gathers the whole of what is.[338] But this is what Heraclitus thinks as *Logos*, that which gathers the whole meaningfully, rendering the openness of things to one another by articulating their boundaries and relations. So, in the attunement of wonder, we are reciprocally joined to the *Logos*, which gathers what is into a unified whole. "What-is in its being: this became the most astonishing thing for the Greeks."[339]

Heidegger outlines, by way of contrast, the modification of this astonishment that he finds already in Plato and Aristotle. He thinks that they attempted to rescue (*retten*) that most astonishing thing, what-is in its being, from the glibness of the sophists, but at the cost of becoming people who only strive after the *sophon*. Henceforth, loving (*philein*) was marked less by belonging or correspondence (*entsprechen*) to the gathering of the whole, what Heraclitus had experienced as *harmonia*, and more by striving or desire (*orexis*, *eros*) for that *sophon*. With the affective modification came a cognitive modification of the interpretation: 'what-is in its being' became the question, 'What is that-which-is, insofar as it is?' (for Plato, as reported by Aristotle,: *ti to on;*). Even that was then further specified as 'What is beingness?' (for Aristotle: *tis hē ousia;*).[340]

Finally, Heidegger examines the very different disposition (and the accompanying alteration of the interpretive question) that inaugurates modern philosophy. Descartes, he claims, asks instead, 'Which is the being that is truly what is?' (where 'truly what is' is understood as *ens*

---

[338] "*Das Sein* ist *das Seiende*," where Heidegger specifies that the italicized 'is' should be taken transitively, to mean something like gathers (*versammelt*) (GA 11:14/*What is Philosophy?* 49).
[339] "*Seiendes im Sein…*" (GA 11:14/*What is Philosophy?* 49), trans. mod.
[340] GA 11:15-16/*What is Philosophy?* 50-55. In German: *Seiendes im Sein* → *Was ist das Seiende?* → *Was ist die Seiendheit des Seienden?*

certum, a certain or ascertained being).[341] The addition of 'truly' here indicates to Heidegger the shift in mood: it is only from within the disposition of doubt that 'what truly *is*' means 'what is in certainty [*Gewissheit*]'. He spells out Descartes's situation a bit more explicitly elsewhere, writing that "Descartes's position arises from the necessity for a person who has abandoned faith […,] who has been placed entirely on his own self, therefore to seek to hold on to something else that is reliable and trustworthy [*zuverlässig und zuversichtlich*]."[342]

That Descartes does indeed begin with at least methodological doubt is hardly contestable, even though how thoroughgoing or genuine that doubt is remains in question. Heidegger's reading understands doubting as the grounding disposition (*Grundstimmung*) that orients all of Descartes's thinking (and the modern tradition thereafter). This says two things: first, that doubting is not simply in Descartes's control, and second, that it attunes or disposes him to a particular essence of truth, from within which attunement only those things that meet the standard will show up as true (i.e., as in accordance [*Stimmen*] with reality). We might add here that even this doubt, as methodological and oriented toward certainty, is taken up by Descartes in the way that is only possible in foreground assuming, the kind of self-investment that pertains to hypotheses or explicit methodological assumptions. Heidegger then interprets this foreground assumption as grounded in a set of background assumptions that attune Descartes, without his noticing, to understand certainty as essential to truth.

In defense of Heidegger's reading, his interpretation is grounded in the way Descartes characterizes not only the main *question* (which could be merely methodological doubt) but also the *answers* or conclusions. Thus, Descartes takes himself to be the most certain thing, and God is encountered precisely as the ground of that certainty – which is, for example, rather far from the

---

[341] GA 11:23/*What is Philosophy?* 84-87, trans. mod. In German: *Welches ist dasjenige Seiende, das im Sinne des ens certum das wahrhaft Seiende ist?*
[342] *Zollikon Seminars* 142/109, trans. mod.

unnameable mystery encountered in medieval negative theology.[343] The mark of a true being, something that is real, is clarity and distinctness of *perception* (holding also for invisible things), and this mode of perception is characterized precisely as what permits of certainty. Hence the epistemic emphasis falls on the subject (rather than on the thing), as that self-certain thing for which other things are certain or doubtful: that which is oriented to the world by its own doubting.

But the relations between dispositions are complex, and it turns out for Heidegger that we can recognize a sort of counter-disposition that properly belongs with doubt. In the disposition of doubting, one is inclined to put all one's eggs in a single basket, as if one said: 'If we could just find a single starting-point that would be undoubtable…' (proposed starting-points: the I think, the *more geometrico*, the monad, nature, the unity of experience, the self-positing of the I, immediate knowledge in sense-certainty). Thus Heidegger concludes that

> the disposition or mood [*Stimmung*] of doubt is the positive attunement to or affirmation of [*Zustimmung*] certainty. Henceforth certainty becomes the standard or measure-giving form of truth. The mood of confidence [*Zuversicht*] in the always available absolute certainty of knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] remains the *pathos* [mood] and therefore the *arkhē* [governing source] of modern philosophy.[344]

Even if Heidegger is right, we are going to want a bit more specificity. If certainty is the measure of truth as seen from the disposition or affective attitude of doubt, how on this set of assumptions do we attain that certainty?

If I have assumption-trust in a particular structure and now find myself potentially betrayed by that structure – disappointed in my specific expectations and trying to discern whether I am fully disoriented – I am still inclined by habit (and by concern to preserve the structure) to orient myself by remaining invested in the same structure I have been trusting, but to

---

[343] See, e.g., *The Cloud of Unknowing*, anonymous, from the 14th century. Ed. J. Walsh (Paulist Press, 1981).
[344] GA 11:24/*What is Philosophy?* 85-88. 'Confidence' here translates *Zuversicht*, in which we should hear *zu versichern* (to assure or ensure, to make certain about), especially in such close proximity to the use of *Zustimmung* as attunement to or direction toward (*stimmung zu*).

be more wary about my decisions to rely. For one attuned by doubting, then, what is most loudly and explicitly trumpeted as trustworthy – as crucial to the structure – will no longer be the place to look for the guarantee of certainty, although one still assumes that this guarantee must be maintained. Thus, the Church, the State, and God may still be appealed to, but now necessarily in a secondary fashion, in the mode of a chosen reliance rather than an obvious, structuring assumption. Instead, one falls back on what has been *implicitly* assumed (i.e., in a background way), something familiar and ostensibly safe, and assumes it more explicitly (i.e., foregrounds it).

According to Heidegger, it turns out that this familiar, long- and implicitly trusted thing is reason (*ratio*), interpreted as the properly human faculty. In Descartes's writings, for example, this appears as good sense (*bon sens*) – which he takes to be equally distributed among rational animals[345] – or as 'thinking' (*cogitare*), the mode of all experience.

But if our confidence about being-in-the-truth lies in reason, then it makes all the difference whether we are reasoning *correctly* or not. So what we need is a reliable *method* to guarantee the correct use of this faculty. That is why Heidegger points out that reason, which for Descartes and much of the modern tradition is supposed to keep itself independent of the passions, is itself ruled by a certain disposition, which in turn orients all those who are, on this view, properly attuned human beings. Reason "is disposed to confidence [*ist auf Zuversicht gestimmt*] in the logical-mathematical intelligibility [*Einsichtigkeit*] of its principles and rules."[346]

This realization opens the way for our next concern: namely, how Heidegger interprets what happens when we finally discover ourselves thoroughly disoriented – when our assumption-

---

[345] René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method for Guiding One's Reason and Searching for the Truth in the Sciences*,*" in *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*, tr. D.M. Clarke (Penguin Classics, 2003), pp. 5-6, 10, 14.
[346] GA 11:25/*What is Philosophy?* 89-90. Cf. Heidegger's numerous other readings of Descartes, including the most famous one in *Being and Time* (§§19-21). For example, see his interpretation of Descartes as the link between Protagoras and Nietzsche: GA 6.2 124-171/*Nietzsche IV* 96-138.

trust in the accessibility of being is betrayed. As we shall see, it turns out that this is centrally

related to our understanding of the essence of truth.

B) Trusting in Reason is the Current Grounding Disposition (*Grundstimmung*)

In the third of the Nietzsche lectures (from 1939), in a section entitled "The Essence of

Truth (Correctness) as 'Value-Estimation,'" Heidegger takes up Nietzsche's account of the nature

of truth for the second time.[347] In this return, he deals with modernity's approach to the essence of

truth by examining the following claim of Nietzsche's: "*Trust* in reason and its categories, in

dialectic, thus the *value-estimation* [*Wertschätzung*] of logic, proves only their *usefulness* for life,

proved by experience – *not* their 'truth.'"[348]

Heidegger interprets this passage (i.e., he thinks through the phenomenon of trust in

reason) in the following way: he claims that both everyday and metaphysical thinking are

grounded in trusting (*vertrauen*) that the relation between being and thinking is secured, or made

certain, precisely by reason (*Vernunft*). He clarifies this 'trust' as consisting in two synonymous

claims: a) "that what-is as such [*das Seiende als solches*] shows itself in the thinking of reason

and its categories," and, in other words, b) "that truths [*die Wahre*] and truth [*die Wahrheit*] are

apprehended and secured [*gesichert*] in reason."[349] We have, he says, delivered over or entrusted

(*anheimgegeben*) to reason our whole capacity both to be brought before what is and to place *it*

before ourselves, to represent it (*vorstellen*).[350]

---

[347] He had left it behind after the first such lecture course two years prior, in favor of a focus on the eternal recurrence of the same in the second course.

[348] Quoted at GA 6.1:458/*Nietzsche III* 33. The quotation is from *Will to Power*, §507, p. 276, original italics. For Nietzsche, we trust in and value reason, not because we have any proof that it allows us to reach what we idealize as the truth, but only because it turns out to be pragmatically successful. 'Falsehood' can be just as useful, if not more so, than 'truth' – and Nietzsche thinks it has been for quite some time now. (Cf. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §110.)

[349] GA 6.1:477/*Nietzsche III* 50.

[350] See GA 6.1:478/*Nietzsche III* 51. 'Capacity' translates *Vermögen*, which in the broader context of Heidegger's thought could either mean an anthropocentric 'faculty of the mind' (*Seelenvermögen*), as *Vernunft* is traditionally taken to be, or it could mean an 'enabling', as beyng enables us to think it. Here it

157

One evidence of our collective philosophical trust in this model of reason may be found, according to Nietzsche (and Heidegger follows him in this) in our growing response to reason's accumulated failures. Our contemporary fights over "values" – concerning both their relation to facts and questions about who can impose such values on whom – are signs that our metaphysical trust in reason has been betrayed. Nietzsche claims: "The feeling of *valuelessness* was attained with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of '*purpose*,' the concept of '*unity*,' or the concept of '*truth*.'"[351] In other words, the relation we assumed between being and thinking does not seem to have worked out.

The history of our disorienting discovery of their incongruity is laid out in three stages in *The Will to Power*:

1) "we have sought a 'meaning' in all events that is not in them: so that the seeker eventually becomes discouraged [… ;] now one grasps the fact that becoming aims at *nothing* and achieves *nothing*" – so nature is not teleological but accidental;
2) "one has posited a *totality*, a *systematization*, indeed any *organization* in all occurrences, and beneath all occurrences [… ,] but behold, there *is* no such universal! [… M]an has lost his faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable totality works through him" – the gods have fled, so human dignity cannot be genuinely grounded but only asserted;
3) "one *escape* remains: to condemn the whole world of becoming as a deception and to invent a world that would lie beyond it as the *true* world. But, as soon as [one] finds out how that world is fabricated, solely out of psychological needs[, …] one concedes the reality of becoming as the *only* reality[, …] but one *cannot endure this world, which, however, one does not want to deny*."[352]

In the first step, according to Nietzsche, we realize that purpose is not inherent in the world. It is not merely the case, as Descartes already maintained, that *we cannot know* whatever purposes God has put in the world. In fact, there *are* no final causes. The second step marks the failure of both Aristotelianism and German Idealism: the underlying unity that was sought without or after the medievals' one God turns out to be merely our construction, rather than

---

seems to mean both, since in metaphysics the work of enabling – bringing human beings before what is – is delivered over from beyng to the human faculty of representing.

[351] Quoted at GA 6.2:47-8/*Nietzsche IV* 25; Heidegger's italics. Quotation from Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §12, p. 13.

[352] Quoted at GA 6.2:46-7/*Nietzsche IV* 24-5, Heidegger's italics. Quotation from Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §12, pp. 12-13.

something like a necessary condition for the possibility of experience. The third step, the failure of truth, takes us back all the way to Plato, who, on Nietzsche's reading, first sought the true world (of ideas) in order to make up for the chaos of the world of becoming. But the genealogical account of the history of this 'true world' shows that world, too, to be all too human.[353] None of these anchors for value remains any longer believable, Nietzsche thinks, and thus he concludes: "Trust in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism."[354]

We could summarize as follows: life turns out to be unbearable in the clear light of the will to truth. That light has shown us too much, leaving us no recourse to any adequate unity or any stable being that would not be completely given over to becoming. Values turn out to be only our projections, investments that are not true to any underlying reality. This is why, although it is an error, we in some sense need the concept of truth.

To confront this analysis, Heidegger wants to rethink the relation between being and thinking – namely, their unity and difference – but he must do so from out of thinking's very failure, in the midst of our disorientation and disillusionment. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of reassuring ourselves that we are valuing correctly, no matter how complicated such a philosophical assurance might be. Rather, it must be an investigation of the very context within which the world comes to matter to us, which we have subsequently represented as a matter of human valuing of otherwise inert facts. He begins this account of our most fundamental integration into a world that makes claims upon us by attending more closely to what is presupposed by Nietzsche's diagnosis.

According to Heidegger, we should hear Nietzsche's rehearsal of our collective disorientation as pertaining to "an investment of values in and a withdrawal of values from the universe of what is, which as it were exists in itself and permits such an investing and

---

[353] Cf. Nietzsche, "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable," in *Twilight of the Idols*.
[354] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §12, p. 13.

withdrawing of values. […] We are actively engaged in valuation and devaluation."[355] But in telling the story that way, Heidegger will point out, we assume ourselves as sovereign subjects over against a world that is simply there, as an object, in which we can freely invest and from which we can freely withdraw. We do not attend sufficiently to what *permits* this investment, for we Nietzscheans have once again presupposed the relation between thinking and what is, rather than having thought through it from out of itself.

Trust in reason as the unifying mediator between being and thinking may at first seem unobjectionable, but since it presupposes a certain interpretation of reason, it also takes for granted a certain version of what it means *to be something*. Reason is understood here as the representing faculty of the soul and, eventually, of the subject.[356]

As we saw (section I.A), according to Heidegger, early in the history of metaphysical thinking the *logos* was understood as what structures all that is, including the human being, such that we primarily belong to *it* and, derivatively, articulate *it* (cf. Heraclitus). When that *logos* was later interpreted, problematically, as merely a power of the subject – a power which we did not give ourselves, to be sure, but over the use of which we nevertheless have or in principle can have full control – then the modern concern that we might not be able to know things in themselves eventually *had* to arise in all its force.[357] We gradually shifted to taking this power for granted, rather than receiving it *as* granted.

When seeking the truth is taken to involve assimilating one's representational faculty to what is by itself *just there*, not intrinsically related to me, then the standard of truth (i.e., truth's essence or nature) lies in whatever obtains the security of this assimilation (*adaequatio*). As we

---

[355] GA 6.2:68/*Nietzsche IV* 43. Cf. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, §12, pp. 13-14: "Final conclusion: all the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which then proved inapplicable and therefore devaluated the world – all these values […] have been falsely *projected* into the essence of things."

[356] Cp. the first sense of 'knowing' in chapter 2, section I.C, above.

[357] "*Ratio* is a *facultas animi*, a power of the human mind [as rational animal], the *actus* of which inhabits the inner man. The *res*, the thing, lies apart from *ratio*" (Heidegger, GA 54:74/*Parmenides*, p. 50).

saw, the proper exercise of reason, in that case, must consist in following the proper cognitive *method*, one that allows the subject to secure beings as objects of its knowledge. But the most secure method turns out to proceed by only addressing itself to such beings as admit of, for example, mathematical representation.[358] This is because the principle of sufficient reason – the most straightforward expression of metaphysical trust in reason – grasps the being of whatever is as *representability* in terms of reason's categories, over which the transcendental ego exerts its structuring control. Knowing things turns out to be assuring oneself of one's correct representation, i.e., making those representations secure through the proper use of the subject's power-to-represent (rationality or judgment).[359] Knowledge is (self-)justified true belief.

Just as when Physics necessarily *assumes* certain categories from the outset of its investigations (e.g., matter, energy, potential, cause), so that only what fits within those categories can show up for it as real, so, according to Heidegger, metaphysics *assumes* a set of categories (quantity, quality, etc.) and a process (reasoning) according to which what is must show up.[360] This assuming does not take being into account except as the *a priori*: in other words, once again as *what is*, only this time attended to in its manner of being, *what* it is and *that* it is. It does not adequately ask about the being of this very *a priori*. The Aristotelian study of being qua being is, he claims, the study of what is just insofar as it is, not yet the study of *how* it is or of *what lets it be*. Metaphysics thereby tends to place the human in control of being's givenness (beyng) and

---

[358] For a reading of Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, cf. Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 129-44/99-110.

[359] Heidegger locates the forerunners of the modern era in Luther's search for assurance (*Sicherung*) of salvation (in the super-sensible realm) and Galileo's physics as seeking mathematical assurance (*Sicherung*) of nature (in the sensible realm). See GA 15:292-3/*Four Seminars* 13-14. The progression culminates in the absolute subject (Hegel) and its will to power (Nietzsche). For the whole story, see GA 54:57-77/*Parmenides* 39-52. In brief: falsity and truth have been understood as *lethē*/*alētheia* → *falsum*/*veritas* → *incertum*/*certitudo* → abstract part/absolute subject → will to power as the subject's negating/affirming.

[360] GA 6.1:479/*Nietzsche III* 51.

forgets, crucially, that beyng is disclosed in accord with its *own* structure of revealing and concealing, to which we integrally belong but over which we have no control.[361]

Hence, in such metaphysical thinking, according to Heidegger, reason is "the most extreme pre-decision [*Vor-entscheidung*] as to what being means" since only what reason "represents and secures [*vor- und sicherstellt*]" has a rightful claim to be in being.[362] For this reason, Heidegger takes 'trusting in reason' to be a founding manner of being-human, a basic way in which our whole comportment can be constituted (*Grundverfassung*), for it decides what will be allowed to count for us as real.[363] Using the distinctions we have already worked out (chapter 1), we can make this a bit more precise: what Heidegger calls 'metaphysics' involves assuming one's relation to being – hence, assuming a particular configuration or meaning of being, presupposing what can count as beings – on the basis of which one either relies on reason, expecting it to give one contact with being (rationalism), or refuses to do so (skepticism, irrationalism).

Because it decides rigidly about the unity of being and thinking beforehand, rather than assuming that *experience* grants meaningful truth and so seeking an experience of this unity, *reason* blocks genuine thinking, which should question back toward the sources without assuming their character. 'Reason' should be understood here as Heidegger's name for a fundamental (or background) variety of assumption-trust in being, according to which access to being is granted or denied by relying on reason as a faculty.[364] That is why Heidegger provocatively claims that "[t]hinking begins only when we have come to know that reason,

---

[361] Such forgetting is precisely the visible manifestation of nihilism: we project categories (values) into the world, and we can take them out again (kill God, as it were), so they fail to be really independent conditions for us. Here Heidegger reads nihilism as just the hiddenness of beyng – the negation in beyng, its refusal to become fully present – as it shows up in anthropocentric accounts of being that take being to be nothing more than the *a priori* of knowing. Cf. "Nihilism and the History of Being," GA 6.2:301-361/*Nietzsche IV* 199-250.

[362] GA 6.1:478/*Nietzsche III* 51.

[363] GA 6.1:478/*Nietzsche III* 51. Metaphysics trusts reason as a power of the subject, rather than beyng as that which makes use of beyng-there.

[364] In Aristotelian terms, this is to understand all *noēsis* as *dianoēsis*.

glorified for centuries, is the most stiff-necked adversary of thought."[365] As we shall soon see, however, this very thinking, even if it does not assume the character of the sources, still assumes their givenness within a certain structure: that of revelation and concealment.

II. The Unity of Being and Thinking

"[I]f the absolute is supposed merely to be brought nearer to us through this instrument [of cognition], without anything in it being altered, as with a bird caught by a lime-twig, it would surely laugh our little ruse to scorn, if it were not with us, in and for itself, all along, and of its own volition [*schon bei uns wäre und sein wollte*]."[366]

How can we find our way out of the metaphysical predicament? What possibilities do we have? If trusting in reason actually prevents genuine thinking, according to Heidegger, then in what *should* we trust? Or should our grounding disposition even *be* some variety of trust? As what sort of grounding disposition should we understand being-held-in-the-truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*)?

Heidegger does not directly answer these questions, but I think his response can be inferred from the course of his thinking. And I think that response turns out to be homologous to the metaphysical trust he has just criticized, hence vulnerable to similar criticism. We can find our way toward this thought via a brief amplification of our earlier discussion of freedom.[367]

A) On Freedom as Exposure

I claimed toward the end of that discussion that trusting as an investment means both being invested *in* the world and being invested *by* the world. But I also claimed that to hold

---

[365] Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche, 'God is Dead,'" GA 5:267/*Question Concerning Technology* 112. This does not mean, please note, doing away with reason. Heidegger claims that it is not a counter-glorification of irrationalism (which, as a reaction, still stands upon the trust in reason – cp. GA 6.1:478/*Nietzsche III* 51). It is, as for Kant, a recognition of the limits of reason. *Thinking* commences not by abandoning reason, nor even by seeking the destruction of its adversary, but by coming to know reason *as* this adversary – as that which it must confront and whose depths it must plumb.

[366] G.W.F. Hegel, "Introduction" to *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §73. Quite appropriately, 'the absolute,' rather than 'the instrument,' is the referent for all the third-person pronouns in this sentence. Cf. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, hrsg. von H.F. Wessels und H. Clairmont, Philosophische Bibliothek Bd. 414 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988), p. 58, lines 7-12; and Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 9, p. 53.

[367] See chapter 2: section II.C (beginning with 'The hinge') and part III.

oneself/be held in the truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*) and thereby also in untruth, to invest in or engage in (*sich eingelassen auf*) what-is to such an extent that things inherently matter to us according to some determinate way of being disposed (some *Bestimmung*) and not others, is a kind of exposure (*Aussetzung*). We feel this in our finitude: the cost of disclosure, of letting anything matter to us as potentially intelligible, is vulnerability to what is disclosed. Thus, what Heidegger has sought to develop under the names 'exposure,' 'freedom,' and 'openness,' I have called 'investment' and have tried to specify as certain kinds of trusting.

But specifically what kind of openness or freedom is involved here, according to Heidegger? Earlier, following John Sallis, I called it an 'engaged openness,' meaning: an openness to what is there, but an openness that is necessarily also engaged with the open region as such. Following Heidegger's account in *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, we could expand this to say: "In the correctness of the representational assertion there prevails [*waltet*] consequently a four-fold openness: (1) of the thing, (2) of the region between thing and man, (3) of man himself with regard to the thing, and (4) of man to fellow man."[368] The first fold is a matter of comportment toward the specific thing about which I speak – is it something I am experientially familiar with in the right ways to be able to talk about it? The second fold is my engagement in the open region as such, my exposure to what is as a whole and the patterns of import that structure that whole. The third fold is my openness to the thing as presented within that open

---

[368] GA 45:19/*Basic Questions of Philosophy* 18-19. Heidegger here summarizes a longer statement: "[I]f our representing [*Vorstellen*] and asserting [...] are supposed to conform or correspond [*sich richten*] to the object, then this entity [whatever it is] must be accessible [*zugänglich*] in advance, in order to be able to present itself openly as a standard and measure *for* the conformity *with* it. In short, the *entity* [...] must lie open. Even more: not only must the [entity] itself [...] lie open but so must the *domain* that the conformity *with* the thing has to traverse, so that we may read off from it, in the mode of representing, what characterizes the entity in its being so-and-so. Moreover, the representing *human*, who conforms or adjusts *himself* [sich *richtende*] to the thing by representing, must also stand open. He must be open *for what* encounters him, so that it might encounter *him*. Finally, the person must be open *for* human beings, so that, co-representing [*mitvorstellend*] what is communicated to him in their assertions, he can, together *with* the others and on the basis of being-with them, conform to the same thing and be in agreement [*verständigt und einig*] with them about the correctness of the representing" (GA 45:18-19/*Basic Questions* 19, trans. mod. and original italics restored).

region, letting it bind my speaking. And the fourth fold is a matter of my relation to others, my being-with them in such a way as to direct their attention through speech.

Thus, the structured and invested openness to things that allows them to be unconcealed for us in their being – i.e., our receptivity to them – is what Heidegger means by ontological 'freedom' (*Freiheit*). But we should recall that with this word he understands 'being-available', in the sense of the ordinary German use of *frei* to mean a place that is unoccupied and in that sense open or free for use. Heidegger describes the essencing of that kind of freedom as liberation (*Befreiung*), but not empty liberation. Specifically, it is "liberation into belonging to being," or a "displacement [*Versetzung*] into being" or "into the free region [*das Freie*]."[369] That liberation makes us free "toward [*zu*] what is, from [*von*] what is, for [*für*] what is, before [*vor*] what is and in the midst of [*inmitten*] what is."[370] In other words, belonging to being as the essence of freedom here means being the place where what is can show up in its being, but also where being can be encountered as such. Oddly enough, this kind of freedom is always already occupied, claimed, or invested, since it means being-a-there (*Da-sein*) as the performative site of the ontological difference between being and what is, over which site we cannot have control.

We might be tempted to interpret even this kind of freedom as a property of human beings, something that would belong to us and be deployed by us. But Heidegger thinks this is to miss the point. We cannot in fact choose whether or not to disclose what is, nor can we choose whether to be in a clearing (i.e., to disclose what is according to some given sense of what is essential). We could put it this way: as irrecoverably intentional, exposed to and lost among things,[371] being-there cannot ever simply take itself in hand, any more than it can fully grasp or control the things among which it finds itself. Freedom is no property (*Eigenschaft*) of ours,

---

[369] Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, tr. G.E. Aylesworth (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993), p. 57/GA 51:68.

[370] GA 51:68/*Basic Concepts* 57, trans. mod.

[371] Being-there is only ek-sistent as in-sistent, standing-out [*ekstatisch*] into what is as standing-among [*inständig*] things.

Heidegger claims, but as displaced into it, human beings are the property (*Eigentum*) of freedom: we belong to being as its site of disclosure, and as such we are ineluctably related to, vulnerable to, things and their import (i.e., their being).[372] We cannot escape our ontological relationality.

If our exposure to unconcealed things includes openness to the open region as such, to their unconceal*ing*, then we are also exposed to the concealing in which unconcealment has its 'ground.' "In the proper [*eigentlich*] sense, the clearing of self-concealing [*Lichtung des Sich-Verbergens*] means that the inaccessible shows and manifests itself as such – as the inaccessible."[373] Thus, as we have seen (chapter 2, section III), Heidegger's phenomenological approach to thinking requires going along (or investing in) a particular descriptive way (*Weg*), encountering something strange – a disorientation of assumptions, the self-bracketing of the world – and then attempting to see that betrayal itself as also an integral part of the phenomenon. This is because phenomenology involves a focus on *how* something is given, seeking the essence as a unity that emerges in interpretation as we go along the way.

From this perspective, according to Heidegger, if the being of what is addresses us, makes some claim to importance, and yet has not even been adequately *asked about* in the long history of philosophy, then this is no simple failure of otherwise very intelligent thinkers. Rather, those thinkers saw the problem in one way (asking after universal traits of things that could be ascribed to them as their beingness, *ousia*) but could not see it more deeply (to ask what non-thing allows things to be at all). If this blindness does not depend on us, then it must be a constitutive moment of the phenomenon of being's own givenness (i.e., its essencing). Thinking has *not* simply failed to reach being; it has encountered beyng's own essential withdrawing, albeit without having made the latter explicit. We are indeed disoriented, but reorientation is possible by

---

[372] Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," GA 9:188-91/*Pathmarks* 144-6.
[373] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 229/183.

locating the whole system (consisting of our inherited set of assumptions and their more recent betrayal) within a larger context of assumptions.[374]

B) Trusting in Unconcealment is Heidegger's New Grounding Disposition

"When a withholding and denial press on, only someone whose thinking is too short-sighted, i.e., not genuine, remains caught up in them and finds there an occasion for despair. This is always evidence that we have not yet fathomed the full turning of beyng and so are not taking the measure of being-there from it."[375]

This implies, it seems to me, that Heidegger thinks we must trust (in the sense of assumption-trust) the intrinsically concealed source of the unity of being and thinking. This source is also called 'the event' (*das Ereignis*) that joins beyng and being-there in some definite manner, as well as 'originary truth' insofar as it is unified in its various clearings. In other words, for Heidegger we must trust unconcealment as a complex phenomenon in which we are necessarily embedded.[376] Support for this interpretation comes in two forms. The first requires thinking through the matter along with Heidegger; the second is a reading of a significant opening in one of his late-period essays.

1. One way of thinking along Heidegger's path, attending to the matter of his thinking along with him, is to ask what it *means* for being and thinking to belong together. The question about this relationship (*Verhältnis*) between the human essence – what I am for now calling 'thinking' – and the being of what is, namely, the question of what element this relationship rests in (*worin… beruht*), is, according to Heidegger, "the unique question that all traditional thinking above all must be made to face."[377] It is Husserl's phenomenological question of the correlation between *noēsis* and *noēma*, now modified beyond the constraints of a sphere of immanence. It is

---

[374] Cp. the two modes of reorientation articulated in chapter 1, part II, and the course of thinking laid out in "On the Essence of Truth," as we have traced it in chapter 2, section II.C.

[375] GA 65:412/*Contributions* 326-7.

[376] Recall my earlier account of a complex phenomenon (chapter 2, part III).

[377] Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, tr. J.G. Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 79, trans. mod./GA 8:85. Hereafter, *WCT?*

no longer a matter of switching attitudes so as to effect a reduction; rather, the givenness of being (i.e., beyng) is intrinsically "reduced," intrinsically hidden, and thus it enables a certain experience of originary truth as incorporating its own betrayal. As we have seen (chapter 2, part II), concealment belongs to the core of the phenomenon of unconcealment.

We get a hint of how Heidegger thinks about this relationship between being and thinking from his claim in *What is Called Thinking?*:

> as soon as I thoughtfully say 'human essence,' I have already said relatedness [*Bezug*] to being. Likewise, as soon as I say thoughtfully: 'being of what is,' the relatedness [*Bezug*] to the human essence has already been named. […] Said from out of the matter [*Sache*]: there are here neither members of the relation [*Beziehung*] nor this relation as such.[378]

Evidently, Heidegger is here trying to avoid, on one hand, dialecticization of the relation ('there are not *members* of the relation'), and on the other, abstraction ('nor is there this relation as such').[379] But one remarkable upshot of this is that one cannot start with one "side" (being or thinking) and get to the other; one has to begin with their unity. Thus Heidegger claims that "every way of thinking always already *goes along within* [geht… innerhalb] the whole relationship [*Verhältnis*] of being and the human essence, or else it is not thinking at all."[380] First, we could not be thoughtful in the relevant way unless we were already joined to being. Therefore, secondly, something said about one "pole" must be seen as always already a description also of the other "pole."

Let us try to see what these two claims would mean. Looking up at the sky, I notice that the clouds are white and puffy today. I thus see *that* something is (the clouds are not nothing) and *what* it is (they are clouds). In an everyday way, then, I encounter the clouds in their being; I encounter a state of affairs (*Sachverhalt*). But I do not *see* this state of affairs; what I see are

---

[378] GA 8:85/*WCT?* 79, trans. mod.
[379] Cf. GA 65:286-7/*Contributions* 225: "essencing [*Wesung*] is not supposed to name something that lies *beyond* beyng; instead, it utters what is innermost to beyng, namely, the event [*das Er-eignis*], that oscillation [*Gegenschwung*] between beyng and being-there in which the two are not objectively present [*vorhandene*] poles but are the pure coming to be of the oscillation [*die reine Erschwingung*] itself."
[380] GA 8:85/*WCT?* 80, trans. mod., original italics.

white, puffy clouds. Where in sensory intuition is the categorial designation that they *are*? It is a kind of excess, one that is included in any encounter with entities, yet not located in perception. Maybe being in this case is something empty, a mere semantic form, but then why does it matter to me so much that they *are*? Why has this 'to be' exercised the philosophical tradition to such an extent? Imaginary clouds would not reach me in the same way; black clouds would lay claim to me in a much different way. I am struck by the *being* of things, not only by the things.

As Hegel also recognized (see the epigraph to this section), we would have no access to the being of what is if we had to consciously acquire it somehow, for example through correct reasoning. Even if it also involves this, the subject's relation to what is cannot *only* or even *first of all* be a kind of trial and error, reaching out from within itself to seize (more or less well) on what is just lying around independently of it. Rather, according to Hegel, the *history* of our attempts to think what is as it is (to reach being) must also themselves already display being, and do so in a way somehow proper to it, as its own history; thus is history introduced into ontology.[381]

To put the problem this way is not to take being as a separate entity with properties. Rather, it takes seriously the attempt to think the belonging-together of being and thinking, rather than simply (or complexly) reducing being *to* thinking. For if we really do belong to being, then according to Heidegger two things follow: 1) our most interesting failures (at least) are parts of being's history (*Geschichte*), its happening (*Geschehen*) – i.e., aspects of beyng – and not only measures of the distance thinking has yet to cover; 2) our successes remain limited, not because they are somehow also failures on our part, but because being itself is finite. Privation at an

---

[381] The question of the differences between Heidegger and Hegel is one to which Heidegger himself returned many times, and one that I cannot deal with here. See, e.g., *Identity and Difference*/GA 11; "Hegel's Concept of Experience," in *Off the Beaten Track*/GA 5; "Hegel and the Greeks," in *Pathmarks*/GA 9; *Hegel* (GA 68, as yet untranslated).

ontological level (*Mangel*, *Entbehrung*, *Not*) is to be understood as self-refusal, self-withdrawal (*Sichversagen*, *Sichentziehen*).[382]

As we have seen (chapter 2, section II.C), this is what allowed Heidegger, in trying to understand the truth phenomenon, to interpret failure ontologically, incorporating the very experience of betrayal into his thinking by allowing it to point back to a deeper unity. For he interprets the unified historical (*geschichtlich*) experience of 'trusting in reason, then becoming disoriented' as indicating a more complicated phenomenal unity of being and thinking. In other words, assuming the guarantee of right reason, or too quickly pre-determining being, as metaphysics has and does, is still a way of belonging to being, even if one that does not own up to it explicitly. Thus, it is not only our contingent failure that leads us to seek in the right use of reason an external guarantee of propositional truth. It is, rather, our desire to completely unconceal or render fully present what cannot be so rendered (beyng) – and this desire is structural to the relation between beyng and thinking itself.

Let us see what all of this amounts to in Heidegger's terminology. First, we would not seek to understand beyng if it did not escape us and frustrate us by refusing full intelligibility (*die Versagung*). Nor, second, would we encounter what-is as compelling our interest, as definitively mattering in some particular way, if the necessity of that refusal, beyng's constitutively limited intelligibility, its mystery (*Geheimnis*), were not itself *disguised* as a merely temporary or contingent receding into the background (*die Verstellung*).

Put differently: we can happily ignore the source of import for the sake of what it lets be important only if it seems that this ignoring is up to us, that we could just as easily attend primarily to the source. But we pay a price for ignoring the source – our standards come to be drawn more and more from what claims us, and when we try to return, to attend to the source of import, we bring these standards with us. That price, Heidegger thinks, is nonnegotiable… unless

---

[382] Cf. GA 29/30:243/*FC* 162.

170

we learn to live with the source as not fully intelligible, responding appropriately to its claim without thereby losing the import of what is.

But by the same token, there is no claim without those who are claimed. It is not simply a farce to speak of freedom here. According to Heidegger, being is "entrusted [*anvertraut*] preeminently and only to thinking."[383] As self-showing, it *needs* being-there, which is the place at which it shows up, the one to whom it lays claim. Thus beyng – as the happening of import – needs (*braucht*) and uses (*gebraucht*) us. That means: there is no being, no coherent organization of what-is according to essential patterns of importance, without being-there, and likewise of course no giving of these patterns (no beyng), although what is would hang around – presumably even hang together – in its own way without us.

What, then, is the relation between beyng and thinking? The least we can say is that it is never one-sided, as far as Heidegger is concerned. There is no beyng without thinking, but genuine thought is always a response to the claim of being – something is disclosed as important, and our attentive receptivity to that disclosure is thinking. Taken together, these claims mean that thinking is always on the basis of our investment in some particular coherently important world (i.e., on the basis of some kind of trusting). They also mean that genuine thinking, which turns back to being by recognizing essences, i.e., by taking over the unthought (being) in what has already been thought, "is only capable of this when it is trusted by [or is familiar to] what is to be thought."[384]

The unthought here is entrusted to us in what has been thought previously, what has shaped us and so remains alive in us for re-thinking. "What is to be thought remains entrusted [*anvertraut*] to thinking – in an unusual way, of course. Namely, until now, thinking did not at all think that, or to what extent, what is to be thought at the same time withdraws itself thereby [*sich*

---

[383] Heidegger, "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being," GA 6.2:360/*Nietzsche IV* 250.
[384] Heidegger, *Introduction to Philosophy—Thinking and Poetizing*, tr. Phillip Braunstein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. 67/GA 50:87. German: "*wenn es dem zu Denkenden vertraut ist*."

dabei gleichwohl entzieht],"[385] that is, withdraws itself *in* its very being-entrusted to thinking. Thus, what is to be thought is not produced by thinking but given to it, latent in what has already been thought as formative of our sense of being. Yet, even as given in this way, the unthought is not simply there like an object; rather, it is still partially withdrawn, drawing us onward. It remained unthought for even the highest of previous thinkers not because they fell short of what they could have been, but because our clearing (the way beyng claims us) discloses as essential different aspects of what is than theirs did. Although we share with them both what is and the matter for thought (beyng as source of import), nevertheless what is shared is not simply identical (*das Gleiche*), since beyng unfolds according to its own history.

In fact, if being and thinking really belong together, and thinking is ineluctably temporal (as ek-static transcendence), how can we avoid asking about the correlative temporality or historicity (*die Geschichtlichkeit*) of being? But Heidegger claims in the *Parmenides* lecture course that when we think history (*die Geschichte*) in terms of essence (see chapter 2, section I.B), we think it "*from out of the ground of the essence of being itself,*" which is to say from the perspective of beyng. Thought from this perspective, history turns out to be "the transformation [*der Wandel*] of the essence of truth. It is 'only' this. […] What is as historical [*Das geschichtlich Seiende*] has its being from out of such transformation."[386]

To make sense of such a claim, we must recognize that Heidegger's project is to inquire into the unity of the manifold meanings of being, without simply giving up and declaring that being is an empty generality. His phenomenological attempt is thus to stay with the matter – being and its phenomenality – until he can undergo an articulated experience of its essence (i.e., the unity of its givenness). So, he says, basic words [*Grundworte*] like 'being' and 'truth' are

---

[385] "Was heisst Denken?" GA 7:132. This is not from the lecture course but from a separate lecture presented to the Bremen Club in 1952 and included in *Lectures and Essays*. There is to my knowledge no published translation.
[386] GA 54:80-81/*Parmenides* 54-55, trans. mod., original italics restored.

themselves historical, important happenings (*Geschehen*) in chronological history. By this he means that their manifold meanings are not accidental – not mere polysemy, nor due only to random chronological development – but necessary, unified in a way that is open to being experienced phenomenologically.[387] Hence "multiplicity of meanings [*die Mehrdeutigkeit*] is the element within which all thought must move in order to be rigorous thought."[388] This, in turn, entails that thinking must always be an interpretation from out of a definite investment in the matter to be thought. In that way, it is intimately tied to the claim dealt with earlier (chapter 2, section I.B) that recognition of essences must be made anew each time.

But if we cannot decide beforehand about the fixed identity of the essence, then Heidegger's claim about *transformations* in the essence of truth need not dissolve into either relativism or historicism, as he insists that it does not. There is what he calls an "essentiality" (*Wesentlichkeit*), a stable core, to the essence, but since the essence is not a thing so much as a unified unfolding, that stable core just is the unified pattern of the unfolding. The essence of truth is given each time as arising from a depth of field, as having a history. Plants or animals, too, are given as self-unifying across a chronological history. But in the case of something like phenomenological history (*Geschichte*), which cannot simply be out there over against us (as, say, the growth of a plant can), there is no difference here between the thing (unfolding transformations that are interiorly related somehow) and its essence (this interior relation of the transformations). Instead, that history is sedimented into our dispositions, our language, and our patterns of understanding.

Heidegger therefore distinguishes between two senses of essence as one-over-many: 1) truth (*Wahrheit*) as the essence of truths – hence what would unite many particular truths that belong together – must indeed be valid for all of those particular truths; but it does not follow that

---

[387] GA 6.1:144-145/*Nietzsche I* 143-144, trans. mod. This rein on the slippage of signifiers is one source of Derrida's lengthy argument with Heidegger.
[388] GA 8:75/*WCT?* 71, trans. mod.

2) the essence must be unchanging (i.e., universally valid in itself). So long as the transformation is a *transformation* and not simply a random change, it has sufficient unity to be always the same (the essence of truth) without always being identical.[389]

This is a phenomenological insight: we encounter essences as unities that emerge from the self-showing of the phenomena. Hence, if the phenomenon shows itself to involve change, the essence will be recognizable as what prevails in that change. "But what is preserved [or maintains itself throughout, *sich… durchhält*] in the metamorphosis [*Verwandlung*] is what is unchangeable [*das Unwandelbare*] in the essence, which essentially unfolds [*west*] in its very transformation [*Wandlung*]."[390] Such an essence *could be* the form or look (*eidos*) toward which the change moves, as Aristotle would have it, but is it so firmly decided that this form is pre-given (and indeed permanent)? Or even that what governs this sort of transformation *is* such a form? (Recall Heidegger's reading of the history of philosophy as governed by fundamental attunements, section I.A.)

Instead, and minimally, Heidegger claims that "[h]istorical meditation [*geschichtliche Besinnung*] […] allows the recognition that in matters of essence there is no progress but only the transformation of the same [*die Verwandlung des Selben*]."[391] As Heidegger never tires of repeating, the same, *das Selbe*, is not the abstractly identical, *das Gleiche*.[392] The same is, I would say, that which can be encountered as belonging to a unified essence in a genuinely thoughtful response to the complex presencing of the phenomenon.[393]

---

[389] For this argument, see GA 6.1:149-150/*Nietzsche I* 147-148.

[390] GA 6.1:150/*Nietzsche I* 148.

[391] GA 45:54/*Basic Questions* 49.

[392] Heidegger links this sharing to Socrates' claim that philosophy always tries to say the same about the same. Cf. Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 30/24, presumably referring to Plato, *Gorgias* 482a, 490e-491a, and 509a.

[393] This distinction is frequently put to use by Aristotle to differentiate things that are somehow the same (one) in being but not identical. His example is not a stairway but the uphill road from Athens to Thebes, and one famous deployment of it is to explain how motion or change caused by something else is still only one activity taking place in the thing moved. Hence teaching is the activity *of* the teacher *in* the learner,

Finally, if it seems odd that a question about the history of *being* in its givenness – and thus about the unity of being and thinking – should be so directly referred to the transformations of the essence of *truth*, we have but to remember the consistency with which questions about the essence of truth have already led us to questions about the truth of essence (chapter 2, end of sections I.B and II.C). It is interesting but hardly surprising, then, that the problem of the essencing of being would turn us toward the essencing of truth, and thus (as an essence that happens, *geschieht*) toward history (*Geschichte*) as the unity of the transformations of that truth.[394]

Let me sum up what has been gained along this first path. Because of the concealed source of unity between being and thinking, even our most remarkable failure – our forgetting of the question of the meaning of being – is not simply due to our necessary wandering (errancy) from the essence of truth; we could say also that truth itself constitutively wanders, as it were,[395] disclosing the world differently in different historical clearings. This is what Heidegger calls 'the mystery,' that intrinsic concealment behind which we cannot venture. Nevertheless, in Heidegger's phenomenological thinking, we do gain access to an experience of the *unity* of these different clearings – an experience of the internally unified transformation of the essence of truth – and this complex phenomenon replaces reason as that to which we are given over in Heideggerian thinking.

---

even though what it is to teach is distinct from what it is to learn. See Aristotle, *Physics* 3.3, for the example, and *Metaphysics* 7.4-6 and 7.11 for his discussion of the relation.

[394] Cf. Heidegger's explanation: "If the essence of the human is founded in the fact that he is that entity to whom being itself is unveiled [*sich enthüllt*], then the essential destining [*Zu-schickung*] and the essence of 'sending' [*das Geschicht*] is the unveiling of being. But if unveiling is the essence of truth, and if in accordance with the transformation [*Wandel*] of this essence of truth the assignment [*Zuweisung*] of being is also transformed, then *the essence of 'history'* is *the transformation of the essence of truth*." GA 54:81/*Parmenides* 55, trans. mod., original italics restored.

[395] This turn of phrase is from L.M. Vail, *Heidegger and Ontological Difference* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), p. 82, who refers to "the wandering course of the open realm itself" as "the kernel of one of [Heidegger's] most difficult ideas."

It turns out, then, that the grounding disposition of Heidegger's thoughtful correspondence to beyng is indeed a form of trusting, specifically that of assumption-trust. This kind of trust would then be a translation of what Heidegger names "shocked and diffident restraint [*erschreckend-scheue Verhaltenheit*],"[396] the disposition honored as central in the *Contributions* that presumably orients thoughtful holding-oneself-in-the-truth (*Sich-in-der-Wahrheit-halten*). We may be able to glimpse how this restraint could be awakened from out of the very disorientation highlighted by Nietzsche if we attend to the shock and terror (*das Erschrecken*) involved in discovering oneself to be "betrayed" by a set of assumptions or a structure. Here is Heidegger's description of what I have understood (chapter 1, part II) as 'disorientation', the "betrayal" of one's background assuming:

> Being shocked [or terrified, *Erschrecken*] is being taken aback, i.e., back out of the customariness of familiar comportment, back into the openness of the pressure of what conceals itself. In this openness, what was hitherto customary shows itself as what alienates and at the same time fetters.[397]

The 'hitherto customary' is what one had assumed, the rug that one discovers in shock to have been pulled out from beneath one. If we remain disposed by that shock, in which the self-concealing of beyng is disclosed, according to Heidegger, we may find ourselves (*befinden uns*) also in the grounding disposition of reserve or restraint (*die Verhaltenheit*), the affective step-back that turns toward (*kehrt zu*) the self-refusal and corresponds (*entspricht*) to it as the essencing of beyng.[398]

Accordingly, I would claim that this restraint (*Verhaltenheit*) belongs within the field of the phenomenon of assumption-trust (chapter 1). The clearest way to see this is that restraining

---

[396] GA 65:16/*Contributions* 15.

[397] GA 65:15/*Contributions* 14, trans. mod.

[398] "In restraint, even though one is still taken aback, there prevails [*waltet*] a turn toward [*Zukehr*] the hesitant self-refusing as the essencing [*Wesung*] of beyng" (GA 65:15/*Contributions* 14). Heidegger goes on to describe restraint or reserve as the "*Grund*zug" of the grounding disposition (his emphasis on 'zug'), which should be heard both as the basic characteristic of that disposition and as the basic pull (*Zug*) on us, the way things fundamentally reach us in that disposition (GA 65:17/*Contributions* 16). The grounding disposition "is hardly to be named in one word, unless that word is 'restraint' [*Verhaltenheit*]" (GA 65:395/*Contributions* 313, original italics).

the desire to check up on the situation – to take soundings, as it were – corresponds to the temporal delay inherent in assuming. In the self-investment we have named 'relying,' such restraint could only be a willed decision, since the temporal structure of reliance-trust involves some audit already having taken place, though in principle supplemented by future checking. In *assuming*, by contrast, we have seen that such audits are necessarily delayed due to the complexity involved in discovering oneself to be "betrayed." Thus, restraint could no longer be a willful decision; it would have to be a disposition involved in orienting me within this kind of self-investment.

In fact, it seems that restraint would be precisely the name for the attunement involved in the kind of *re*orientation that takes a step back and interprets its own previous assumption and betrayal as belonging together within a larger context (what Heidegger calls 'turning toward the self-refusal'). It is, in other words, the disposition that enables a certain response to disorientation (i.e., to "betrayal" in the realm of assuming). Not by chance, that kind of response is precisely the one we have seen Heidegger to employ (in chapter 2, section II.C, as well as in the present section).

2. The second way to bring into view what Heidegger thinks we should trust lies in reading his late essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking." Here, as we shall see, he implies that we ought to turn from trusting what-is to trusting the very structure of unconcealment.

Toward the end of this 1964 text, Heidegger appeals to Parmenides as one who, from the viewpoint of the end of metaphysics, can be seen to have spoken already at the beginning of philosophy about the clearing as a constitutive concealment. Heidegger translates the following portion of Parmenides' poem:

but you should learn [*erfahren*] all: / both the untrembling heart of unconcealment [translating *alētheia*], well-rounded, / and also the opinions [*Dafürhalten*] of mortals who lack the ability to trust [*Vertrauenkönnen*] what is unconcealed.[399]

Though he translates the whole passage, Heidegger here abandons his most typical strategy – carefully interpreting each word – in favor of a focus on the phrase 'the untrembling heart of unconcealment, well-rounded.' He takes the 'heart of unconcealment' to be the phenomenon of the clearing, *alētheia* proper: "unconcealment itself in what is most proper to it, the place of stillness that gathers in itself that which first grants [*gewährt*] unconcealment."[400] That 'place of stillness' is *lēthē*, the concealing side of the truth-phenomenon. Hence, as we saw above, concealment first grants unconcealment, and Heidegger names that granting 'clearing' (*lichten*).[401]

It is this clearing for self-concealing that Heidegger understands in this essay to be "the possible presencing of presence [*das mögliche Anwesen der Anwesenheit*] itself,"[402] which is to say, the possibility of experiencing (*erfahren*) what first gives presence, what allows things to show up as fundamentally mattering to us, hence as making various claims on us.[403]

That which first grants unconcealment, Heidegger says, is the way (*der Weg*), the path of experiential (*erfahrendes*) thinking, by which we may seek out and receive (*Vernehmen*) just this appearance of the process of presencing itself. The clearing, then, is what grants the possibility both of this way (i.e., a particular kind of thinking) and of the experience to be had along the way (i.e., the experience of beyng as self-refusing, *sichversagend*). In such an experience, that which allows anything to show up meaningfully for us (including the being of what is) *itself* shows up (albeit only as withdrawing). The clearing makes both the way and the experience possible

---

[399] Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, GA 14:83/*Basic Writings* 444, trans. mod.
[400] GA 14:83-4/*Basic Writings* 445.
[401] Cf. note 20, GA 14:84: "*d.h. die Lichtung*".
[402] GA 14:84/*Basic Writings* 445.
[403] Wrathall distinguishes between intelligibility – being meaningful as organized, instrumental referentiality – and existential mattering (when I am and must be engaged in something). Beingness gives us only sheer intelligibility. Cf. Wrathall, *Unconcealment*, pp. 200, 210.

because it itself is the source or element of the belonging-together of being and thinking, of presence (*Anwesenheit*) and receiving (*Vernehmen*), which is presupposed by any showing up of particular beings.[404]

Heidegger then briefly contrasts the 'way to the heart of unconcealment' with 'the street of mortal opinion'. But there is in this text no reference to Parmenides's *explanation* for the failing of mortal opinion to reach *alētheia* – namely, that mortals lack the ability to trust/rely on (*Vertrauenkönnen*) what is unconcealed. Instead, Heidegger interpolates the famous discussion in which he gives up his earlier claim that *alētheia* was at one time experienced by the Greeks as unconcealment rather than as truth determined by correctness.[405] Such a context prompts one to ask, precisely, *why* mortals always take *aletheia* to be (*halten … für*) correctness. And Heidegger himself does ask this, in a certain way. "How is it that *alētheia*, unconcealment, appears to man's natural experience [*natürliche Erfahren*] and speech *only* as correctness and reliability [*Verläßlichkeit*]?"[406]

The surprising addition of 'reliability' here to Heidegger's usual characterization of propositional truth as 'correctness' must be a nod in the direction of *pistis*, the 'ability to trust [*Vertrauenkönnen*] what is unconcealed' that appears in the passage from Parmenides.[407] In other words, we mortals are too caught up in determining *whether* we can rely upon beings, the things unconcealed, even to consider the clearing that first lets beings appear *as* reliable or unreliable.[408]

---

[404] GA 14:84/*Basic Writings* 445.

[405] GA 14:85-87/*Basic Writings* 445-447.

[406] GA 14:87/*Basic Writings* 447-448, tr. mod.

[407] Cp. Heidegger's somewhat different translation of the same Parmenides fragment, in the 1942/43 lecture course *Parmenides*. *Pistis* is translated there as 'relying on' (*Verlaß*). If we look further forward, in the Zähringen Seminar (*Four Seminars*) Heidegger simply drops the latter portion of the passage (the part involving trust) from his citation and translation. He no longer takes even Parmenides to have thought unconcealment separately from correctness.

[408] Heidegger's explicit discussion of reliability (*Verläßlichkeit*) in "The Origin of the Work of Art" is in line with my characterization of it in chapter 1, above. There he describes reliability as the ground (the essential being, *das wesentliches Sein*) of 'usefulness' or 'serviceability' (*Dienlichkeit*). We should hear in the latter, which he calls an essential consequence (*die Wesensfolge*) of reliability, the means/end distinction familiar from Aristotelianism. What a thing is, especially an artificial thing, is determined by its

So much so that, in epistemology, we even rely upon these beings – truths – for constructing a theory of truth, when we generalize from what truths (unconcealed things) share in common.

Thus, Heidegger does not spend much time on Parmenides's own diagnosis of the problem because this diagnosis itself wanders in errancy – that is, gets caught up in what is and forgets being. It is not our ability or inability to rely on unconcealed things that keeps us from experiencing *alētheia* as such, but rather our focus on what is given (those very unconcealed things) instead of on the how of givenness, i.e., the essential structure of beyng.

Heidegger's thinking, by contrast, does *not* rely on what is, on beings, but on the phenomenological structure of the clearing that allows them to show up. Thus, he goes on to answer his own question – about why *alētheia* appears throughout the history of Western thought only as correctness – by claiming that *alētheia* is the clearing *for self-concealing*, not only for presence (or revealing).[409] In other words, as we have already seen (chapter 2, section II.C), he claims that untruth – understood as hiddenness rather than incorrectness – is not simply a privation of truth but is included in the phenomenal structure of truth, so that unconcealment necessarily makes possible (*ermöglicht*) for us a twofold possibility: we may experience it as the clearing, or we may fail to experience it that way.[410]

---

end (which determines the form). But in reliability we have a more originary thinking of the thing's openness to us, its solicitation of our trust in it as reliance. "The tool in its genuine tool-being comes from a more distant source. Matter and form and their distinction are of a deeper origin" (GA 5:20/*Basic Writings* 161, trans. mod.) than that of the end or the use.

For the tool's reliability "first gives to the simple world its shelteredness [*Geborgenheit*, in which lies its certainty (*gewiss*) for the user] and secures for the earth the freedom of its steady pressure" (GA 5:20/*Basic Writings* 160, trans. mod.). This reliability is both 1) a belonging of the tool to the earth that gives and refuses without explanation (*unerklärt*) and 2) the protection of that tool in the confidence of a familiar world – hence, as Heidegger names it, a "protected belonging [*behütetes Zugehören*]" (GA 5:20). That is to say, as I claimed earlier: relying is structured by familiarity and oriented toward definite (even if implicit) expectations, clearly exposed to disappointment if the thing fails.

[409] GA 14:87/*Basic Writings* 448.

[410] Cf. GA 45/*Basic Questions*, §30, where Heidegger interprets what failed to happen historically as what approaches us as ever more necessary (*notwendiger*) and more compelling (*nötigender*). Precisely by being held back or withdrawn into mere possibility, it draws attention to its own necessity (*Notwendigkeit*).

Although this is clearly no longer to put one's trust in what-is, it seems to me to be no less a matter of self-assurance than the assumptions of metaphysics. If we assume that the mystery is ineluctable and that beyng's unconcealment is unrelenting, then we can make a certain kind of progress by coming to have an experience of the unity of being and thinking as *granted*, but there is no ontological change on offer here: we remain caught up in the dynamic of revealing and concealing, the same dynamic in which we would be caught up if we had never bothered to think.

The specific self that would be reassured here is the thinker, the one who can recognize being's givenness even in its very abandonment of beings. Such a thinker gains phenomenological insight into a certain essential structure – that of originary truth, or that of the history of beyng – and this insight allows the thinker to assume that being will always disclose what-is, that our exposure is never-ending. This is a matter of assurance or security, not of one's own making, but nonetheless brought about through one's own assuming of a certain context.

C) The Turn (*die Kehre*) as an Alteration of Self-Investment

This discussion of truth in Heidegger's reading of Parmenides takes us to the core of Heidegger's well-known turn. For although he does not in this text explicitly address himself to the mortals' trust (or lack thereof) that is mentioned by Parmenides, he nevertheless proposes a turn from relying on particular entities (while assuming that being is a super-entity) to assumption-trust in the unified structure of beyng's essencing, which includes the complex phenomenon of concealment and unconcealment. As he puts it, this would be the turn from what-is in its being to the *meaning* or *truth* of being, i.e., to the essencing of beyng. From our investigation, however, we can see that it is in fact a matter of switching between kinds of trust.

Let me try to characterize that turn more clearly, since there are various distinguishable levels. First, at an ontic level of distress, we might become concerned about the reliability of

181

various things that are and turn to being, not yet by thinking it explicitly as the being of what is (i.e., the philosopher's refuge), but simply within our everyday understanding of being. In this sense, Heidegger contrasts the everyday reliability (*der Verlaß*) of being to the flux of what is. Not only do we encounter being (as import) along with every experience of what is; being is even presupposed by any doubt about particular things. "For how could we doubt what-is, in whatever respect, if what is called 'being' did not remain in the first place reliable [*verläßlich*]? Being is the most reliable [*das Verläßlichste*], and this so unconditionally that, in all spheres of our comportment toward what is, we do not ever become clear as to the reliance [*Verlaß*] we everywhere place upon it."[411] Although we fail to notice that our comportment is opened up by the (historically variable) patterns of import that highlight what-is as essential or inessential, that-things-are can always be counted on to remain.

If at some point we become enamored of this reliability of being (we metaphysicians), then we might try to ground our lives directly upon being's stable foundation, perhaps by living in light of the eternal forms of what is, or by appealing to the *a priori* as a defense against skepticism. Yet, as some metaphysicians in fact did discover (see section I.B above), being then slips away, turns out to be general and empty; we are denied (*versagt*) its reliability to directly ground our projects. From that vantage point, being shows up as the refusal (*die Absage*), the great disappointment, of our expectations for its constancy and meaningfulness.[412] Being, as both Hegel and Nietzsche claim in very different ways, is nothing.

At that point, Heidegger thinks that the way out is to make the turn to thinking about *how* being is given, *how* it can turn out to be both most reliable and also 'nothing,' the refusal of ground. This is, as we just saw, a phenomenological move, except that instead of concentrating on the structures of givenness for what is, he asks about the givenness of those structures

---

[411] GA 51:62/*Basic Concepts* 52.
[412] GA 51:62-3/*Basic Concepts* 53.

themselves – how is being itself given? Like we saw with the essence of truth in the previous chapter, being is *given to us* precisely as concealed, as *withdrawing from us*, bracketing itself. This means: every time we try to reify it as a particular *a priori* pattern, we eventually discover ourselves again betrayed.

But if, again as with the phenomenon of originary truth, we are granted the space in which to step back from this repeated experience of positing and betrayal – what Heidegger calls the 'history of metaphysics' or (as the repeated discovery that 'being' is nothing) the 'history of nihilism'[413] – we may be able to encounter that history as itself a unified phenomenon, one with its own essential structure. Then we could attend, as Heidegger does, to the way in which the withdrawal (*Entzug*) or refusal (*Versagen*/*Absagen*) or even the abandonment (*Verlassenheit*), the staying-away (*Ausbleiben*), of being – all of which are names for the source of our experience of disorientation – are in fact the way in which being is *given* to us. Then we could interpret our experience (*Erfahrung*) of history as an undergoing (*er-fahren*) of beyng's own essencing (*Wesung*).[414]

Let us now render all of this in terms of the analysis of trusting undertaken at the outset of this investigation. We would say, then, that Heidegger wants to turn us from *assuming* being as the unity of eternal forms – and relying on reason as what in principle ensures our access to those forms – to *assuming* our basic belonging to what gives being. That is, he responds to our historical disorientation by reorienting us to a broader structure within which our previous assumptions can find their place. This is why he ends "The Question Concerning Technology" with the hope that art might help us out of the predicament that metaphysical thinking has gotten

---

[413] "[D]oes not nihilism also, or perhaps first of all, put itself properly into play where not only is there nothing to what is but also nothing to being? Indeed. Where there is simply nothing to what is, one might find nihilism, but one will not encounter its essence, which first appears where the *nihil* concerns being itself. The essence of nihilism is the history in which there is nothing to being itself" (GA 6.2:304/*Nietzsche IV* 201).

[414] Cf., among other places, GA 65:494/*Contributions* 388: "Beyng as appropriating event is history."

us into by "newly awakening" for us a "glance into what grants [*das Gewährende*]" being, and by "instituting anew" our confidence or trust (*Zutrauen*) in that same granting.[415]

But discovering oneself, in an insight, as given over to something that is simultaneously disclosed as trustworthy is just the general phenomenon of trust-like self-investment that we have already outlined (chapter 1). We can now see what we *should* find ourselves trusting, according to Heidegger: the complex self-showing of beyng's essence.

It seems to me that the way Heidegger speaks of our belonging to this essence conflates two kinds of trustful security that I have tried to distinguish (chapter 1, parts II and III). On one hand, there is the security of an assumed context, in which (for example) I have grasped the relevant ontological relations and thus understand where I belong within them. This kind of security has glimpsed but not mastered whatever betrayal might eventuate, and is prepared even for repeated disappointments along the way. It has, we could say, incorporated a certain level of betrayal into its understanding of the context: although I cannot simply avoid speaking metaphysically, I recognize in advance that being withdraws from such speech, and so prepare each time to make a fresh start, albeit always within the space opened up by the essential insight into the unity of being and thinking.

On the other hand, there is the security found in personal trusting, in which I am given over to the freedom of the other, confident in her trustworthiness (as disclosed in an insight) but nonetheless vulnerable to her radical betrayal of my trust. The latter would not be able to be anticipated, nor would the relation be in principle recoverable after such a betrayal, even if sometimes the relationship does (contingently) recover.

We can still see the difference between Heidegger's proposal and metaphysics quite clearly when he describes being as "the simple, the insignificant, ungraspable by the fangs of the

---

[415] GA 7:36/*QCT* 35.

will, withdrawing itself from all artifices of calculation, because it surpasses all planning."[416] It is not, in this sense, subject to a 'self-serving snatching up of a self-made security.' Yet, in the same passage (from his lectures on Parmenides), Heidegger characterizes being as phenomenality itself, what must be with us already in any coherent experience. It is "what essences always already and in advance [… ,] the uncanny [*Un-geheure*] that shines into everything ordinary, i.e., into what is."[417] Being is thus immanent to what is, as Heraclitus says of the gods while standing at his stove, but it is immanent precisely as first opening up whatever is for our encounter with it.

When we become distressed or skeptical about the nature of that encounter, as Nietzsche makes clear that we have, Heidegger provides the thinker, specifically, with a way to reassure herself. In an experience of a certain essential unity that binds history (as *Geschichte*), we can recognize that being is *not* a vapor. If it is nothing, it is nothing in a very robust sense, as the non-thing that allows all things to be. Since our essence lies in being-there, we belong to being always already, so that even if it can only be encountered in its withdrawal, nonetheless we are drawn along within that very withdrawal, held in relation to it, and thus held open for disclosure.

III. The Place of Danger and Salvation
"Positionality [*Das Ge-Stell*], although veiled, is still a glance, no blind destiny in the sense of a completely oppressive doom."[418]

"What grace gives us is endangerment. Endless toil is grace. Unceasing danger is grace. […] Grace lets us be reached by [endless toil and unceasing danger]."[419]

To claim that originary truth is – and thus that our relation to being is – a kind of self-assurance for Heidegger is already to take up an interpretive position concerning his frequent

---

[416] GA 54:150/*Parmenides* 101.
[417] GA 54:150/*Parmenides* 101.
[418] GA 79:75/"Turn" 71. "Even in positionality, as an essential destiny [*Wesensgeschick*] of being, there essences a light from the flash of beyng."
[419] Andrew J. Mitchell, "The Exposure of Grace," in *Research in Phenomenology* **40** (2010): 309-330, p. 328.

references, starting in 1936-38 (in the *Contributions*),[420] to our status as essentially threatened. In these discussions he characterizes a danger that would not be only one among many in the midst of World War II, but rather *the* danger (*die Gefahr*), one that threatens our essence as human beings and therefore also the range of possibilities for our future. His work on this danger, and on the promise contained in it, forms a further meditation on what we just saw to be the nihilism of the Western philosophical tradition: the gradual recognition that there is nothing to being.

If all of this sounds rather apocalyptic, that is no accident: a straightforward reading of Heidegger's discussions gives rise to a certain amount of distress (*die Not*) concerning our collective future. Nevertheless, there is another reading that is both possible and in various ways demanded by the texts. Tracing this latter reading will confirm my claims about Heidegger's thinking as elaborate self-assurance, even in the moments at which he is most concerned to disorient our metaphysical background assumptions.

I began the discussion of unconcealment (chapter 2, section II) with a pair of phenomena explained at the ontic level: 1) the interweaving of presence and absence (which Heidegger calls 'juncture,' *die Fuge*) and 2) constitutive concealment. Let me now present another to help make sense of Heidegger's discussion of the danger.

The third phenomenon I want to indicate is simply the working out of a phenomenological assumption that underlies everything we have seen from Heidegger so far: being must be given, even if only *as* intrinsically concealed, or *as* withdrawing from appearance. In other words, as we discovered in his account of the essence of truth (chapter 2, part II), we are also exposed to (or open to) concealment, not only to what is unconcealed, hence we can phenomenologically experience the process or happening of unconceal*ing* as such. I would like to call this phenomenon (according to a familiar move) a *crisis*, in the technical, ancient Greek sense

---

[420] According to Iain Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 200-1.

of a decisive (*krinein*) moment that displays the unity of a complex phenomenon by turning from one essential aspect of the phenomenon to another.[421]

One of Heidegger's clearest examples of this is the relation between night and day. Dawn and dusk here mark crises between what might initially be taken for simple opposites, or even for two merely (chronologically) alternating durations, each of which would be just there for a certain amount of time, then replaced by the other for a time. In other words, day, like night, would be simply present and then absent, rather than presenc*ing* or absenc*ing*. But in saying that one *replaces* the other, we already indicate a relation that is not adequately understood in the indifference of sheer alternation. Day would not *be* day (in all its complexity) without the anticipation of and the emergence from night. The experience of night would be completely different – i.e., night would be a different thing – if night were not understood as arising out of and being followed by day.[422] All our experience of either one is oriented by the other. The two phenomenally belong together; as a structured unity (or whole) of experience, they can be said to form a single phenomenon.

Thus, to put it in terms of the two phenomena introduced earlier, night presents itself within day precisely by its absencing, its withdrawal or self-concealment therein, while day constitutively appears upon a background of concealment: that of its relation to night, and that of day's own peculiar resistance to complete intelligibility.[423] Hence neither is complete without the

---

[421] Thomson follows Hubert Dreyfus in calling this a *Gestalt* switch, in which one abruptly experiences y in the very place where one previously experienced x (his example is the duck-rabbit that Wittgenstein made famous). For the comparison, see *Heidegger, Art*, pp. 192-3.

[422] Astronomy attempts precisely to gain distance from day and night as humanly meaningful phenomena, in order to allow them to subside into indifferent moments of Earth's rotation (the 24-hour day). Even here, however, one does not make sense without the other: the rotation must continue, and a large part of what it is to be the planet is exposure to the sun.

[423] For important uses of the day/night phenomenon in Heidegger's work, see among others *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* (tr. Keith Hoeller [Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000], pp. 133, 158/GA 4:109-10, 136-7), *Country Path Conversations* (GA 77), and the 1968 Seminar in Le Thor (GA 15:301-2/*Four Seminars* 19).

other, which is another way of saying that each opens onto the other, although they are not synthesized into a higher unity. They are, we could say, co-constitutive.[424]

The unity of this complex phenomenon becomes most apparent when we try to give an account of either daybreak or nightfall. Just here, at the joint or turning between the moments of the whole phenomenon, we find we cannot account for the moments except in terms of one another. Dawn *just is* a movement from night into a day that night has already gathered to itself, but to which it has not yet submitted. Something crucial *happens*, dawn *is* an ontic "crisis," in this sense of the word, and yet it was already implicit in the very experience of night. We await the dawn in hope and perhaps anxiety, but nonetheless with little ultimate fear that it might not come at all. (It is not by accident that David Hume addresses precisely the rising of the sun in his argument against inferring the future from previous experience.)

By thinking in terms of *crisis* as the moment of visible unity of a complex phenomenon, already in *Being and Time* Heidegger interprets the moment (*Augenblick*) of understanding my own death, my ultimate exposure and contingency, as a disclosive and potentially redemptive event. Then, as we have already begun to see, Heidegger uses that same analysis at different points in his career for the essence of truth, the essence of technology, and the essence of nihilism (i.e., the history of metaphysical thinking). Each is understood ontologically in terms of a crisis – a decisive point marking the turn between two sides of the same coin – in which the most extreme danger constitutes the very possibility of salvation. Each is thus a phenomenal unity that allows what seems like betrayal to be maintained as assurance: what seemed, in the midst of disorientation, like endless night is now, in a thoughtful reorientation, seen to take its place in a constitutive relation to bright daylight.

Our task in what follows is to recognize this understanding of crisis as it is at work in Heidegger's interpretations of our place in the history of beyng. To do so, we need to attend to

---

[424] For another example, see Socrates's discussion of pain and pleasure in Plato's *Philebus*.

three different pieces: 1) Heidegger's narrative about the danger and about our possible salvation (the latter supported by an account of the human essence and of possibility), 2) an apocalyptic interpretation of the narrative, and 3) a phenomenological interpretation of the narrative. Since the apocalyptic interpretation seems to follow most clearly from the way Heidegger talks about the *danger*, I will give that version (section III.B) as a supplement to the basic narrative (section III.A). Then, since the phenomenological interpretation seems to follow most clearly from the way Heidegger talks about *salvation*, I will give that version (section III.D) after consideration of the salvation part of the narrative (section III.C). So: first apocalypse, then phenomenology. This way of proceeding will allow us to do justice to both readings at some length, which is necessary for developing an immanent critique of Heidegger's work.

My claim, ultimately, is that Heidegger's repeated interpretations of the danger genuinely pull in two different directions. I will try to show that seeing this as a tension between his dual commitments to phenomenology and to hermeneutics can aid our understanding of it, but I will also defend a version of the phenomenological reading as most faithful to the bulk of his work. If I am right, then the very persistence of this tension constitutes further evidence for my reading of Heidegger's trust in beyng as a form of background assuming. It supports my reading negatively, since the most obvious objection to my claim – namely, that he thinks we are essentially endangered, not at all secure – turns out to depend on what is neither the only nor even the best interpretation of the texts. But a demonstration of the tension also supports my reading positively, since it allows us to see that even Heidegger's own attempts to characterize the unity of being and thinking in some way other than as a guaranteed structure consistently succumb to an account that ultimately reassures us of our essential relation to being.

A) Beyng Is Endangered By Its Own Essential Structure

In 1945, as World War II drew to a close, with his two sons still held in Russian prisoner-of-war camps, Heidegger composed a dialogue between two German prisoners in such a camp. This was not the first time he had written about *the* danger (*die Gefahr*), but he makes use of the dialogue's setting to emphasize the layered relation between ontic and ontological danger.

It is clear, first, that the prisoners find themselves threatened by the rigors of camp life, including despair. But, on the same level, the war is now ending; things will get better. There will be progress and improvement of living conditions. The ontic danger is, perhaps, soon passing. Yet it matters that this conversation takes place in the evening (it is entitled "Evening Conversation in a Prison Camp in Russia Between a Younger Man and an Older Man"), that is, on the way toward daybreak, to be sure, but only *through* a deepening darkness.[425] They both speak of being wounded, but they do not seem to mean physical injuries. And although the topic of the conversation is a glimpse into what is healing, the older man makes clear that "in order to comprehend [*begreifen*] what has become healing for you, I would have to know [*kennen*] what is wounded in you. And what is *not* wounded and torn apart in us?"[426] This brings them to discuss the ontological danger that remains and perhaps even grows stronger as the ontic danger clears up with the end of the war.

The younger one explains that "the devastation [*Verwüstung*] we are thinking of has not, after all, existed just since yesterday. And it is not exhausted by what is visible and tangible. It can also never be accounted for by an enumeration of instances of destruction [*Zerstörungen*] and the obliteration [*Auslöschung*] of human lives, as if it were only the result of these."[427] Instead,

---

[425] Cp. Heidegger's rhetorical questions in "Anaximander's Saying": "Do we stand in the very twilight of the most monstrous transformation of the whole earth and of the time of the historical space in which it is suspended? Do we stand before the evening of the night of another dawn? […] Is the Land of the Evening only now emerging?" (GA 5:325-6/*OBT* 245).

[426] GA 77:206/*CPC* 133, my italics.

[427] GA 77:207/*CPC* 133.

what is at stake operates on the level of essence, in terms of the invisible that enables visibility. As Hubert Dreyfus has nicely put it: "The threat is not a *problem* for which there can be a *solution* but an ontological *condition* from which we can be *saved*."[428] Solutions make problems dissolve, whereas ontological salvation, for Heidegger at least, transforms *us* by altering our range of possibilities.

The difference between these two levels in terms of the danger (*die Gefahr*), or what threatens (*die Bedrohung*), appears relatively clearly in Heidegger's Bremen lecture entitled "The Danger," presented just a few years after the war (1949). It is also correlative to the various layers of truth I worked through in my previous chapter, and to the various turnings mentioned just above (section II.C).

Heidegger says, first of all, that death, pain, and poverty, as ontic distresses, "are all indications by which the danger lets it be noted that *the* [ontological] distress remains outstanding [*bleibt ... aus*] in the midst of the tremendous [ontic] distresses, that [in these distresses] *the* danger *is* not as the danger."[429] Simply because we are concerned about genuinely terrible things regarding beings does not mean that we are at all distressed with regard to our relation to being. In fact, according to Heidegger, ontological danger only *is* insofar as it concerns us or presences to us, so that when we are concerned about ontic dangers, that *is* an encounter with our ontological danger, but *as* unrecognized, rather than *as* most dangerous. He has just spent several pages working out the ontological meanings of these particular indications: as the limit to world-disclosure, death is beyng's refuge or gathered sheltering, which indicates that beyng does not show up without being-there; pain is beyng's basic sketch, indicating our exposure to its structured independence (we cannot fully control how things matter to us); poverty is liberation

[428] Hubert Dreyfus, "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology," in *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge*, eds. A. Feenberg and A. Hannay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 99, original italics.
[429] GA 79:57/"Danger" 54, trans. mod., original italics.

into the propriety of things, indicating our ineluctable belonging to them. When we fail to interpret these ontic phenomena ontologically, we are simply milling about in what is, failing to attend to beyng.

Then, secondly, Heidegger sets out the interrelation of the two levels, first in terms of the way ontology shapes our experience of what is, then in terms of how we might come to recognize this shaping in a thoughtful experience of disorientation and discovery. First, in the order of the phenomenon itself, the ontological danger "is concealed in that it is disguised [*verstellt*] by positionality [*das Ge-Stell*]."[430] (By positionality, to which I will return in detail shortly, Heidegger means the way being shows up to contemporary human beings: it orders or positions whatever is as information for use.) Here we can recognize the mystery (self-concealment) that is not encountered *as* mystery (or the danger *as* danger) because it is disguised, meaning that it disposes (*ver-stellt*) us into errancy.[431] That is one level. Again, however, positionality "is itself veiled once again in what it lets essence, in technology [*Technik*]."[432] Here we have a second level, that of what is: we encounter things in a technological way – we deal with them as resources for maximization – but do not notice that this is a particular way of being disposed toward them rather than simply what they *are* in themselves, independently of us.

Second, if we follow the chain the other direction, according to the order of our knowledge of the phenomenon, we receive some guidance about what the ontic phenomena mean ontologically.[433] In other words, we get an explanation of why our relation to the essence of technology is a strange one.

---

[430] GA 79:57/"Danger" 54. See below for the meaning of 'positionality.'
[431] "The zone of this dangerousness [*Gefährlichkeit*] of the danger [i.e., *how* we encounter the danger as dangerous], which thinking must traverse in order to experience the essence of beyng, is that which earlier in another place was named errancy [*die Irre*], [which] would belong to the essence of truth in the sense of the unconcealment of being" (GA 79:54/"Danger" 51-2).
[432] GA 79:57/"Danger" 54.
[433] Going this direction, starting from what is most familiar to us, is parallel to the movements in chapter 2, section II.C, and in section II.B of this chapter.

To what extent is it strange? Because the essence of technology does not come to light as positionality, nor the essence of that as the danger, nor this danger as beyng itself, therefore precisely now, where everything indeed is more and more permeated by technological manifestations and the effects of technology, we everywhere still misinterpret technology.[434]

Let me follow for a bit Heidegger's account of the essence of technology, so as to clarify what he means by 'positionality' (*das Ge-Stell*). Normally, *das Gestell* means a rack, a frame or framework, a stand, or a stage, such that *die Gestellung* means a presentation or an appearance (presumably on the rack or the stage), a muster or a marshaling (of forces in some pre-arranged area). But Heidegger hyphenates the word because, in thinking ontologically, he recognizes that the *Ge-Stell* is not one single thing, but rather the unity or essence of a multiplicity of phenomena.[435] These phenomena include (at least semantically) a whole set of words involving *stellen* (which itself has a relevant range of meanings including to place, to posit or position, to establish, stand, or impose, and to supply).[436] The unifying name that Heidegger gives for what governs all of this ordering and positioning, hence what first disposes *us* to see everything that is in terms of its orderability or disposability, is 'positionality' (*das Ge-Stell*).[437]

But let us ask about the matter itself, not only the name. Earlier (chapter 2, section II.C), I characterized the truth of essence as a set of dispositions, a fundamental attunement, to take certain things as *essential*, i.e., as the characteristics of what-is that matter the most. As we have

---

[434] GA 79:57/"Danger" 54, trans. mod.

[435] Heidegger hears it as a word explicitly modeled on *das Gebirge* (a gathering of mountains, *Berge*, into a mountain range) or *das Gemüt* (one's temper or disposition, as a gathering of the ways one is inclined toward something, *nach etwas zumute ist*), or even *das Gebäck* (pastries or cookies, a gathering of what has been baked, *gebacken ist*). The first two examples are from Heidegger, GA 79:32/"Positionality" 30-1. In the third lecture of *Basic Principles of Thinking* (included as "The Principle of Identity" in *Identity and Difference*), Heidegger adds *das Gesetz*, law, which gathers by positing (*setzen*) the unity of (or by setting together, *zusammensetzen*) many propositions (*Sätze*). See GA 79:124/*BPT* 116.

[436] Thus: to requisition or to order (*Bestellen*); to pursue, to entrap, or to provoke (*Nachstellen*); to imagine, to represent or to think representationally (*Vorstellen*); to produce (*Herstellen*); to arrange or to situate (*Hinstellen*).

[437] Other English translations have been offered for the term, including 'Enframing' (Lovitt and Stambaugh) or 'the Frame,' 'the Construct' (Sheehan), 'the System' (de Beistegui), and probably others of which I am not aware. For reasons given in the text, I will use 'positionality,' which is Andrew Mitchell's translation. The '-ality' suffix preserves the generalizing effect of the '*Ge-*' prefix, and the term reminds us explicitly that what are gathered or structured are activities of positing and positioning for the sake of disposing most efficiently.

since seen (section I.B of this chapter), Heidegger claims that trust in reason is just such a pre-determining disposition. Positionality is the current form of that trust in reason, which trust has been reaffirmed with a vengeance precisely in reaction to the disorientation that Nietzsche highlighted. As what Heidegger calls an epoch or a dispensation (*Geschick*) of being,[438] it is a pre-decision about what can count as real (i.e., a set of assumptions integrated and in that sense learned, but not consciously adopted). In this case, what is allowed to count as real, the structuring filter through which we see everything that is in the epoch of positionality, is what Heidegger calls standing-reserve (*Bestand*) or (more colloquially) resources.[439]

What does all of this mean? We contemporary Westerners encounter natural resources, renewable resources, and even human resources, all of which obviously must be managed so as to be dealt with efficiently and appropriately. And in order for these things to be managed as resources, they must be on hand as organized, at our disposal, available for requisitioning, so as to aid production or consumption. When our understanding of being is in terms of information (which is posited beforehand as uniform and endlessly orderable, transferable, and replaceable), everything turns out to be reducible to information. Even data, as data-stream, is not primarily a gift (Latin: *datum*, what is given) but what is to be – one might almost say, is destined (*geschickt*) to be – processed and communicated. That is just what one does with data.

I am tempted to say that this is simply right. Not necessarily that Heidegger is right in his diagnosis, but that this characterization of things as resources that ought to be governed by efficiency, of data as inherently for processing and communicating, is an accurate representation of the way things really are. Does Heidegger think we should pursue *in*efficiency? Does he think we should forget that some of our natural resources are non-renewable and just go ahead and

---

[438] Cf. "Anaximander's Saying," GA 5:337-8/*OBT* 254-5.

[439] Conveniently, *Bestand* is the noun form of *bestehen*, which can mean 'to be' in the sense of 'to persist' (so of course *Bestand* is a shape of being!) but can also mean more specifically 'to be in place' or 'to be available,' at one's disposal. 'Standing reserve' thus tries to indicate a stock that stands (*steht*) ready for disposal.

squander them? He has characterized being-there as fundamentally oriented in the world by its *projects* – how are we supposed to carry out projects without seeing things as resources for them?

That temptation, the sheer difficulty of imagining some genuinely other way of looking at things that would have the same intuitive pull or level of obviousness as the one I have, is precisely what Heidegger thinks is dangerous about positionality. It is why Dreyfus referred to it as an ontological condition from which we need saving. As an epoch in the history of the transformations of truth and being described earlier, it is not unique in shaping what is obvious. That is what every different clearing does. Heidegger's worry is that this particular epoch is, we could say, uniquely good at closing off other options. In his lecture on positionality, he explains that "standing reserve [inherently] persists [*Bestand besteht*]. It persists insofar as it is imposed upon to make a requisition [*auf ein Bestellen gestellt*]." In its turn, "[r]equisitioning is only directed to one thing […]: to position *the one whole* of what presences as standing reserve. Requisitioning is in itself universal."[440]

There is an intentional circularity here, what Heidegger calls "the circuit of ordering [that] takes place in positionality and as positionality."[441] The goal is to get everything to be maximally available for use. But why is that the goal? Because that produces the greatest efficiency. And why be efficient? Because resources need to be maximally available for use. Such a circle tends toward encompassing everything that is and all ways of unconcealing what is.

Heidegger's claim, then, could be summarized this way: what is can only be seen as a constantly present stock of resources if *everything* is such a resource, if the whole into which things fit is an ordered system that exists for the sake of perpetuating that system. "Positionality names the universal ordering [*universale Bestellen*] that is gathered from itself, the gathering requisition [*versammelnde Bestellen*] for the complete [*vollständigen*] orderability of what

---

[440] GA 79:26, 32/"Positionality" 25, 30, trans. mod.
[441] GA 79:32/"Positionality" 31.

presences as a whole."[442] Because of this uniquely universalizing capacity, positionality assumes

a role that other constellations of beyng have not – that of the highest danger.[443] Let us try to see

why. According to Heidegger:

> The essence of positionality is the collective positioning that pursues its own essential truth with
> forgetfulness, a pursuit that is disguised in that it unfolds in the requisitioning of everything that
> presences as standing reserve, establishing itself in this and ruling as this.[444]

As a first move toward clarity, let me simply paraphrase: The danger, the essence of *Ge-*

Stell, is *Stellen* gathered in itself, which ensnares (*nachstellt*) the unconcealment of its own

essence in forgetting.[445] This pursuit (*Nachstellen*) with oblivion (i.e., the withdrawal behind what

is and its import that allows beyng, the granting of this import, to be forgotten) is therefore the

ontological danger, but it disguises itself (*sich … verstellt*) by showing up as ordering (*Bestellen*),

thereby establishing itself (*sich … einrichtet*) in – and ruling or determining everything that is as

nothing other than – standing reserve (*Bestand*).

So we have, at one level, a concealment of the fact that being (the various structures of

givenness for things) is itself *given* or unconcealed. This concealment unfolds as a remarkably

long run of forgetting. But, at another level, it is not as if we ever *notice* that everyone has

forgotten this crucial happening, since it seems to us like we *know* what things are: resources to

be managed and ordered in an optimal way. The question concerning technology is then merely

how best to deal with those resources. Heidegger highlights this second level, the level of self-

disguising – we could say: the fact that it is *structurally* disguised – as what is *dangerous* about

the danger, or, in other words, as the way that we encounter the danger every day.

---

[442] GA 79:32/"Positionality" 31, trans. mod. My rather free translation incorporates Heidegger's marginal note indicating that 'universal' is to be understood as "*versammelnde*," gathering.

[443] "The destining of revealing is as such, in every one of its modes, and therefore necessarily, danger. […] Yet when destining reigns in the mode of positionality, it is the supreme danger" (GA 7:27/*QCT* 26, trans. mod.).

[444] GA 79:68/"Turn" 64.

[445] Recall the progression from *Being and Time*: the question of the meaning of being (the question about its givenness, how it is unconcealed) has been completely overlooked or, whenever it emerged briefly, immediately forgotten through the whole history of very smart people thinking very hard. That seems odd. There must be something about being that lends itself to this forgetting or even produces it.

As a second mode of clarification, let me translate more expansively. Heidegger claims that "technology itself prevents any experience of its essence"[446] (recall that its essence is positionality) by developing in the departmental sciences a kind of knowing that cannot reach the realm of essence – i.e., one that cannot think being as such but only what is, in its patterns and probabilities. If we assume that everything is explicable by recourse to forces (or, more broadly, through the use of mathematics; or, still more broadly, that everything is explicable *at all*, that an explanation is the only mode of knowing), then it turns out that what we admit to encountering are all and only things that are explicable by forces (or, respectively, things that are fully explicable). Thus, once the variety of modes and concrete practices of thinking are leveled down to only calculative reckoning,[447] the manipulation of information, then every time we try to evaluate technology, we do so technologically (i.e., from a technological Framework, the *Ge-Stell*), and so we take technology as an entity rather than as being itself.[448]

If we do manage to gain an experience of technology's essence, however, and so see it as an instance of beyng's own essencing – i.e., as the understanding of being that prevails in Western humanity currently – then we realize that the essence of technology "is to seek more and more flexibility and efficiency *simply for its own sake*,"[449] as Dreyfus helpfully summarizes. Then we might be able to realize that all the many threats to and from various entities (including mass death, poverty, pain, and global warming) are posed as *problems* that encourage us to seek

---

[446] "What Are Poets For?" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, tr. A. Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins Perennial Classics, 2001), p. 115, trans. mod./GA 5:295.

[447] Cf. "Gelassenheit," translated as "Memorial Address" in *Discourse on Thinking*, trs. J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 56 (trans. mod.)/GA 16:528: "the approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man in such a way that calculative thinking may someday remain *as the only way of thinking* that is valid and practiced."

[448] Cf. the common claim that 'technology is just like anything else, dependent for its value on the use to which it is put.' This claim has two major problems, according to Heidegger, which are separated in my statement of it by the comma. First, 'technology is just like anything else': this takes technology as a sort of vague collection of machines, or perhaps as a certain capacity (like information conversion and transfer), but at any rate, as a means to an end, hence as an entity among others. Secondly, 'dependent for its value on the use to which it is put': this takes all things as intrinsically value-neutral facts, entirely subject to human use and valuation. (See the discussion of Nietzsche in section I.B, above, and GA 79:60/"Danger" 56-7.)

[449] Dreyfus, "Gaining a Free Relation," p. 100, original italics.

technological solutions, and that solving them in this way may turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory, since it will further entrench us in our positional understanding of being.

But if we thus bracket the level of ontic danger, there remain still two different ways to interpret Heidegger's discussion of beyng as itself the ontological danger. As Richard Polt puts it, "Heidegger's writings seem to swing back and forth between two poles: unique happening and universal structures."[450] We could also say: between a hermeneutics of history and a certain phenomenology. I will begin with the way of reading ontological danger that seems to me more obvious, the one that construes the threat as more serious. Then, after considering how Heidegger thinks the human essence as possibility, I will present the second way of reading the danger and ask whether the threat thus construed is sufficiently troubling to warrant Heidegger's apocalyptic descriptions of it.

B) Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted (Apologies to Kant and Derrida)

If we return to the "Evening Conversation," we find the danger characterized as the unity of the earth's devastation (again, not merely destruction) and the correlative annihilation (*mit ihr zusammengehende Vernichtung*) of the human essence.[451] Considered as this unity, Heidegger

---

[450] Richard Polt, "*Ereignis*," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. R. Dreyfus and M. Wrathall (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 389.

[451] We should not miss the reference to Nietzsche contained in 'devastation' (*Verwüstung*), a bringing about of the desert or wasteland (*die Wüste*). In a set of lectures delivered ten years after the "Evening Conversation" was written (namely, *What Is Called Thinking?* in 1951-52), Heidegger quotes Nietzsche's seemingly self-contradictory aphorism: "'The wasteland grows; woe to him who shelters wastelands within!'" GA 8:69/*WCT?* 64, trans. mod.

Heidegger at this point in his thinking distinguishes between devastation on one hand and destruction or annihilation on the other, but he holds the former to be *worse*, not better. "[The aphorism] means, the devastation is growing wider [*breitet sich aus*]. Devastation is more than destruction [*Zerstörung*]. Devastation is more uncanny than annihilation [*Vernichtung*]. Destruction only sweeps aside all that has grown up or been built up so far, but devastation blocks all future growth [i.e., binds it under the ground: *unterbindet*] and prohibits all building. Devastation is more uncanny than mere annihilation. The latter, too, sweeps away everything – indeed, even the nothing – but devastation establishes and spreads what blocks and prohibits" (GA 8:31/*WCT?* 29-30, trans. mod.). It is as if devastation implied not only razing a village and killing all its inhabitants, but salting the earth and poisoning the water table, as well.

calls the danger "evil itself [*das Böse selbst*],"[452] although he is careful to distinguish this as prior to any sense of moral evil. I take him to mean that such annihilation would prevent us from being able to authentically distinguish between moral good and evil in the first place, such that *we* would not be able to name it as a moral evil; just as I pointed out earlier (chapter 2, section I.A) that there is no place for *us* to stand from which primitive trust can be evaluated as justified, since any such stance is already within that trust.

If the danger is, in whole or in part, that our essence will be *annihilated*, as Heidegger maintains in the 1930s and '40s, then it is hard to see how what saves could always remain entwined with that danger. When Heidegger explains in 1957 that "[a]s presencing, being is dedicated to [or 'delivered over to the ownership of': *zugeeignet*] the human essence,"[453] having already warned us in 1946 that the human is threatened "with the death [*Tod*] of his own essence," a threat which "assaults [or concerns: *angeht*] the essence of the human in its relation to being itself,"[454] is this not painting an apocalyptic scenario in which being, which we normally take to be what is most reliable, would no longer enable what is to show up for us? That what is would cease to be disclosed to us as mattering *at all*?

It seems, in fact, that between 1936 and 1946 Heidegger traces out just this worry. For example, he claims in "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being" (written 1944-1946) that "the human is threatened with the annihilation [*Vernichtung*] of his essence, and being itself is endangered in the usage of its abode."[455] In other words, since being-there is the place (or abode) at which beyng manifests itself by "using" being-there to let what is presence (*An-wesen*),[456] and

---

[452] GA 77:207/*CPC* 133.
[453] GA 79:126/*BPT* 118.
[454] GA 5:294-5/"What Are Poets For?" 114-15.
[455] GA 6.2:355/*Nietzsche IV* 245.
[456] *Anwesen*: to essence (*wesen*) in a way that approaches us (*geht uns an*), a way that matters or makes a difference.

the human is threatened with being unable to essence as being-there, then what is could no longer presence – *and from this there would be no recovery*.

Even worse, there may *already* be no recovery. As we will see, Heidegger's concern is that our epoch in history may have reached a point of no return, from which any possibility of salvation through thoughtful awakening to the crisis has been removed by our vision of the world as willed and calculable (i.e., as will and representation). Heidegger claims in the *Contributions* that a second inception of thinking, in which we would experience beyng as event, would have to inaugurate a new relation to what is. In this new relation, all of our dealings with what is would be oriented from out of an attentiveness to beyng, "such that beyng, its truth, explicitly bears every relation to what is."[457] That would require a fairly radical transformation – Heidegger calls it an overthrowing (*Umwerfung*), a sea-change in how we are as human beings – by which we would be extricated from our current orientation, an orientation that involves "the disavowal [*Verleugnung*] of all history [*Geschichte*]" in favor chronological history (*Historie*).

Furthermore, Heidegger asserts that the "success or failure" of such a salvation "cannot be calculated," even though we can think through its contours, what it would have to involve, in advance. This means that the attempt by positionality to posit everything as calculable runs aground here, since what would ground this radically different way of being is "given or withheld by the event of appropriation itself." Thus, despite its requiring our cooperation ("a coming-to-meet-it [*Entgegenkunft*] from the side of the human"), we can neither calculate nor control it, nor even sovereignly bring about our own cooperation, since this is "perhaps already something impossible for humans today." It would take place from the side of beyng, as a "cutting loose" of what is from the pervasive strictures of positionality, a "squandering" of things by freeing them from total control.[458]

---

[457] This paragraph and most of the next paragraph are from GA 65:248/*Contributions* 195-6.
[458] GA 65:406/*Contributions* 322.

Returning to 1946, Heidegger says that we are threatened with "a single endless winter"[459] in which it would be dark all the time. He has earlier characterized this as "the *conclusive* abandonment by being [*schließlichen Seinsverlassenheit*],"[460] the "desolation [*Verödung*] of the human,"[461] and (he adds some 20 years later) we would be the slaves of this complete concealment of being (*vollkommene Verborgenheit des Seins*), its complete oblivion (*vollkommene Seinsvergessenheit*).[462] This is "the danger of all dangers to being-human [*Menschsein*], namely, the danger of the grounding and destroying of its essence [*seiner Wesensgründung und Wesenszerstörung*]."[463] In such a situation, "the human being would no longer be there [*nicht mehr da sei*] in order to correspond [*entsprechen*] to what appears, but rather only in order to master" what previously was an appearance.[464]

All of that, I submit, would seem to justify Heidegger's use in the *Contributions* of dramatic words like *erschrecken*, to shrink back in terror (the basic disposition that governs one's initial response to an experience of beyng), *Verrückung*, deranging the human essence into being-there (what is required for becoming authentic understood as a kind of going crazy, questioning the obvious basic patterns of experience), and *entsetzen*, to unsettle by horrifying or appalling (one way to characterize beyng's self-refusing relation to us). And it would make good sense of Richard Polt's translation of *die Not*, the plight or distress or urgency of our situation, as 'emergency' in his commentary on the *Contributions*.[465]

---

[459] GA 5:295/"What Are Poets For?" 115.
[460] GA 65:423/*Contributions* 335, my italics.
[461] GA 65:406/*Contributions* 322.
[462] GA 15:370/*Four Seminars* 63.
[463] GA 65:424/*Contributions* 335.
[464] GA 15:284/*Four Seminars* 9.
[465] Titled, appropriately, *The Emergency of Being*. See pp. 5-6 for his justification of the translation, although it is hardly strange to everyday German, in which a normal term for emergency is *Notfall* (lit.: a case of distress), the emergency room can be referred to as the *Notaufnahme* (the place that accepts emergencies), raising the alarm in an emergency is a *Notruf* (a call of distress), and one of Heidegger's early lectures took place during and was interrupted by the War Emergency Semester (*Kriegsnotsemester*).

We might call this the apocalyptic strain in Heidegger's thinking, in which he attempts hermeneutically to interpret our historical situation and even to attend to a parallel hidden history (*Geschichte*) that shapes the chronological one. Indeed, as Polt explains in an essay on the manifold meanings of 'the event' (*das Ereignis*) in Heidegger's work, at least around the time of the *Contributions* (the late 1930s), Heidegger attempts to "explicitly embrace historicity and integrate it into our thought." [466] Rather than thought's being able to grasp the essences of givenness phenomenologically, givenness is, in a way, itself up for grabs. This has several consequences that Polt lays out.

First, as I will discuss in more detail below, being-there "must be recognized as a historical *possibility* rather than as a given phenomenon." The analyses of *Being and Time* and of *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, in which being-there is the neutral essence inhering in each human being, are seen to be inadequate to understand our complex belonging to being-there.

Secondly, the event (as the grounding of the there) is "highly exceptional," "inaugurating a place and age in which the givenness of beings can be questioned and cultivated by a people."[467] Heidegger's differentiation between two inceptions (the first – ancient Greek – and the other that he seeks) do not "refer to moments in which human beings recognize or fail to recognize an already given state of affairs"; rather, "[t]o seek the other inception is […] to prepare for the essential happening of *Ereignis* itself." This essential happening, "should it ever happen, will be a crisis," so "in a time that is indifferent to crisis, the greatest danger is that be-ing will fail to happen, because we will fail to enter the condition of urgency that *Ereignis* requires."

---

[466] Polt, "*Ereignis*," p. 381. This essay was published before the appearance in 2009 of GA 71, entitled *Das Ereignis*, dated 1941-42, and relevantly containing, among other things, a 20-page set of extended dictionary entries concerning words essentially linked to *Ereignis* (titled "The Event: The Vocabulary of its Essence"), not unlike Aristotle's *Metaphysics Δ*, and an 8-page summary entitled "The Treasury of the Word." These two sections on vocabulary are followed by roughly 20 pages of more loosely organized thoughts, under the titles "The Event" and "The Event and the Human Essence."
[467] This quotation and the rest of this paragraph from Polt, "*Ereignis*," p. 382.

The possibility of beyng's failing to happen suggests, then, that the event may be one, unique event that has never yet happened, or has not yet happened fully, and may never happen.

Nevertheless, thirdly, Heidegger claims that "only the greatest happening, the innermost event, can still save [*retten*] us from lostness in the bustle of mere incidents and machinations."[468] But such saving may not be available, since the event may not take place. That risk may also suggested be by Heidegger's later echo in the *Spiegel* interview, when he claims that "only a god can still save us" – or, perhaps, "only *another* god can save us."[469] As Polt neatly summarizes, then, this historical thinking is "in the future tense and subjunctive mood."[470]

Polt goes on to characterize Heidegger as quickly turning away from this revolutionary tone, which flashed up for a brief moment in the *Contributions*. Nevertheless, as I will try to make sense of in what follows, every one of Heidegger's works cited just above in offering what might be called the apocalyptic reading – including the *Contributions* – also carries an ameliorating qualification. With this crucial *and yet*, Heidegger in each case carves out room for the possibility of salvation. Such consistency should lead us to understand that very possibility as belonging essentially to the danger, as one of the aspects of danger's self-unified structure.

Recognizing this structure would then open up a more phenomenological interpretation of the ontological danger. We can catch glimpses of this already, when Heidegger says that "the danger of all dangers" is "the danger of the grounding and the destroying" of the human essence, and that in such destruction the human being would no longer be there to correspond to what appears but only to master it.[471] In the danger, then, we encounter not only the destroying but also the *grounding* of the human essence. Likewise, should that danger come to pass, the human

---

[468] GA 65:57/*Contributions* 46, partially quoted in Polt's article, p. 385.
[469] As Dreyfus points out ("Free Relation," p. 105), the latter is also a possible translation of Heidegger's "*nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*." See Heidegger, "'Only a God Can Save Us': The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)," tr. W.J. Richardson, in *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, ed. T. Sheehan (Precedent, 1981). The interview was published May 31, 1976, five days after Heidegger's death.
[470] Polt, "*Ereignis*," p. 384.
[471] See GA 65:424/*Contributions* 335 and GA 15:284/*Four Seminars* 9, respectively.

would no longer *be there* in some ways (those modes of disclosure would be closed off), but we would still *be there* to do something, in which case perhaps we could turn and own up to our being-there. Maybe even in the very taking-place of what the danger threatens us with, the human essence (being-there, *Dasein*) would not really be *annihilated* after all.[472]

It begins to seem as if we might have two competing accounts of the danger in Heidegger's work. There is his frequent talk of essential annihilation and desolation, but there are also hints that such language is overblown, or at least requires heavy interpretation. To sort out what Heidegger means by the danger, and to see whether annihilation is an appropriate word, or whether something else is at stake here, we will have to consider more closely the terms of his discussion. If it is the human essence that is threatened, how does he think that essence? If danger and salvation are understood as possibilities, what does he mean by 'possibility'? These considerations will open up a second way of reading the danger, one that would attend especially to the status of what saves as a constant possibility.

C) Of Essence, Possibility, and Essential Possibility

If nothing else, Heidegger's apocalyptic language brings into sharp relief the circumstances under which something like the question of the truth of being might emerge from within experience. Already in *Being and Time*, being-there understands being precisely insofar as its own being is at issue. And as Polt reminds us, what is as such (*Seiendes als solchen*) makes a difference to us only because we are confronted with questions like 'who am I?' and 'who are we?' The givenness of being thus shows up in a crisis over my identity, a crisis of belonging.[473] For when my identity becomes problematic, then the problem of identity as such can emerge –

---

[472] Heidegger consistently distinguishes between annihilation (*vernichten*) and nihilation (*nichten*), reserving the former for complete removal or destruction, and the latter for modification, transcending, etc. See, e.g., "What is Metaphysics?" GA 9:113-14/*Pathmarks* 90.

[473] Polt, "The Burning Cup," pp. 8-9; cf. *The Emergency of Being*, the argument of which the article summarizes.

and Heidegger has shown *that* problem to be precisely the question of the unity between being and thinking.[474]

1. Human Essence

Heidegger consistently claims that "the history of the human being" in which he is interested is "the history of the *essence* of this being,"[475] so if we are to think about who we are for Heidegger, we must get straight how he sees the human essence. First of all, I should note that already, in a somewhat hasty way, I have characterized the human essence as *thinking* and as complexly *belonging to being* (in the earlier discussion of the unity of being and thinking, section II.B).

We find confirmation that this initial characterization is faithful to Heidegger's account in the same set of Bremen lectures from which our discussion of the danger has proceeded. In the lecture called "The Turn," Heidegger says that the human essence is "to be the one waiting, the one who waits upon the essence of beyng, in that he protects [*hütet*] it by thinking."[476] And in a lecture from the same cycle called "The Thing," he claims that mortals "are the essencing relationship [*das wesende Verhältnis*] to being as being"[477] – that is, a relationship not simply to the being of what is, but to being taken on its *own* terms, in terms of its givenness. Thus both thinking and belonging to being – indeed, thinking *as* belonging to being – are understood by Heidegger to characterize the human essence. But in pointing out this confirmation we have run across two other designations: the human as essentially the one who waits (*der Wartende*), and humans as mortals.

---

[474] Briefly: the law of identity (A is A) is a law of thinking, but in the 'is' and in the claim of universal validity it appeals to the *being* of whatever is identified, and so a question about how being and thinking are related must arise. See *Basic Principles of Thinking* (GA 79) and *The Principle of Reason*, tr. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991)/GA 10.

[475] GA 65:491/*Contributions* 386.

[476] GA 79:71/"Turn" 67, trans. mod.

[477] GA 79:18/"Thing" 17.

We can find some help in locating the unity of all of these designations by turning once more to the "Evening Conversation," in which the Younger Man is so designated because he proposes an account of the human essence that initially seems more recent, while the Older Man proposes one that seems older (although these turn out to fit together).[478] The younger one follows the ancient Greek philosophers in seeing humans as preeminently thinkers, the thoughtful animal, *zōon logon ekhon*. The older prisoner goes a bit further back, to ancient Greek epic and drama, in which humans are essentially mortals: those who are related to the divine but are emphatically not immortal.

Heidegger weaves together their designations by orienting both thinking and being-mortal toward waiting (*warten*). This is why the Younger Man claims that "the older definition can only be elucidated if the younger one is thought through."[479] Here Heidegger draws on (without explaining) his extensive work on Greek thinking and proclaims that "*logos* originarily means gathering [*Sammlung*]," such that the human essence as thinking means "to be [actively] in the gathering […] toward the originary all-unifying One."[480] Being-gathered in that way is a mode of receptive relation (to the One or the divine) that opens us up, since it involves a certain attentiveness (*Achtsamkeit*), one that seems connected with waiting for the pure coming (*das reine Kommen*). Similarly, to be mortal means to be stretched out toward death, to be exposed to it and hence able to know about it as such, which "is possible only for one who can, according to his essence [*Wesen*], wait on that which, like death, waits upon our entire being [*Wesen*]."[481]

We may say, then, as a kind of summary, that by being opened up through our relation to the being of other things and to our own death, we are *there* as disclosive of being. Hence we

---

[478] GA 77:221-25/*CPC* 143-146.
[479] GA 77:223/*CPC* 145.
[480] *Ibid.*
[481] GA 77:225/*CPC* 146.

guard (*wahren*) the truth (*Wahrheit*) of being,[482] watching over it attentively as stewards (*Wächter*)[483] or shepherds, all of which can be characterized as a certain kind of waiting (*warten*) or dwelling (*wohnen*). This waiting is not so much waiting *for* beyng as waiting *on* it, serving it, acquiescing to its use of us as the place where it shows up.[484] We should hear an allusion to primitive trust in this account of the human as one who essentially waits on pure coming (i.e., as one who projects the future). That which allows us to be open for what comes, to wait on it, and thus structures our openness along determinate lines (in a particular clearing), is a kind of trust that relates us to beyng. In this trust we can dwell in the shared world as our home.

Waiting is difficult in part because it requires accepting finitude (ours *and* that of beyng), meaning, among other things, that we cannot simply determine the traits of being *sub specie aeternitatis*. Although we cannot avoid such attempts, each one is another version of what Heidegger calls metaphysics, another way of forgetting that beyng exceeds our categories.[485] We must name it anew in each experience of thinking, which involves waiting on it so it can show up in our speech. Such waiting is also difficult in part because we experience this very excess of beyng as our own inescapable being-exposed to things: they matter to us, hence we are vulnerable to them, and this is never simply on our terms.

In this characterization of being-there as the one who attentively waits, we can also hear the account from *Being and Time*: being-there is care (*Sorge*), the ontological meaning of which is temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*). That temporality means that our own being comes to us from the future, what is to come (and, like death, cannot ever be present), that on which we wait. As

---

[482] Cf. the "Letter on Humanism," GA 9:342/*Pathmarks* 260-1: the human essence is "to be called by being itself into the preservation [*die Wahrnis*] of being's truth."

[483] Cf. GA 65:491/*Contributions* 387: "The human being [is] the steward [*Wächter*] of the truth of beyng."

[484] Cf. Bret Davis's footnote 4 in his translation of *Country Path Conversations*, p. 140.

[485] Being is *logos*, or the *idea*, or *ousia*, or… . Heidegger at one point characterizes beyng as "never sayable definitively and therefore never sayable in a merely 'provisional' way" (GA 65:460/*Contributions* 362). Cf. the discussion of the region that is the source of our horizons by being turned in part toward us in "A Triadic Conversation," GA 77:111-148/*CPC* 72-96.

shepherds or guards of the disclosure of beyng, we care about it and for it: not only things, but that and how they *are* matter to us, and we disclose those things in terms of our determinate ways of being among them (*sein bei*). But something has changed in the account. There is now a certain distance understood between the human and being-there, which is precisely the distance between a thing and its essence for Heidegger.

Thus, returning to the Bremen lectures, we find Heidegger emphasizing that humans must *become* mortal, become what we already are, just as in *Being and Time* being-there needed to *become* authentic (*eigentlich*) being-there by owning up (*eignen*) to its own destined role in the manifestation of what is. "From out of rational living beings (*animale rationale*), the mortals must first come to be."[486] "The human is not yet the mortal" because "the essence of death is disguised [*verstellt*] to the human."[487]

I will have to come back later in more detail to the interpretation of death (chapter 4), but for now the important thing is the *distance* between the human and the human essence – between the human and the mortal. This is the same distance we find in the *Contributions*, where Heidegger discusses the separation under two heads: what it means for us *not* to own up to our essence, *not* to be authentic, and what would be involved in becoming who we (essentially) already are.

First, if the essence of the human is to be understood as disclosing beyng by waiting on it, by watching over it through thinking, and 'essence' is that in the light of which something is unconcealed, then to whatever extent we forget beyng and fail to understand its withdrawal *as* a withdrawal (as absenc*ing* rather than sheer absence or emptiness), to that extent we can be revealed to the thinker as those who do not wait – those who are astray (*irrend*) among what is – in other words, those who do *not* think. Since Heidegger's name for the human essence is 'being-

---

[486] GA 79:18/"Thing" 17.
[487] GA 79:56/"Danger" 54, trans. mod.

there,' in the light of our essence we currently *are* being-there, but only in a negative mode, as it were: in the mode of being-away, inauthentically straying (erring) among what is, precisely *in* our metaphysical efforts to determine the being of what is. Heidegger characterizes being-away as "pressing on with [*betreiben*: pursuing as if plying one's trade] *the closedness of the mystery and of being*, forgottenness of being." And he adds: "Herein is expressed in converse [*gegenwendig*] the essential relation [*Bezug*] of being-there to beyng."[488]

If maintaining being as closed-off (taking what is as inherently open, without need of being) is the converse, the negative mode or counter-essence that can make us aware of being-there as proper to us, then we have a foothold from which to ask about what authentic being-there might look like. Indeed, we must already have caught a glimpse of the essence in order to recognize the non-essence as belonging to it. How then does Heidegger understand authenticity in the late 1930s? It must involve sustaining some sort of openness to the mystery and to being.

For one thing, we can say that with respect to beyng, "[b]eing-there is grounded abyssally [*abgründig*: without further ground] in the event, and thereby the human being [is, too], if he succeeds at leaping [*Einsprung*: entering through a leap] in creative grounding."[489] The leap indicates that one cannot infer one's way to the event as the historical giving of being; one must grasp it, encounter it, in an insight or a leap (*Sprung*). The perspective from which one is thinking has to change suddenly (rather than discursively), so as to think from the event toward what is, rather than from what is back to the event. When and if such inventive thinking (*Er-denken*) happens, then the human owns up to being-the-there for finite beyng to show itself. The human would thus take on the "character of *the* being-there in which the there is endured [*bestanden*: also 'confirmed,' as when one passes a test] by sheltering the truth in some fashion or other (such

[488] GA 65:301/*Contributions* 238, original emphasis.
[489] GA 65:301/*Contributions* 238.

as thoughtfully or poetically, or by building, leading, sacrificing, suffering, rejoicing).”[490] In such

a sheltering, beyng is not forgotten but preserved as what gives itself only in epochs (from Greek:

epekhein, 'to hold back from'); it is preserved precisely *as* concealed, but concealed now in an

activity that engages with what is in a new way, rather than getting lost in it and forgetting beyng.

Hence in such a sheltering, what is endured (or withstood) is *possibility*, “not an arbitrary one,

and not 'the' possibility in general, but possibility's essence.”[491]

      We are not yet thinking in this way, as Heidegger tells us over and over in *What is Called*

Thinking?[492] Nevertheless, this is not simply our fault, since it is beyng itself that sets upon and

entraps itself in positionality. Nor is our being-away an accidental privation or recoverable failure

of full presence. “Being-away comes to be the name of an essential (and indeed necessary)

manner in which the human being relates – and indeed must relate – to being-there. With this,

being-there itself undergoes [*erfährt*] a necessary determination [or destiny: *Bestimmung*].”[493] In

this curious passage, we encounter the 'necessity' – the irreducibility – of errancy, which cannot

permanently be avoided. This would perhaps also suggest even the 'necessity' of metaphysics,

and a 'necessary' determination of being-there, to complement (perhaps) the 'essence of

possibility' just mentioned. Were we to *try* to speak in terms of form and privation, we would

have to say that the privation here, as something not simply accidental, alters or modifies the

form. I will come back to this shortly (section III.D), when I develop the second reading of the

danger, but first we need to understand more of what possibility and necessity could still mean for

Heidegger.

---

[490] GA 65:301/*Contributions* 238.
[491] GA 65:487/*Contributions* 383. See below for my interpretation.
[492] *Was heisst Denken?* in Heidegger's title is polyvalent. What does 'thinking' mean? What calls for thought? What summons forth thinking? Or: what does thinking call for? (The last is from Manfred Frings, “Parmenides: Heidegger's 1942-1943 Lecture Held at Freiburg University,” in *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* **19**.1 (1988): 15-33, p. 21.
[493] GA 65:302/*Contributions* 238.

2. Possibility

It is well-known that for Heidegger, in explicit contradistinction to Aristotle, possibility ranks higher than actuality.[494] But it is less than obvious how to understand this. I think we can make sufficient sense of it by looking at two passages, one from Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism" and one from the *Contributions*.

Let me begin with the negative side. On Heidegger's account,[495] metaphysics has gotten itself stuck from the very beginning by privileging actuality (*energeia*, *actus*, *Wirklichkeit*), understanding this as a conjunction of constancy and presence. Thus, what is most real is what is most fully actual, and this is what is most constantly present (preferably existing in an eternal now). Possibility, then, as an abstract form of potency (*dunamis*) or ability-to-be-something, is taken as a lower level of actuality, since it is not yet or no longer fully present, while the highest level of actuality is designated as necessity (being always fully present), and the latter is taken as the aim or *telos* of all things (such that it can be understood as *entelecheia*, having its aim within itself). Thus the great chain of being is a chain of being-as-actuality.[496]

Furthermore, although the being of what is (*ousia*, the abstract noun form of *ousa*, participle for 'to be', according translated by Heidegger as 'beingness') turns out to be same as actuality (*energeia*) in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,[497] in a confusing development of later metaphysical thought, essence (*what* a thing is, *essentia*, the literal Latin translation of *ousia*), gets subordinated to existence (*that* a thing is, *existentia*), which becomes correlated with

---

[494] Cf. *BT* 38/63 and "My Way To Phenomenology," in *On Time and Being*, p. 82/GA 14:102.

[495] *Heidegger's* account, please note. I seek here only to elucidate, not necessarily to endorse.

[496] See GA 65:281/*Contributions* 221 and GA 66:187, as well as the lecture course *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: On the Essence and Actuality of Force*/GA 33. In *Contributions* §158, Heidegger refers to possibility and necessity as "so to speak, two horns [*Hörner*: like horns of a dilemma, but also like antennae]" of *energeia* as actuality.

[497] Aristotle, *Metaphysics Θ*.8, 1050b2-3: "So that it is evident [*phaneron*] that the being [*ousia*] and the form [*to eidos*] are actuality [*energeia*]."

actuality.[498] As a result, being (as *ousia*) ends up designating the abstract essence (what Aristotle called the *ti esti*, the what-being, or the articulation of a thing's being in speech), which is a kind of possibility. Hence one can articulate the being (the essence, *what* it is, in one sense of 'is') of a unicorn without claiming that there are any (*that* it is, in another sense of 'is'). Whence also various forms of the ontological argument for the *existence* of God take as granted the possibility of such a being (God's *essence*) and try to show that this is the singular being for which existence is included in that essence. This makes God the sole necessary being, in contrast to all other beings whose *existences* are ultimately merely possible (i.e., contingent upon God's willing them). In what sense the *essences* of all non-divine beings are also contingent in the same way is then a matter of debate.[499]

But Heidegger wants to think *being* (i.e., possibility) as the highest, without thereby making it abstract (i.e., non-actual). So, just as with essence, he has to give a positive account of possibility that does not take it to be abstracted from what is. If metaphysical thinking takes necessity and possibility as a kind of split in being, as modal modifications of presence, then the thinking of beyng must try to understand "plurality within the happening [or essencing] of be-ing itself, which is irreducible to presence [… i.e.,] plurality within the *giving* of the being of beings,"[500] as Polt explains. The key is to realize that beyng "cannot be understood in terms of a *telos* that is to be made actual; it happens only when it retains its problematic, questionable character and is not subservient to a further goal."[501] Thus beyng has to be thought as refusing itself, as self-withdrawal – in other words, according to the how of its givenness.

---

[498] This is, to be sure, made slightly less confusing if we take into account Aristotle's categorial distinction between first and second *ousia* (which becomes the difference between existence and essence), but that still does not solve the problem that arises from within a synoptic perspective.

[499] Heidegger makes oblique reference to this problem in GA 65:281/*Contributions* 221; the fuller account comes from "Metaphysics as History of Being," in *The End of Philosophy*/GA 6.2 (*Metaphysik als Seinsgeschichte*).

[500] Polt, *Emergency*, p. 151, original emphasis.

[501] *Ibid.*

Heidegger reluctantly acknowledges that we could start by thinking of this self-withdrawal along the lines of Aristotle's definition of motion (*kinesis*): "refusal [*die Verweigerung*] (the essencing of beyng) is the highest actuality of the highest possible as possible and is therefore the first necessity."[502] Two things about this are particularly noteworthy:

First, as Polt says, beyng "preserves possibility without subordinating it to actuality (presence)."[503] It reveals the possible precisely *as* possible by making it active, setting it to work. Thus the challenge for Heidegger is always to think beyng *as* beyng, rather than give in to the temptation to understand it as *a being* (or on the basis of beings).

Second, and crucially, in the passage about refusal Heidegger writes of 'the possible' (*das Mögliche*), not of 'possibility' (*die Möglichkeit*). This I take to be an attempt to move away from abstraction. In discussing the essence of being-there, I quoted Heidegger to the effect that authentic being-there would withstand or endure the *essence* of possibility, not possibility in general. He goes on to explain that this essence "is the event [*das Ereignis*] itself as the enabling [*das Vermögen*] of what is most unique about the appropriation [*der Er-eignung*] – an enabling that withdraws into what is most extreme. Such withdrawal [...] bestows the fissure [*das Geklüfte*] of beyng."[504] The essence of possibility is thought as the event itself, what *gives* being or *makes* the difference between what is and what is not. We could also say that it is what *enables* (*vermöglicht*) what is to show up as important (i.e., in its being), since it is what allows our engagement in a particularly patterned world. The event carries out this enabling precisely through withdrawing in a *particular* way, thus bringing about the multiplicity in the happening of beyng that we were looking for: what Heidegger calls 'the fissure.' Thus Heidegger claims that "[t]he possible [*das Mögliche*] essences in beyng alone and as its deepest fissure [*Klüftung*], so

---

[502] GA 65:192/*Contributions* 244. Cp. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.1, where he defines motion as the activity [*entelekheia*] of a potency *as* a potency.
[503] Polt, Emergency, p. 151.
[504] GA 65:487/*Contributions* 383.

that in the thinking of the other beginning beyng must first be thought in the form of the possible."[505]

We are now prepared for a look at the passage from Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism," in which he tries to think possibility concretely, in its essencing. Once again, he is giving an account of the unity of being and thinking, in the course of which possibility comes to light as essentially a making-possible (*Ermöglichen*) or even an enabling (*Vermögen*).

> It is in virtue of [or by the power of: *'kraft' dessen*] the enabling [*das Vermögen*] of favoring [or of loving: *des Mögens*] that something is enabled to be. This enabling is the authentic 'possible' [*das Mögliche*], the essence of which rests in favoring. From out of this favoring, being enables thinking. The former makes-possible [*ermöglicht*] the latter. Being as what enables and favors [*das Vermögend-Mögende*] is the may-be [*das Mög-liche*]. As the element, being is the 'quiet power' of […] the possible. […] When I speak of the 'quiet power of the possible,' […] I mean being itself.[506]

We should observe, to begin with, that we have once more the familiar three layers. There is first of all possibility (*das Mögliche*) at the level of everyday, metaphysically influenced language, an abstraction that is theoretically understood in relation to actuality.[507] Its essence (designated generally by reference to 'the possible' but in this passage by 'the authentic possible' so as to avoid unwanted ambiguity) is enabling (*Vermögen*), or authentic making-possible (*ermöglichen*, Kant's 'condition of the possibility'). The essence of *that*, then, the happening in light of which it is unconcealed, is what Heidegger here calls favoring (*das Mögen*) and elsewhere names inclining-towards (*Zuneigung*).[508]

---

[505] GA 65:475/*Contributions* 374. For Heidegger's experimental working-out of beyng as the possible in terms of its fissure, see GA 65/*Contributions* §159 on mastery [*Herrschaft*]; for the corresponding development of necessity as a fissure of beyng, see GA 65/*Contributions* §§160-163 on being-toward-death [*Sein zum Tode*].

[506] GA 9:316-17/*Pathmarks* 241-242, trans. mod.

[507] "Our words 'possible' and 'possibility,' under the dominance of 'logic and 'metaphysics,' are thought solely in contrast to actuality; that is, they are thought on the basis of a definite […] interpretation of being as *actus* and *potentia*, a distinction identified with that between *existentia* and *essentia*. […] I do not mean the *possibile* of a merely represented *possibilitas*, nor *potentia* as the *essentia* of an *actus* of *existentia*" (GA 9:316-17/*Pathmarks* 242).

[508] Cf. the lecture "Was Heisst Denken?" in GA 7 and the first page of the lecture course *What Is Called Thinking?*/GA 8.

Richard Kearney has made the second layer perspicuous by showing that an ambiguity arises in *Being and Time* between making-possible as inauthentically understood (a projective activity of being-there) and as authentically understood (making-possible as being-there's thrownness by being into what is). Kearney then claims that "*vermögen* [enabling] is to be correctly understood as the exclusively authentic essence of *ermöglichen* [making-possible]."[509] On Kearney's reading, then, enabling is making-possible "from the point of view of Being in general […] rather than [that] of the being of man in particular."[510]

With regard to the third layer, we may say that Heidegger characterizes what enables (i.e., the element in which thinking moves, the truth of being) as *intimately related* to that which it enables. It is not a property of something at-hand (like *Vermögen* understood as a capacity of a body) so much as a phenomenologically accessible 'back side' of a phenomenon, the invisible implied in the visible. The intimacy is an active *allowing to belong*: what he calls favoring or loving (*Mögen*) and understands as "the bestowal of [the loved thing's] essence as a gift."[511] Since it is being that enables, what is enabled is allowed to belong to being; in other words, it is allowed to be. Hence Heidegger eventually speaks of being itself (= beyng) as letting-presence (*anwesen lassen*), what first *grants* the being of what is (= import) as presencing (*Anwesen*).

What Heidegger speaks of as 'intimacy' here is what we have already seen as the unity of being and thinking, their belonging-together (section II.B of the present chapter). It is this that was said to be unrelenting, ineluctable, and this that I want to put in question by thinking through the phenomenon of primitive trust. What is the character of this belonging? How do we really experience our relation to being?

---

[509] Richard Kearney, "Heidegger and the Possible," in *Philosophical Studies* **27** (1980): 176-95, p. 187.
[510] *Ibid.*
[511] GA 9:316/*Pathmarks* 241: *das Wesen schenken*.

3. Essential Possibility

With those questions in mind, let us now try to see what significance this intimacy has for being-there as the human essence. The human is not merely something at-hand that would possess properties or attributes (although it can *derivatively* be described and studied this way). Instead, in each case we *are* as projected possibilities – ways of being that are projected in response to a call to be in some determinate way or other (as setting certain goals, actively fulfilling certain roles, and so on). So, we cannot *lose* our possibilities in the sense of misplacing items at-hand. We can only cover them up more or less by projecting other possibilities instead.[512]

Our *essence*, then, is also not something at-hand but rather what stands out as of central importance when we think ourselves as in relation to beyng (which claims us). This means that the human essence is radically at stake in each attempt to think it (or to think being), for although dispositions to take certain things as essential have been handed down or destined to us, it does not seem to be thoroughly determined in what light the human will show up each time.

This is probably what Heidegger is after in saying that humans have our essence as something peculiar (*Eigentümliches*) to us or even as our property (*Eigen-tum*), the space of what is our own (*Eigentum* understood as own-dom, like kingdom). For this 'having' is a kind of project: we must "carry out the acquisition [or adoption: *Aneignung*] and loss [*Verlust*]"[513] of our own being-appropriated, of our belonging to beyng in our very temporo-spatial structure without being able to ground or adequately grasp that beyng. What is up for grabs, as it were, is both *that* and *how* we are appropriated; our task, that to which we are called, is thus "authentically [*eigentlich*] to be the explicit proprietor [*eigens Eigentümer*] of our essence, and to endure

---

[512] Aristotle would have said: by *enacting* other forms of life, from which activity other possible activities would then arise. Heidegger's emphasis lies always on the side of the possible, so he instead takes projection of my possibilities to be what enables me to enact any of them (i.e., to be actual), and my own thrownness to be what enables me to project possibilities.

[513] GA 65: 489/*Contributions* 384.

[*bestehen*] this authenticity […] by standing within it [*inständlich*]."[514] In short, it is because we may also fail to endure the strain of authenticity, in which we are face to face with the groundlessness or finitude of beyng, that having our essence as our property places our essence "in constant danger [*steten Gefahr*] of loss."[515]

D) Of Essence as Gift: Phenomenology

And yet… there is another way to read all of this, one that I think makes better sense overall of Heidegger's thinking. For if our essence is not something at-hand, then Heidegger's worries about the 'annihilation' or 'desolation' or 'loss' of the human essence cannot refer to the disappearance or destruction of something at-hand. Indeed, it seems that, however they might sound, if they are to be consistent, those worries cannot at all be about the complete removal of the human essence from us or from our possibilities, for at least two reasons.

First, it is not as if we already *had* our essence firmly in hand as something actual. As we saw above, Heidegger thinks being in terms of (a revised understanding of) *possibility*, not actuality. Indeed, Heidegger claims in the *Contributions* that being-there is "the *being* [*Sein*] that distinguishes humans *in their possibility* [i.e., in] the highest human possibility."[516] Hence our being, our essence, is what enables our activities; it is not controllable *by* our activities. One could even say that what above all we do not have from ourselves, what can only be *given* to us, is precisely our essence. Heidegger claims in this vein that "the highest and authentically persevering gift [*eigentlich währende Gabe*] to us remains our essence, with which we are gifted such that we first are who we are from out of this gift."[517]

And since it *is* only as given, we may ask what gives our essence, from whence this enabling. Here Heidegger approaches his theme from both sides, as it were: from both *noēsis* and

---

[514] GA 65:489/*Contributions* 384-5.
[515] GA 65:489/*Contributions* 385.
[516] GA 65:301/*Contributions* 237.
[517] GA 8:146/*WCT?* 142. Cf. the quotation from *QCT* in the last line of section II, above.

noēma. He asks *what* is given to us, how to characterize our essence, and, as we saw earlier, he discovers it to be waiting, dwelling, or (to stay with the passage just cited) thinking (*noēsis*): "what is given in the sense of this dowry [*Mitgift*] is thinking. As thinking, it is entrusted to [or pledged to: *zugetraut*] what there is to think."[518] The 'dowry' of which Heidegger speaks we could understand as the gift that accompanies (*Mitgift*) our being-joined to being.

From the other side, then, he also asks *how* thinking is given to us as our essence. We are enabled (*vermögen*) to think only insofar as we are given what is most questionable or thought-provoking (*das Bedenklichste*), what would like to be thought – insofar as it is bestowed upon us as a gift, or, we could say, is entrusted to us.[519] What would like to be thought, being itself, "first allocates thinking to us, entrusts [*zutraut*] thinking to us as our essential destiny [*Wesensbestimmung*], and thus above all assimilates [*vereignet*] us to thinking."[520] In determining our essence as thinking by being given for thought, even (or especially) as withdrawing from that thought, beyng places us back into our essence. Said more directly: being itself, the event, is what "entrusts [*zutraut*] to us our own essence as such."[521]

If we put these two claims together, then, it turns out that we are entrusted with our own essence (thinking) *by* what is to be thought (beyng), and our essence is reciprocally entrusted or

---

[518] GA 8:146/*WCT?* 142.

[519] Cf. GA 8:131/*WCT?* 126, original italics: "When we ask, 'What calls us to think?', then we look toward that which allocates [*vergibt*] to us the gift of this dowry [*die Gabe dieser Mitgift*], as well as to ourselves, whose essence rests in being gifted [*begabt*] with this dowry. Only insofar as we *are* gifted with what is most thought-provoking [*das Bedenklichste*], bestowed [*beschenkt*] with that which long since and for a long time to come would like to be considered, are we enabled [*vermögen*] to think." In the 'would like to be considered' (*möchte bedacht sein*), we should hear the echo of the *Mögen*, the favoring that enables thinking – or calls for it. In the lecture just prior, Heidegger has already meditated on this call, *heissen*, as used by Martin Luther to translate the Latin *iubere*, "wishing that something might [*möge*] happen" (GA 8:121). From there, Heidegger has understood it as *befehlen*, to order or to command, but heard here as to commend (*anbefehlen*) or to entrust (*anvertrauen*) (GA 8:122, 162).

[520] GA 8:125/*WCT?* 121. Cf. the summary and transition for that lecture, GA 8:130/*WCT?* 125: *das Bedenklichste* "entrusts [*zutraut*] thinking in general to us as our essential destiny." "*uns das Denken zutraut*" could also mean 'gives us credit for thinking,' but Heidegger adds a marginal note indicating that it means "to maintain [thinking] by enabling the capacity [*fähig-vermögend halten*] and to entrust [*anvertrauen*] the accomplishment of this enabling [*Vermögens*]." Note that *Vermögen* can also mean 'capacity', and *fähig* as an adjective can mean 'accomplished.'

[521] GA 8:129/*WCT?* 124.

pledged *to* what is to be thought (beyng). Since all of this takes place through the withdrawal of beyng, we should recognize it as a more benign version of Heidegger's characterization of positionality. "The name for the gathering of the challenges [*Herausfordern*: challenging-forth understood as the current form of the claim (*Anspruch*) that beyng always makes on us] that being and the human deliver to [*zustellt*] one another such that they reciprocally position one another is: positionality."[522] We can see, then, why Heidegger would say that even (and perhaps first) in positionality, "we catch sight [*erblicken*] of a belonging-together of the human and being wherein the letting-belong first determines the type of togetherness and its unity."[523] In other words, in recognizing positionality as the depths of the danger, we also recognize that the unity of being and thinking is a strictly given unity, one over which we do not have control. That insight or glimpse, which he thinks can only be provided by a leap (not, e.g., by a deduction),[524] is how Heidegger understands what saves [*das Rettende*].

1. **Hölderlin's Dictum**

For Heidegger, ontological saving (*retten*) does not primarily mean "to seize hold of a thing threatened by ruin [*Untergang*] in order to secure it in its former continuance," "to snatch something from a danger."[525] That would be salvation at the ontic level. Instead, saving means "to set something free [*freilassen*] into its own essence," or "to fetch something home [*einholen*] into its essence, in order to bring the essence for the first time into its authentic shining [*eigentlichen Scheinen*]."[526]

---

[522] GA 79:124/*BPT* 116.

[523] GA 79:127/*BPT* 119. Belonging is understood here as interrelated spheres of ownership: "By its essence, because it is needed, the human is brought into the ownership [*vereignet*] of what is at first still called 'being.' As presencing [on the other hand], being is delivered into the ownership [*zugeeignet*] of the human essence." The space in which the essencing of beyng meets the essencing of the human is, quite simply, the event (*das Ereignis*) that appropriates one to the other and vice versa.

[524] GA 79:122/*BPT* 114.

[525] GA 7:29/*QCT* 28; "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* 148/GA 7:152.

[526] GA 7:152/"Building Dwelling Thinking" 148; GA 7:29/*QCT* 28, trans. mod. Heidegger had earlier (in the Bremen lectures of 1949) elaborated it as follows: "to dissolve [*lösen* (but not to redeem, *erlösen*)], to

219

Since essences are grasped in a productive seeing (*Er-sehen*) – as the event is thought by an inventive thinking (*Er-denken*) – it is not surprising that Heidegger thinks we are saved precisely through a certain kind of insight, what he refers to as an "event of insight [*Ereignis des Einblickes*]," in which the human essence is "what is caught sight of by this insight."[527] It is then, from out of an attunement of restraint, that we glimpse our belonging to beyng even in beyng's withdrawal, refusal, and abandonment, then that we recognize positionality (as a particular *way* of belonging to beyng) as the essence of technology and as a manifestation of being itself. In other words, says Heidegger, what saves lies in recognizing the danger *as* danger, beyng *as* beyng, possibility *as* possibility, mystery *as* mystery, without making it ontic or actual. It is, in my terms, grasping these as complex phenomena that give themselves in their very withdrawal from actuality.

If we wanted, at this point, to try to hold onto the apocalyptic reading laid out earlier, we would have to put all that was just said about the gift of our essence into the subjunctive. Thus, somehow, we belong to an essence (thinking) that *may* be given, along with an explicit belonging to being, *if* we are at some point enabled to accomplish the thinking toward which we are currently (along with Heidegger) only underway. It might also not be given; our essence might instead be destroyed or completely refused, in either case ceasing to be a possibility for us.

Such a reading, however, would also have to come to grips with a second reason why we probably need not worry about the possible impossibility of our own essence. According to Heidegger, although we are destined to project the possibilities that cover up the danger,

---

liberate or make available [*freimachen*], to free [*freyen*], to spare [*schonen*], to shelter [*bergen*], to take under protection [*in die Hut nehmen*], to guard […] to put something back into what is right, what is essential [*in das Rechte, Wesenhafte zurückstellen*] and guard it therein" (GA 79:87/"Turn" 68). "Building Dwelling Thinking" (from 1951) then makes explicit the connections between these words in a meditation on building as dwelling that moves from *zufrieden sein* (to be at peace) to *zur Freie gebracht, in ihr bleiben* (brought into the the open, to remain in it), from *frei/fry* to *geschont* (spared) and from *freien* to *schonen* (to spare), from *schonen* to *in sein Wesen zurückbergen* (to shelter back into its essence, the realm of its own). Cf. GA 7:150-1/"Building Dwelling Thinking" 147.

[527] GA 79:76/"Turn" 71.

nevertheless in this very distortive projecting, we are implicitly always projecting the possibility of what saves. That is why he can say that being itself is *preserved* (*verwahrt*) in positionality,[528] which means, as we saw with truth (chapter 2, section II.C), that it is given *as* concealed, rather than as simply present. This follows the saying of Hölderlin that Heidegger quotes frequently: "But where danger is, there grows / also what saves [*das Rettende*],"[529] albeit modified by Heidegger's recognition that growing involves taking root and thriving, both of which "happen concealedly and quietly and in their own time"[530] – i.e., underground.

Here it will be helpful to recall the phenomenon of the *crisis* as I characterized it at the outset of this part of the investigation (the beginning of section III). There, I called it the moment of visible unity of a complex phenomenon, which means of a phenomenon whose "reverse side," as it were, is not so much given apperceptively in every presentation as it is granted in privileged moments of insight that also constitute turnings from one essential side to the other. In the example of the dawn, we find a turn from night to day in which it becomes clear how the essences of day and night are bound together. Also important to the ontic example are two features that, it seems to me, return in the ontological phenomenon of danger and saving: first, the turn from night to day (and vice versa) is phenomenally always implied, always coming (*Zu-kunft*); second, the darkness hides things in a way daylight does not.

The former feature is true of the phenomenon, even though from a purely theoretical perspective we can propose that something cosmically could go horribly wrong such that dawn

---

[528] Cf. GA 79:51-2/"Danger" 49. I conclude this from the following claims in the text: Heidegger says a) that "world is being itself," b) "World and positionality are the same [*das Selbe*]," c) "The same [*Das Selbe*] is […] the relation of differentiation [*das Verhältnis des Unterschiedes*]," d) "That which necessarily is held [*gehalten*] – i.e. protected, i.e., preserved, and so in a rigorous sense remains reserved [*verhalten*] – in this relation [*Verhältnis*] that takes place [*sich ereignend*] is the same [*selbig*]." Note that the meaning of the word 'world' has changed from *Being and Time*.
[529] See GA 7:29, 35/*QCT* 28, 34; GA 5:296/"What Are Poets For?" 115; GA 79:72/"Turn" 68; GA 4:21/*Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry* 40.
[530] GA 7:30/*QCT* 28. He continues: "But according to the words of the poet, we may precisely not expect that there where the danger is we should be able to lay hold of [*aufgreifen*] what saves immediately and without preparation" (trans. mod.).

will never come tomorrow, and even though from the perspective of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) it can at times seem as if the dawn will never come. (Note that the latter perspective only makes sense if we already assume that dawn *is* coming.) It is furthermore true that day and night have distinct meanings and open distinguishable worlds; their reciprocity and essential transformation into one another do not make them interchangeable.

The latter feature, that day exposes and night hides, is at the ontological level not a simple binary but a kind of imbalance. So, although Heidegger speaks of the "limpidity of the dark" that "keeps [*behält*] the light to itself" and needs to be guarded as "the mystery of light,"[531] in his reference to 'keeping' he still uses the night as a figure of hiddenness or concealment (*lēthē*), of absenc*ing* (*Abwesen*) rather than abstract or sheer absence (*Abwesenheit*).

If I am right about that, then even when Heidegger refers ("What Are Poets For?") to "the light of day" as "the world's night, rearranged into merely technological day," this 'night' of the world *must* conceal a possible, more authentic light. He immediately goes on to claim, as mentioned in the apocalyptic reading given earlier (section III.B), that this technological day "is the shortest day. It threatens a single endless winter."[532]

I take it that he is not speaking ontically here of the way that technological things (electric lights) replace the sun and artificially extend the day. He means rather that the mode of unconcealing granted to us in positionality only lets things show up as resources, and precludes (darkens or hides) all other modes of unconcealing. As the essence of technology, positionality is thus a 'technological day' that would also be the 'night' (the concealment) 'of the world,' i.e., of the granting of context that allows what is to *be* meaningfully. But positionality, even in

---

[531] GA 79:93/*BPT* 88. "Thus the dark [*das Dunkle*] holds itself distinct from the pitch-black [*das Finsternis*] as the mere and utter absence [*Abwesenheit*] of light."

[532] GA 5:295/"What Are Poets For?" 115. Cp. the *Contributions to Philosophy*, where, in the midst of thinking beyng as a hearth-fire that burns out the space for its own embers to glow, Heidegger asks rhetorically, "How to find beyng? Must we light a fire in order to find the fire, or must we not rather reconcile ourselves to *watching over the night* first?" (GA 65:487/*Contributions* 383).

threatening a 'single endless winter' (in which the world would be permanently dark, i.e., hidden), nonetheless must also 'keep' a more authentic light, a genuine 'day' of other modes of unconcealing that would remain possible even in the midst of 'endless winter.'

That is why, then, in the same text where the human is characterized as essentially "risked" or "wagered"[533] and is claimed to be in danger of "the death of his essence" (still in "What Are Poets For?"), that risking or exposing is understood as both tossing (*loswerfen*) into danger and retaining (*einbehalten*), as one does with a betting chip. "As wagered, those who are not protected [human beings] are nevertheless not abandoned [*preisgegeben*]. If they were […] surrendered [*ausgeliefert*] only to annihilation [*die Vernichtung*], they would no longer hang in the balance." This could mean that we are delivered over (*ausgeliefert*) to whatever may come, not only annihilation but also, perhaps, authentic grounding. But instead, Heidegger interprets it to mean that precisely *as* endangered, put in the balance, the human essence is sheltered (*geborgen*) in the wager itself, hence always already secure (*sicher*) in its ground (i.e., in being). The annihilative threat seems then to be drawn back into the juncture of presencing and absencing that marks a complex phenomenon.

Again, if we ask about the *Country Path Conversations*, in which the specter of "the annihilation of the human essence" arose and from which we disclosed the human essence as pure waiting, we find waiting further specified as releasement (*Gelassenheit*). But in this discovery, we also discover that releasement, as letting oneself engage in that upon which one waits, is only possible if we are *already* admitted to that in which we may or may not engage. The Older Man explains to his interlocutor that the latter was "already one who waits whenever the event of the devastation distressed you. If we were not already in essence those who wait, then how could we

---

[533] *gewagt*, i.e., as thrown (or cast like dice, or played like a card, or laid like a bet) by being, which is understood from out of Rilke's poem as itself the venture (*das Wagnis*) or the authentic venturing (*das eigentliche Wagen*). Heidegger reads Rilke's interpretation of being as grounded in metaphysical willing (venturing as willing), but he nonetheless stays with the words in an attempt to twist free of that will or at least to point out of it.

ever become so? [...] [W]e [can only] wait on that in which we [already] belong."[534] As Andrew Mitchell points out, "For the human, who belongs to [beyng] by essence, to not be released into [beyng] is nevertheless still to bear a relation to [beyng]."[535] This is what the Older Man means in saying that "we release ourselves to the coming because our essence is already released to it"[536] through no doing of our own. We are thus in one sense *always already* appropriated to beyng,[537] while in another sense we have only the *essential possibility* of fulfilling that appropriation, responding to it explicitly. Again, Mitchell: "This ambiguous position between yes and no is not something to flee from but rather is itself the human essence that allows admittance into the open. Suspended between yes and no, our 'residence in this between is waiting.'"[538] We are essentially suspended in the balance, wagered, but already in such a way as to remain secured.

In a similar way, it is in precisely the same text where Heidegger projects the danger as both the possible annihilation of our essence and our possible refusal to let being use us as its abode – indeed, it is only a page before – where he also names being itself "the unrelenting [*das Unablässige*]," "what never lets up [*lässt ... ab*] from unconcealing what is."[539] This never relenting from unconcealing, Heidegger suggests, might seem straightforwardly good (it "essences as promise") but in fact cuts both ways: it also means that the mode of unconcealment that covers up all other such modes by proclaiming that being is empty and general (positionality, nihilism) does not relent in such concealing, just as it does not relent in its revealing. This is how we are (unrelentingly) tempted into metaphysics: being itself appears permanent, given, so its givenness need not come into question. The danger to which being is given over (as self-

---

[534] GA 77:231/*CPC* 150.

[535] Andrew J. Mitchell, "*Praxis* and *Gelassenheit*: The 'Practice' of the Limit," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, eds. F. Raffoul and D. Pettigrew (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), p. 327. I have replaced "that-which-regions" (*die Gegnet*) with 'beyng' for the sake of simplicity.

[536] GA 77:231/*CPC* 150.

[537] "He belongs to it, insofar as he is inceptually appropriated [*ge-eignet*] to the open region, and indeed by the open region itself" (GA 77:122/*CPC* 79).

[538] Mitchell, "*Praxis*," p. 327; he quotes from "A Triadic Conversation," GA 77:123/*CPC* 123.

[539] These quotations and the next two paragraphs are from "Nihilism as Determined by the History of Being," GA 6.2:354-5/*Nietzsche IV* 244-5.

pursuing) can therefore also be described as the threat "that the emergency, as which [being] essences compellingly, never becomes for historical human beings the emergency that it is."

But Heidegger also mentions the other side of the coin here: that, as unrelenting, and as needing being-there in order to appear at all (permanent or otherwise), being compels (or necessitates: *nötigt*) being-there into serving as its place of appearance.

If we then attend to the coin itself – the unity of the phenomenon – it displays the crux of the human essence, the balance or the hinge on which that essence turns either toward what is or toward being itself. This hinge is the fact that being itself addresses (*beansprucht*) the human essence as its abode, whether by withdrawing or by approaching.[540] The fact that being emerges as needing us in the very conditions of its utmost leveling down – in which it seems like it is simply absent, rather than withdrawing – means that there is a task for thinking that will not go away. It can be removed neither through our own achievement of thinking (in which case "the emergency [*die Not*] would be enabled [*vermag*] to be compelling [*nötigen*] in the realm of the human essence") nor through our own failure to think. The latter is the case because being "remains what is to be thought by thinking," even and especially when it is forgotten, since "the lack of distress is the emergency [or need: *die Not*] of being as such," while being as such "is entrusted [*anvertraut*] preeminently and only to thinking." It can only become explicit through thinking, but it only becomes explicit *as* emergency, *as* needing us ever again to think it; it can only become explicit through thinking, but the possibility of such thinking remains always implicit in being's usage of us to let what is show up.

---

[540] *Inter alia*, GA 6.2:330/*Nietzsche IV* 223. That is to say: whether approaching by absencing or approaching by presencing, where approaching is understood as mattering to us and allowing everything else to matter to us in a coherent way. Both this text and the just-previous one from "What Are Poets For?" turn on an interpretation of our relation (*Bezug*) to being as a kind of draw or pull (*Zug*) that can be manifest even in withdrawal (or pulling away: *Entzug*). In a marginal note to GA 6.2:330, Heidegger marks this as the event (*Ereignis*).

If (following Polt) we take the 1936-38 *Contributions* as the height of Heidegger's apocalyptic interpretation of history, it is remarkable that we find even there evidence of what I have called the more phenomenological reading. Keeping in mind our recent consideration of possibility (section III.C), we realize that enabling, as the essence of possibility, only happens as a withdrawing "movement," the history or essencing of beyng, which cannot be pinned down to one permanent manifestation. Heidegger says it this way: "That beyng […] does not become a being, is expressed most pointedly by saying: beyng is possibility, which is never at-hand [*Vorhandene*] and yet *always granting and denying* [*immer Gewährende und Versagende*] in refusal through the appropriating."[541] Here the refusal of beyng to fully show itself, to show up as something other than concealed, is understood not only as hesitating (i.e., perhaps to be given in a new way, perhaps not) but as *always* both granting and denying itself. We should note carefully, then, that even in the *Contributions*, there is a move toward understanding beyng's abandonment as inescapably structural.

The significance of this passage becomes clearer in the light of two other, later accounts. In "Anaximander's Saying" (from 1946), Heidegger characterizes being itself, the event, as what "clears itself in what is and lays claim to [*in Anspruch nimmt*] a human essence" – in other words, that it addresses the human essence as its abode in the midst of what is – "a human essence that, as destined [*geschickliches*], receives its historical path [*Geschichtsgang*], a path sometimes guarded [*gewahrt*] in, sometimes released from [*entlassen*], but never separated from [*getrennt*] being."[542] That inability to be separated from being, the latter's unrelenting quality, is what

---

[541] GA 65:475/*Contributions* 374, my italics.
[542] GA 5:336/*OBT* 253. Cf. the two marginal notes indicating that being itself is to be understood as the event (*Ereignis*) and that its laying claim to the human essence is "*Brauch*" (custom or usage) and "*Vereignung*" (bringing into ownership, joining and appropriating).

Heidegger in 1953 called "the innermost, indestructible [*unzerstörbare*] belonging of the human being within what grants,"[543] i.e., within the event, or within being itself.

What Heidegger claims in all three passages (as in the various passages from 1944-46) is that the whole complex phenomenon of endangerment and saving takes place (*sich ereignet*) within the vicissitudes of belonging to and being used by beyng. As we saw earlier (section II.C), he calls these vicissitudes 'turnings' (*Kehren*), the turning to and fro of being-there between authentic being-there and being-away. It seems, then, that neither we nor beyng could ever annihilate, destroy, desolate, or otherwise do away with our possibility of turning back to beyng.

2. Heidegger in Question

I turn now to the one remaining text cited earlier in support of the apocalyptic reading, the seminars in Le Thor. This is also where Heidegger explains the danger most concretely, so I will take the opportunity to characterize it once again. I would like to take up Heidegger's response to some questions that were raised by Roger Munier in the course of the 1968 seminar, but whose answers were then postponed until the first day he could attend the following year: September 6, 1969. Munier's fifth and sixth questions, as reported in the protocol, ask about what we might call the "dangerousness" of the danger. I would summarize them as follows: 'In the epoch of positionality, *as in every other epoch*, we only encounter the truth of being as hidden. This may be disappointing, but if it is the very structure of being and truth, then what is the big deal?'

In his own words, Munier asks: could one not say that the danger will "finally bring about an essential poverty [of disclosure], from which a turning around [*Umkehr*] of the human to the truth of its essence becomes possible, even if by a detour of errancy?"[544] In my words: does

---

[543] GA 7:33/*QCT* 32, trans. mod.
[544] GA 15:341/*Four Seminars* 44-5.

this historical danger not also share the phenomenological structure of truth, as a complex phenomenon that includes its own betrayal (i.e., errancy)?

Munier then names the danger explicitly: "The scientific interpretation of the world and of natural phenomena brings about a situation where every day the human loses more and more of an already immemorial naturalness."[545] Meaning is leveled down into calculability or predictability – fundamentally: orderability. As Heidegger puts it earlier in the same seminar, "when the astronauts set foot on the moon, the moon as moon disappeared. It no longer rose or set. It is now only a calculable parameter for the technological enterprises of humans."[546] We can no longer encounter it as having any other *real*, *true* meanings, even if we can project poetic significance onto it.

Munier then adds, however, "But what harm does that do [*was schadet das jedoch*] when it makes us attentive to what is indicated by these appearances [*Erscheinungen*] of the world, appearances mastered now and in future – when other more originary ways of expressing the mystery should be thereby unfolded, something to which the appearances no less attest in their own way?"[547] This is *my* question for Heidegger, as well. If appearance always, structurally, shows being, and always shows it to be self-concealing, and always will, what harm does it do when it conceals and reveals according to the particular constellation that makes it most 'urgent' for us to rethink it? Whence the urgency? The possibility of the saving insight into the danger *as* danger cannot be abolished, since it resides in the very danger itself.

Heidegger responds in the seminar itself, as I read it, by characterizing the danger under four different headings.

First, as I hope to have made clear by now, Heidegger emphasizes that forgetting of being does not signify *per se* a lack or privation in us. Rather, nothing is more dear (i.e., more essential)

---

[545] GA 15:341/*Four Seminars* 45.
[546] GA 15:331/*Four Seminars* 38.
[547] GA 15:341/*Four Seminars* 45, trans. mod.

to emergence than concealment, as he translates Heraclitus's *physis kruptesthai philei*. In other words, "being is not 'subject to falling out of attention,' but rather *conceals itself* to the extent that it is manifest."[548] Beyng is itself finite.

Second, one version of this self-concealment is that being intrinsically resists articulation *as* being; we always want to make it some extant thing, forgetting the ontological difference. This is why, for Heidegger, the discussion of being repeatedly arises in the context of the nothing (*das Nichts*) as what is no-thing, that which nihilates (*nichtet*) entities without annihilating (*vernichten*) them.[549] This is what Heidegger had already characterized in the seminar the previous year as "the most dangerous matter [*gefährlichste Sache*]" for thinking,[550] and in the *Contributions* 30 years earlier as the greatest danger to beyng, one which constantly arises out of itself: that greatest danger is "for beyng to make itself 'a being' and to tolerate confirmation on the basis of what is."[551]

Third, understanding positionality means recognizing that the danger lies in part in "the fixing of language outside of its natural possibilities for growth,"[552] which is what happens when we reduce it to an instrument for the communication of information. Heidegger thinks that our authentic form of receptivity is to listen to what is unsaid in the metaphysical language of the tradition (see chapter 7, section II.B), so as to learn to speak otherwise, pushing language to twist free of metaphysics. If, on the other hand, "the possibilities of computer calculation set the standard for language,"[553] then we think of art, etymology, and thoughtful saying as fanciful or metaphorical rather than as disclosive of things. Thus Heidegger says that such reduction of language may bring about the end (*das Ende*) of both language and tradition, since the handing-

---

[548] GA 15:344/*Four Seminars* 46.
[549] See, e.g., "What is Metaphysics?" GA 9:113-14/*Pathmarks* 90.
[550] GA 15:307/*Four Seminars* 22.
[551] GA 65:476/*Contributions* 375.
[552] GA 15:351/*Four Seminars* 51.
[553] GA 15:351/*Four Seminars* 51.

down of tradition primarily happens in language. If everything is assumed to be replaceable, then nothing needs to be handed down, and persistence comes to refer to consistently having something new.[554] As Paul Ricoeur has put it in another context: "The same epoch [technology] holds in reserve both the possibility of emptying language by radically formalizing it and the possibility of filling it anew by reminding itself of the fullest meanings, the most pregnant ones, the ones which are most bound by the presence of the sacred to man."[555]

Fourth, Heidegger claims that the most extreme danger, the extremity of the danger, is "that man, insofar as he produces himself, no longer feels any other necessities than those demands [i.e., hypothetical imperatives] that his self-production calls forth." Nothing constrains us; we take ourselves to be conditioned only by ourselves. In so doing, we take up a fundamentally new relation to being, but *completely without noticing*: to be is no longer even to be an object, which had its own problems, but is now to be replaceable, meaning that the subject/object division disappears into pure relation. Everything is standing-reserve; everything is replaceable.[556]

Previously, metaphysics always felt the need to explain its conditionedness – its contingency – by appeal to a first cause, a single anchor for meaning. But now, for what Heidegger takes to be the first time, we just think we *are* unconditioned, not in need of metaphysics. Even our concerns about interpreting humans as resources are couched in terms of human resources and the exchangeability of values. Although we are in danger of becoming a mere byproduct of production – simple waste for disposal – we comport ourselves as lords of the earth, as if technology were something we created and could control.

---

[554] GA 15:359, 369/*Four Seminars* 56, 62.

[555] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, tr. E. Buchanan (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986), p. 349.

[556] GA 15:368-9/*Four Seminars* 61-2. Cf. "Science and Reflection," GA 7:55/*QCT* 173. Cp. W.V.O. Quine's famous claim that "to be is to be the value of a variable," in "On What There Is," *The Review of Metaphysics* **2** (1948/49): pp. 21-38.

Iain Thomson explains it this way: since we see all entities, including ourselves, as "intrinsically meaningless resources on standby to be optimized for maximally flexible use," we end up optimizing for its own sake. The danger, then, is that "we could become so satiated by the endless possibilities for flexible self-optimization […] that we lose the very sense that anything is lost with such a self-understanding."[557]

Heidegger's way of putting this is to say that while every constellation of beyng destines us to a particular way of unconcealing and not others, positionality is "the highest danger" because "it drives out every other possibility of unconcealing." This is because it "conceals unconcealing as such and with it that in which unconcealment, i.e., truth, takes place [*sich … ereignet*]."[558] In the grip of ordering for its own sake, we forget the uniqueness of the human being as belonging to and needed by beyng, indeed as the site for projecting a meaningful world. If the being of what is can be understood as exchangeability (*Ersetzbarkeit*), which is the character of information, then it seems that nothing *need* be hidden. "For what is of equal value, it is no longer a matter of whether and how it itself still presences as unconcealed against [the background of] something else, something concealed."[559] Just when it seems that everything could in principle be unconcealed, lying there before us as information, what is covered over is precisely the fact that we, as fully human and thus finite, are needed by being for unconcealing.

Even here, however, the very extremity of the danger implies a turn into what saves. Thus Heidegger points out in "The Question Concerning Technology" that since positionality is itself is not something we can invent or make, not something that is itself subject to ordering, it shows us that we are conditioned; we belong to what grants unconcealment, i.e., to the event. But that means that being itself (as positionality) grants us an experience of our essence (as needed and used by being itself) for the first time, and so inclines us to re-think our metaphysical

---

[557] Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*, pp. 199-200.
[558] GA 7:27-8/*QCT* 26-7.
[559] GA 79:52/"Danger" 49.

understanding of essence.[560] In this way, we are pressed to think the essence of truth by the truth itself (essencing in positionality as its current constellation). This is why the Le Thor seminar turns right at the end to an attempt to make sense of the event.[561]

Since the danger is that we will forget completely – in the sense of losing any modes of disclosive activity that might remind us – that we are needed for (or that to us is entrusted) the multiple ways of being of things, their multiple modes of disclosure, what saves is realizing this danger *as* a danger. That means *remembering* (*Andenken*) that the multiple modes of import of things are entrusted to us – granted to us – for disclosure. We, at least, are not disposable or replaceable.

According to Heidegger, then, the "essential insight is that man is not a being that makes himself"[562] but one who must wait upon something else, one whose essence is given from some other source. What is our own, the realm of our proprietorship (*Eigentum*), must be given to us. Thus, in the "Evening Conversation" the Older Man explains that what heals does so "by letting us [expressly] become those who wait." He then adds: "And so for those who wait, the near and the far is the selfsame, although precisely for them the difference of the near and the far holds itself open most purely."[563] I take this addition to be a description both of authenticity (explicitly taking oneself up as one who waits) and of what I have named grasping the unity of a complex phenomenon: experiencing what saves as the back side of the danger, recognizing that beyng withdraws (into the far) and deeply concerns us thereby (is near), that concealment (the far) and unconcealment (the near) belong essentially together.[564] Such authentic waiting does not take

---

[560] GA 7:32-3/*QCT* 31-2.
[561] GA 15:366-7/*Four Seminars* 60-1, including the claim that "positionality is, as it were, the photographic negative of the event" (trans. mod.).
[562] GA 15:359/*Four Seminars* 56.
[563] GA 77:226/*CPC* 146.
[564] This experience is described in the *Contributions* as follows (GA 65:381/*Contributions* 301, Heidegger's emphasis): "The abyss as staying-away of ground is still supposed to be the essencing of truth (i.e., of the concealing that clears). Staying-away of ground: is that not the *absence* [*Abwesenheit*] of

everything to be of equal value (*gleich-giltig*), nor does it erase the difference between the unconcealed and the concealed aspects of a thing, but it does recognize them as aspects of the same (*dasselbe*) phenomenon. As Heidegger himself puts the matter at a certain point, waiting sees positionality as Janus-faced: "It can be understood as […] a most extreme shape [*Ausprägung*] of being. At the same time, however, it is a first form [or prototype: *Vorform*] of the event itself."[565]

3. Phenomenology as Apocalypse

If we are to interpret Heidegger's account of endangerment and salvation as phenomenological in this way, we will have to make some sense of his apocalyptic language. Here I shall just mention – without endorsement or critique – three attempts to do so by other important interpreters as further evidence of a deep phenomenological streak running through Heidegger's work on the danger. We could perhaps take these three interventions as elucidations of Heidegger's claim in the Le Thor seminar that "'human life' as such would be impossible without the prior [*vorgängige*] and unacknowledged [*ungewußte*] clearing of being,"[566] as well as the claim from the *Contributions* cited earlier that being-away (erring) is a necessary determination or destiny of being-there.[567]

In a recent book on sculpture, Andrew Mitchell understands abandonment by being (*Seinsverlassenheit*) in light of Heidegger's frequent claims that things begin their presencing at

---

unconcealment? But the hesitant self-refusal [of beyng] is nonetheless precisely clearing for concealing, hence is presencing [*Anwesung*] of truth. Certainly, [this counts as] 'presencing,' yet not in the manner in which something just there [*Vorhandenes*] presences, but rather [as the] essencing of that which first grounds [any] presence and absence [*An- und Abwesenheit*] of what is, and not only this."

This point appears in the Le Thor seminar as "the [phenomenological] 'step back' (the step that retreats from metaphysics) has the sole meaning of making-possible [*ermöglichen*], in the gathering of thinking upon itself, a glance ahead to what comes. It means that thinking begins anew, so that in the essence of technology it catches sight of the heralding portent [*Vorzeichen*], the covering pre-appearance [*Vor-Schein*], the concealing pre-appearing [*Vor-Erscheinung*] of the event itself" (GA 15:367/*Four Seminars* 61).

[565] Heidegger, "Summary of a Seminar," in *On Time and Being*, p. 53, trans. mod./GA 14:63.
[566] GA 15:362/*Four Seminars* 58.
[567] GA 65:302/*Contributions* 238.

their limits, "for it is here that they enter into relationships with the rest of the world,"[568] into contexts in virtue of which they have their being. Thus, "[a]bandonment is a way to think being as neither wholly present (it has abandoned beings) nor wholly absent (abandonment is *noted*, it leaves its mark on beings)."[569] "This idea of an abandonment of being keeps us from imagining being as inhering in the thing," since for Heidegger beings "are no longer construed as self-contained and discrete objects but as already opened and spilled into the world." Abandonment, then, is a way of recognizing the "constitutive insufficiency" of beings by which they are abandoned to the world, to their context, to the states of affairs within which they can be understood: "Being lies beyond the being, calling out to it that it come forth." This does not mean that being is a thing existing somewhere beyond all beings, but rather that, since things are "essentially relational," for Heidegger "[b]eing takes place between presence and absence […] at the limit of the thing."

If we think the self-withdrawal, self-refusal, or abandonment of beyng as what opens things up to one another, it becomes clear why this would both be always already the case and why it would still claim our express recognition. Precisely because beings are exposed to one another, we can jumble them all together and take them as present in standing-reserve; precisely because their being is vulnerable to context, we can to a certain extent manipulate the context to make them serve our ends. Their essential relationality, however, will always cut against our metaphysical attempts to take them as simply present or absent, hence we will always have the possibility of realizing that their resistance to unconcealment implies the happening of such unconcealment, the presencing involved in presence.

Thomas Sheehan has long been advocating a phenomenological reading of Heidegger, but for my purposes at the moment, I want to focus on his account of nihilism. In a pair of essays

---

[568] Mitchell, *Heidegger Among the Sculptors*, p. 1 and *passim*.
[569] This quotation and the rest of the paragraph from Mitchell, *Sculptors*, pp. 22-23.

called "Nihilism: Heidegger/Jünger/Aristotle" and "Nihilism and Its Discontents," Sheehan reads

Heidegger as parallel to Socrates in the latter's encounter with Meno. Socrates tries to get Meno

to attend to the *essence* of virtue, rather than endless examples, just as Heidegger tries to get Ernst

Jünger (and the rest of us) to attend to the *essence* of nihilism. Sheehan sets this up quite

precisely: "Without first answering [the question of essence] (Heidegger seems to say), one might

end up like Meno […], thinking that nihilism could be overcome by nature, effort, or learning, or

perhaps by some other way."[570] Thus Sheehan lines up the possibility of "a future 'turning' of

being" with overcoming nihilism "by nature," the discipline of willing not to will with "by

effort," reading Heidegger's texts with "by learning," and some kind of gift from the last god with

"by some other way."[571] The point, Sheehan claims, is that "once one recollects the essence [of

something], one realizes that it is always already present, always already known" – it does not

need to be bestowed at all.

Parallel to this realization, Sheehan claims, is Heidegger's recognition that overcoming

(*überwinden*) nihilism is an illusion. Indeed, Sheehan goes all the way the other direction and

advocates what he calls techno-nihilism, the availability of everything to our understanding, as a

triumph of history.[572] To support this, Sheehan presents a tendentious reading of Heidegger's

open letter to Ernst Jünger ("On the Question of Being"), claiming that Heidegger there shows

that "we should await no such future moment [i.e., a future overcoming of nihilism] when being

---

[570] This quotation and the rest of the paragraph from Thomas Sheehan, "Nihilism: Heidegger/Jünger/Aristotle," in *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives*, ed. B.C. Hopkins (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1999), pp. 278-9.

[571] Sheehan takes Heidegger's "only a God can save us now" as ironic (like Socrates' reply to Meno toward the end of the dialogue) in this context.

[572] Cf. the following claims from Thomas Sheehan, "Nihilism and Its Discontents," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*: "Hence, planetary technology is not only inevitable but also unsurpassable" (p. 287); "The technological domination of the globe is the *gift* of the finite open" (p. 295); "One can promote and affirm a world that is, in principle, completely knowable and controllable by human beings and still remain resolutely true to the open" (p. 295); "the mystery of *Ereignis* inhabits and empowers planetary technology. Therefore, we live into the mystery of *Ereignis* not by being less nihilistic but more [i.e., by carrying out] the task of the endless humanization of the world. This was clearly not Heidegger's move, but it should be our own" (p. 296).

would 'turn toward' human beings – because, [Heidegger] says, being is always already" a turning-toward the human essence.[573] The event (*Ereignis*), Sheehan claims, thus "names the Ur-fact that human beings are thrown out of immediacy and into discursiveness, so that worlds of possible significance are engendered and sustained."[574] In other words, entities are "intrinsically open to what the Greeks called *nous*/*noein* [thought] and therefore are *noēta* (intelligible), always already correlative to a possible human *noēsis* [thinking]."[575] This is what Sheehan calls "the entity's *intrinsic* intelligibility, the a priori status of its availability for human engagement."[576] The emphasis here is clearly on the 'always already' character of our relation to being.

Miguel de Beistegui, too, reads Heidegger as a phenomenologist. Specifically, he reads the event not as "an event that took place once, and from which everything else unfolds," but as "the event that does not cease to take place, and in the taking place of which a world is opened up, and beings find their own place. It is the advent of presence, or the opening up of being."[577] As I have tried to show at some length already, between this event that constantly takes place and our forgetting of it in positionality, "there is a *structural* unity. Not an accidental, random relation, linked to some historical contingency, but an essential or intimate relation, precisely, which amounts to nothing other than the necessity of history."[578] Hence our technological way of unconcealing, which is "in a sense contingent," is nevertheless "one that is inscribed *structurally* within the essence of truth."[579]

The most interesting contribution de Beistegui provides for my problematic here, however, is his attempt to understand history (*die Geschichte*) as Heidegger thinks it, including

---

[573] Sheehan, "Nihilism and Its Discontents," p. 277. Note that Heidegger does not literally say 'always already' in the letter, though he does say that being turns toward us ("On the Question of Being," in *Pathmarks*/GA 9).
[574] *Ibid.*, p. 280.
[575] *Ibid.*, p. 285.
[576] *Ibid.*, p. 289, original italics.
[577] Miguel de Beistegui, *The New Heidegger* (New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 83.
[578] *Ibid.*, p. 119, original italics.
[579] *Ibid.*, p. 117, original italics.

his highlighting of the problems that arise in the process. So, he claims that with the event "the history of being is granted a certain necessity: not a rational necessity, such as the one exposed by, say, Hegel, but an ontological or structural necessity, a necessity linked to the play between truth and untruth, or between concealment […] and unconcealment […], in the very happening of being."[580] This, de Beistegui says – and I am inclined to agree – turns out to be a problem for Heidegger, who is trying to think "a history that is entirely heterogeneous to chronology, a future that in a way already was, and could coincide with […] the possibly – [or even] necessarily – endless history of metaphysics."[581] He reads Heidegger, then, as setting up two kinds of time, that of beyng (the event) and that of chronology, narrative time as a series of experienced presents (even if we take these presents in terms of ecstatic temporality as unities of past and future). "The 'first' and the 'other' beginning can coincide, for the simple reason that they correspond to two entirely different temporalities: their relation is one of chronological coincidence *and* historical […] disjunction."[582] Thus de Beistegui claims that "[d]espite Heidegger's talk of 'salvation' and 'rescuing,'" the future of which Heidegger speaks "conforms to neither messianic nor eschatological time, neither to the time of a transforming event having taken place in time, nor to the time of ontological hope," and the futural man "is not the man who is announced, or promised, the man who will come" but rather "the 'to come' within the human, the possible that is already there," "the man who is already coming."[583]

But can we make any sense of such a parallel temporality inhering, as it were, in chronological history? De Beistegui thinks we can if we understand this alternate history according to the *Contributions*, as "the happening of time-space, every time absolutely singular

---

[580] Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis*, p. 122.
[581] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[582] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[583] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

and unique."[584] It would be, then, "the time that is otherwise than worldly, or the time of the earth,"[585] i.e., of concealment that shows up *as* self-concealing. He claims, however, that we will have to depart from Heidegger's text and from the use of the word 'history' in order to consistently think such a time, "for will not 'history' always carry a sequential, chronological connotation? Does Heidegger himself not fall prey to this temptation, time and again?"

De Beistegui thus accuses Heidegger of an "inability to distinguish entirely between history and *chrono-logy*" that plays out in his "chronologizing, as it were, something that is simply otherwise than chronological, and yet temporal through and through." The primary example of this confusion on Heidegger's part is his "talk of epochs, and his attempt to distinguish between moments 'within' history,"[586] even by distinguishing a first beginning and an other beginning. For this latter would "not so much come 'after' metaphysics as [interrupt] it."[587] For this reason, de Beistegui says, "I would like to suggest that the other beginning does not succeed the first beginning," since succession would again submit it to chronology. Instead, recognizing that Heidegger himself spoke of only one history, the history of beyng – "that of the fascination with, and the conquest of, beings in their presence"[588] – "[s]hould we not rather acknowledge that metaphysics would have always already begun, but that this beginning does not have a history that can be *told*? And should we not allow for the possibility that, at the same time, contiguous with this beginning, the interruption of it will have also always already begun?" That

---

[584] Unless otherwise noted, quotations in this paragraph and the next are from *Ibid.*, pp. 147-9.
[585] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 150: "For the earth itself has a history, which is not one of succession, but of superimposition, each geological stratum communicating with all the other strata."
[586] Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 149: "does he not succumb to the temptation of constructing a narrative regarding the history of the first beginning, which progresses toward an ever-greater abandonment and forgetting of the essence of truth in favor of an increasingly representational and machinic worldview?"
[587] *Ibid.*, p. 135.
[588] de Beistegui, *The New Heidegger*, p. 94.

would be to say that history – as such and all history – is "[s]tructurally […] shot through with metaphysics."[589]

To be sure, it is not as if we have nothing to do, no responsibility to respond and thus to engage explicitly in what has already admitted us. The point I wish to make in this section is simply that for a major strand of Heidegger's thinking (one which shows up literally everywhere that we might turn to support a more apocalyptic reading), *we must always already be so admitted* – it belongs to our essence in a way that cannot change. Insofar as we stand in the danger, then, even by forgetting it (lack of distress), we nonetheless constantly and concretely stand in the possibility of what saves, no matter how flat our language or how calculating our thinking has become.

IV. Conclusions: A Matter of Some Tension

With this, I would like to say, the tension I have been pointing out within Heidegger's work comes to a head. Heidegger seems to say, at one and the same time: a) hermeneutically, our particular age especially endangers the human essence, and it may already be too late for any kind of overcoming; b) phenomenologically, this endangerment allows us to encounter the essential structure of beyng (as the giving of import) that maintains itself throughout particular destinings and remains always, if only ever indirectly, accessible.

The same tension animates a particularly difficult passage from the *Contributions*, focused on the event of time-space, in which Heidegger says in immediate succession that waiting "puts up for decision the whether-or-not of the onset [or intrusion: *Anfall*] of beyng" and that through such waiting "everything would indeed already be decided."[590] De Beistegui

---

[589] de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis*, p. 150.
[590] GA 65:384/*Contributions* 303-4. Here is my rendering of the whole passage:
> The *recollective awaiting* [erinnernde Erharren] (recollecting a veiled belonging to beyng, awaiting a call of beyng) puts up for decision the whether-or-not of the intrusion [*Anfall*] of beyng. More precisely, timing [*die Zeitigung*], as this joining of the (hesitant) self-refusal, abyssally

interprets it more or less straightforwardly: "Time […] springs from a certain twofold absencing, the twofoldness of which nevertheless points to a single event: as hesitating self-refusal [thus as an oscillation between granting and refusing], the truth of being is at once this event that is forever withdrawing, thus opening up the past, and forever approaching, turned towards Da-sein from the start, thus opening up the future." Hence, the essence of truth as absencing "is what's always and already awaiting Da-sein."[591]

But I am not sure that it is so clear for Heidegger, at least in the *Contributions*. His next sentence seems in fact to rebut the thought that everything would already be decided, bringing us back to the first statement and emphasizing the decision by once again highlighting *possibility*. "But what refuses itself does so hesitantly; [this hesitation is how] it grants [only] the possibility of the granting and appropriating."[592] If we then follow Heidegger's murky connections, he adds that this possibility of granting and appropriating is admitted, spaced-in, 'as essential possibility,' and the event *is* this essential possibility, the possibility that essences.

What does he mean by *decision*? At the close of the book's introductory movement (entitled "Preview"), Heidegger stops to ask about a certain either-or, about "why it comes to an

---

grounds the realm of decision. With the transport [*Entrückung*] into what refuses itself (which transport is just the essence of timing), everything would indeed already be decided. But what refuses itself does so hesitantly; thus it grants [*schenkt*] the possibility of the granting and appropriating. Self-refusal joins together the transport of timing; as *hesitant*, it is equally the most originary *captivation* [Berückung]. This captivation is the *embrace* [Umhalt] in which the moment and along with it the timing are held fast (as the *originary* abyss? The "emptiness"? Neither the latter nor fullness). This captivation admits the possibility of the granting as essential possibility, slots in its space [*räumt sie ein*]. Captivation is the arranging into space [*Einräumung*] of the event. Through captivation, abandonment is something held fast, something to be *sustained* [or withstood: *auszu*stehende].

The "staying-away" of ground, its abyssal quality, is *attuned* from out of the hesitant refusal, [which is] at once timing and spacing, transporting and captivating. Arranging into space grounds and is the site of the moment. Time-space as the unity of originary timing and spacing is itself, originarily, the site of the moment; this site is the abyssally grounding essential temporality-spatiality [*Zeit-Räumlichkeit*] for the openness of concealing, i.e., the temporality-spatiality for the there.

[591] de Beistegui, *The New Heidegger*, pp. 89-90.

[592] GA 65:384/*Contributions* 303.

either-or *here*."[593] This is not a choice that the human would simply make as an exercise of free will; it is, rather, the emergency within which beyng irrupts. Heidegger says it is the decision about who we are "[i]n our belonging and not belonging to being,"[594] the decision about the "bestowal as a gift or the staying-away of those […] whom we name 'the ones to come.'"[595] It must be decided "because *only out of the deepest* ground of beyng itself is there *still* a *saving* of what is."[596] Then Heidegger adds and emphasizes: "*Must that be*? To what extent is there still only such a saving?" His answer is, as we have seen, that because the danger has become extreme in that it now hides itself, we do not notice any danger, and as such "the initiation of the lack of history is already here."[597] But I think we can read the emphasized question another way, in line with Polt's interpretation earlier: it is not clear for Heidegger at this point whether saving must remain a possibility or could be lost.

We may see this same tension at work in Dominique Janicaud's interpretation of the theme of 'overcoming metaphysics' in Heidegger's work. Janicaud explains that

> holding Being in view as '*Ereignis*' is not derived from the discovery of a transcendental structure or correlation, but announces itself as a sign heralding a *new epoch*. Such an irruption does not proceed from a decree made by thought, it emerges from what, up to the present, Being has reserved and now offers.[598]

This seems quite in keeping with the apocalyptic reading, and seems to be confirmed by one of the characters in the "Evening Conversation," who claims that the 'to come' "could be entrusted [*anvertraut*] to us and at the same time still held in reserve [*aufbehalten*]."[599] "And yet," Janicaud also claims, "this truth – reserved though it is – must also grant itself to humans. Everything else

---

[593] GA 65:101/*Contributions* 80.
[594] GA 65:100/*Contributions* 79.
[595] GA 65:96/*Contributions* 76.
[596] GA 65:100/*Contributions* 79.
[597] GA 65:100/*Contributions* 79.
[598] Janicaud and Mattéi, *Heidegger from Metaphysics to Thought*, p. 9. Responsibility for the various chapters is explicitly divided up between the two authors; the passages I cite come specifically from Janicaud's contributions.
[599] GA 77:218/*CPC* 141.

depends on this *presumption*."[600] That is what de Beistegui designates "an ontological or a structural necessity,"[601] what I have attempted to isolate as a 'complex phenomenon.'

Were we to try to understand Heidegger's work on the danger as *consistent* rather than internally conflicted, I think there are only two options:

Perhaps we are *intrinsically* not-yet thinking, always underway toward our essence, and thus we correspond essentially to the structural withdrawing of beyng. This would mean that authenticity (being-there as grounding the event of the there) involves explicitly recognizing this structure to which we belong – and, I would add, finding in it a kind of security parallel to (albeit operating at a different level than) metaphysics' self-securing projection of truth as certainty. Such recognition would take place as attuned by restraint (*Verhaltenheit*), in which one can recognize one's place and role, drawn along by the possibility of thinking, without grasping at it as a goal that one must reach. As we saw (section II.B.1), this mood of restraint also involves being attuned by awe (*Scheu*) and wonder that being allows what is to show up.[602]

On the other hand, perhaps we are not thinking but we still might, by the grace of the event, should it happen. In that case, the danger is real and genuinely troubling (there is no self-securing going on), but then it is very hard to see how we could be entitled to follow Hölderlin's dictum and maintain that along with the danger there is always the possibility of what saves.

Could there be a third possibility? Could it be *both* that the event may or may not happen *and* that we may or may not recognize it? If Heidegger is to be consistent, *ex hypothesi*, the answer is no. For on the first option just mentioned, the structural account, the event is always happening, and the only decision is whether or not we will ever, contingently, recognize it. Since

---

[600] Janicaud, *Heidegger from Metaphysics to Thought*, p. 6.
[601] de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis*, p. 122.
[602] Thus, in his lectures on Parmenides, Heidegger claims that we experience the Greek gods as the attuning ones, "since awe and favor [*Gunst*] and brilliance of mildness [*Glanz der Milde*] belong to being," which are "experienced poetically in *aidōs* [awe] and *kharis* [favor], and thoughtfully in *thaumaston* [the wondrous] and *daimonion* [the uncanny that inhabits the everyday]" (GA 54:164/*Parmenides* 111).

the possibility of this recognition is constant (as structural), the two cases are not essentially different in their historical significance. It is only with the second reading that the event may or may not happen. But, on that reading, Heidegger always includes our recognition of it as an integral *part of* the event's taking place. To see why, we can run through the account of saving again.

What saves is the event of a certain turning, in which our experience of beyng as withdrawing, refusing itself, *turns into* an experience of being-appropriated to beyng's preservation (*Wahrnis*) in that same withdrawing. We become thoughtfully authentic being-there when we recognize (not merely cognitively, but out of the attunement of restraint) that the withdrawal of beyng is structural and serves to maintain the mystery *as* mystery, rather than trying to force it to become fully present, to leave behind all concealment.

As Heidegger puts it: "Only when the human essence (in the event of insight, as what is caught sight of by this insight) renounces [*entsagt*] human stubbornness [*Eigensinn*: self-will, *lit.* sense of one's own] […] only then does the human correspond [*ent-spricht*] in his essence to the claim [that is encountered in] the insight."[603] To become what we already essentially are, we must give up *making* things our own (securing them for ourselves and thus securing ourselves through them) and yield to our being-claimed by what grants us the sphere of our own. This is to respond appropriately to our own finitude and to that of beyng. It involves learning to dwell with things in language, to belong to beyng explicitly through corresponding, which is what Heidegger names *thinking.*[604]

This means that even on the apocalyptic reading, the event does not happen without our thinking it; we are intrinsically implicated in it. In that case, I cannot see any possibility of a third

---

[603] GA 79:76/"Turn" 71, trans. mod.
[604] GA 79:71/"Turn" 67.

consistent reading, one on which the event may or may not happen, but even if it does we still might not recognize it.

There remains one more tension interior to Heidegger's account that I would merely like to indicate here, since it will become important a bit later (chapter 4). If we ask what role humans have in the decision, it seems that we can destroy our essence without any help (or, at any rate, what help we need has already been granted), but we cannot save ourselves without help. It will depend on which reading of the danger one favors whether *that* help has always already been granted, or only may be at some point in the chronological future.

Thus, in a lecture course from 1957 (excerpted in *Identity and Difference*), Heidegger claims that we experience in positionality a kind of prelude (*Vorspiel*) to the event, but that it is not necessary that we encounter the event only through such a prelude. Rather, we might be able to encounter it explicitly, since in the event of appropriation, "the possibility arises that the event as the sheer reign of positionality is converted [or won over: *verwindet*] into a more inceptual appropriating [*Ereignen*]. Such a conversion […] would result in the […] retraction of the technological world from its position of mastery into one of servitude."[605] Heidegger emphasizes, however, that because we cannot master being, and because this conversion would be on the level of the event (*ereignishaft*), that possibility cannot be fulfilled purely by human effort. It must be brought about (or, perhaps, not brought about) by the event, which takes place in a moment of insight. Already in the Parmenides lecture course fifteen years prior, he describes this insight as "an awakening that all of a sudden sees that what-is 'is'." In such a moment, being "shows itself, if it does show itself, in each case only 'suddenly' – in Greek, *exaiphnēs* [event], i.e., *exaphanēs*, the way that something irrupts into appearance [the event], from non-appearance [literally, *ex-a-phanēs*]."[606]

---

[605] GA 79:125/*BPT* 117-18, trans. mod.
[606] GA 54:222-3/*Parmenides* 149.

We can find a similar sense of the possibility of technology for service rather than mastery in a public lecture entitled "Releasement" (1955), but here Heidegger seems to allow us more participation in both the danger and what saves. He says, on the one hand, that if we fail to attend to the essence of technology, we can reject the claim of things on us and so bend our essence out of shape (*verbiegen*), muddle it (*verwirren*), and empty it out or make it desolate (*veröden*).[607] With the highest technological success, then, would come the danger of "total thoughtlessness," meaning that "man would have disavowed [*verleugnet*] and thrown away [*weggeworfen*] what is most his own, namely, that he is a thinking or reflective being [*ein nachdenkendes Wesen*]."[608]

On the other hand, more than merely recognizing the danger *as* danger, he calls for us to be attuned to things by a disposition he calls releasement (*Gelassenheit*). This, he claims, could afford us a new groundedness amidst technological things, since holding ourselves in "[r]eleasement toward things and openness to the mystery belong together,"[609] if the mystery is understood as what shows itself and at the same time withdraws. Such openness is holding oneself open for the meaning that is concealed in the technological world. It would allow us to use technological objects without becoming enslaved to them, without letting them get a grip on us as what touches us most centrally.[610] And, most interesting for my purposes here, releasement and openness "never fall to us from themselves [*von selber zu*]. They are nothing accidental [*Zu-fälliges*]. Both flourish only through persistent [*unablässigen*], courageous thinking."[611]

---

[607] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 54/GA 16:527. Hereafter, *Discourse*.
[608] GA 16:529/*Discourse* 56, trans. mod. Cf. "What threatens man in his essence is the willful opinion [*Willensmeinung*] that the human, by the peaceful release, transformation, storage, and channeling of the energies of physical nature could make being-human tolerable for everyone and happy [or successful: *glücklich*] as a whole" (GA 5:294/"What Are Poets For?" 114, trans. mod.).
[609] GA 16:528/*Discourse* 55.
[610] GA 16:526-7/*Discourse* 54.
[611] GA 16:529/*Discourse* 56.

Heidegger merely locates us in the midst of this tension, articulates us once again as wagered or thrown into the balance, when he explains that

> we can neither discard [*verwerfen*] the contemporary technological world as the devil's work, nor are we permitted to annihilate [*vernichten*] it […]. Still less are we permitted to indulge in the opinion that the modern technological world would be the sort that completely prohibits [*verwehre*] a departing leap [*Absprung*] out of it.[612]

On its face, this seems quite a reasonable assessment of our situation with regard to technology. But once we project it upon what we have already seen in this chapter – namely, that 'self-securing' is Heidegger's basic diagnosis of metaphysical thinking about truth, and that for Heidegger 'the modern technological world' is the current shape of an unrelenting (if complex) unity between being and thinking – we realize that, as I have already claimed for the Heidegger's truth analysis (chapter 2), subsuming betrayal within a phenomenological structure simply provides a more complex kind of self-securing for the phenomenologist.

This way of grasping the situation also traces the contours of a tension internal to Heidegger's thinking, in which Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology comes apart into hermeneutics and phenomenology, or at least has to struggle to keep these from working at cross purposes. I have tried to highlight the point of divergence here by asking, with Roger Munier, 'what harm does the most extreme danger do?'

Let me clarify that here I have in mind harm at an ontological level. Of course I recognize that there are many ways in which being stuck in a framework of will to power, calculation, and violence harms us ontically. Heidegger's analyses of National Socialism in the *Contributions*, in *Meditation*, and in *The History of Beyng*, among other places, make that quite clear. Among other problems, an ideology of total mobilization leaves us endlessly either enlisted by or crushed by

---

[612] GA 79:129/*BPT* 121, trans. mod. Cf. "For all of us, the arrangements, devices, and machinery of the technological world are to a greater or lesser extent indispensable [*unentbehrlich*]. It would be foolish to attack the technological world blindly. It would be shortsighted to want to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend on technical objects; they even challenge us to ever greater advances. But suddenly and unaware we find ourselves so firmly shackled to these technical objects that we fall into bondage to them" (GA 16:526/*Discourse* 53-4).

the drive to seek more power for its own sake, justifies criminal behavior internationally by appeal to the right of self-assertion, and generates a police state that is ostensibly for our own protection.

But is Heidegger's recognition of beyng as requiring being-there (i.e., beyng's very finitude) not remarkably reassuring for the thinker? Certainly it is unsettling to realize that beyng is not a permanently enduring entity of whatever stripe. And yet, for one who undergoes an experience of the unity of beyng's history, our belonging to this finite no-thing is not something we can change, even with all of our willful destruction. By locating the negation in being itself, then, it seems that Heidegger has absolved us of any ontological fault, at the same time guaranteeing that "where danger is, / the saving power also grows."

Chapter Four
'Apocalypse' Still Means 'Unconcealment'
wherein the Import of Things is interpreted as Radically Contingent,
and a New Reading of Death enters an ongoing Debate

> "[L]ife possesses an uncanny ability to ceaselessly throw itself ever anew
> into a darkness not always accessible to the light of another future."[613]

Introduction

Now that I have shown both that there are two ways to read the ontological danger and that the phenomenological way, although less obvious, seems more faithful to the bulk of Heidegger's diverse texts on the theme, I want to turn around once more and make the case that in terms of the matter itself, Heidegger's apocalyptic inclinations *are* in a way more appropriate (more *sachgerecht*). That case will rest on my earlier argument (chapter 2, part I) that what is at stake in Heidegger's accounts of truth and beyng is the same phenomenon that is at issue in my account of primitive trust. We established there that as the ground of phenomenality itself, this phenomenon (by whichever name) cannot itself be grounded further. Because they are two names for the same phenomenon, we can now ask whether phenomenality itself, our very being-in-the-world or being-held in the truth, is vulnerable to the kind of betrayal that I have claimed belongs to personal trusting (chapter 1, part III).

My argument here is also a way of exploiting the tension in Heidegger's discussion of the danger by using the distinctions drawn earlier between kinds of betrayal (chapter 1) to show that Heidegger has settled too quickly for trusting as background assuming. By showing that he passed over openings within his own texts that might have allowed him to think our relation to beyng along the lines of trusting proper, I hope to mark out a space within which to ask about that relation itself, both with Heidegger and against him.

---

[613] Dennis Schmidt, "On the Memory of Last Things," *Research in Phenomenology* **23**.1 (1993): 92-104, p. 95.

If we were to try to sustain the apocalyptic reading of Heidegger's own texts on the danger, we would have to put all of the emphasis upon the decision, the either-or, between authentic being-there and inauthentic being-away. Will we have the insight, or not? How will we respond to the silent call of responsibility to things, the quiet power of the possible? Will we fulfill our essence as the between of relatedness, or remain lost in metaphysical absolutes?

In this way, we could line up a whole series of rough equivalences running through Heidegger's work. In *Being and Time*, we may never become authentic. In the *Contributions*, we may never become being-there – we may lose our essence by not becoming explicit proprietors. In *Time and Being*, we may fail to repeatedly turn out of metaphysics and thus never be assimilated (*vereignet*) to beyng. In the Le Thor seminar, we may cease to be human, being reduced to the replaceable plaything of technology, without even noticing. In each case, the emergency of the lack of distress would somehow fail to reach us, or at least fail to turn us in toward our essence. Anxiety about finitude would remain covered over because we would never adequately confront death.

Granting all of that, I want to ask about what I take to be a still grimmer possibility. In each either-or, it seems to me there is a third possibility that Heidegger has omitted. What if the emergency did reach us, but it was more than we could bear – if it were excessive in a way that destroyed the possibility of insight? What if, instead of responding to anxiety either by owning up to our finitude or by running away from it, we were simply overwhelmed by it? What could save us from *that*?

To make this question a bit clearer, I want to introduce a fourth and final phenomenon into the series of ontic/ontological analogies that have been aiding our interpretation. (We have already made use of the juncture, constitutive concealment, and crisis.) This one is also encountered at the ontic level, but it calls more directly for an ontological interpretation than the others. I will refer to it as the *failure of mattering*. According to Robert Pippin, this is the central

phenomenon of Heidegger's inquiry,[614] and if we understand 'mattering' as the granting of import (i.e., the givenness of being), then I could agree.

Focusing on Heidegger's analyses of the late 1920s, especially in *Being and Time*, Pippin contrasts Heidegger's project with Kant's transcendental inquiry. Kant was looking to account for the intelligibility of things in terms of transcendental conditions of experience, i.e., conditions that cannot fail to obtain (hence the "Transcendental Deduction" in the first *Critique*). In Pippin's words, Heidegger by contrast asks: "what could meaning [especially the meaning of being] *be, such that it could fail, utterly, and in a way absolutely fail*?"[615] That is, through his attention to the phenomena of death, anxiety, and boredom, Heidegger is trying to describe the "prethematic ontological horizon of sense" as a finite or fragile "horizon of mattering,"[616] one that is constituted by its susceptibility to failure (as attested by, e.g., mortality).

Thus Heidegger interprets experiences of the radical failure of meaning – the way in which, sometimes, for no reason, the world of intelligibility collapses or threatens to collapse *entirely* – as constitutive for being-there (*Dasein*). Death reveals our *thrownness* (*Geworfenheit*): the fact that we do not make ourselves into sites of meaning. It does so because the structuring of ourselves *as* this site where things matter (what Heidegger calls 'care,' *Sorge*) happens or fails to happen not only beyond our control but beyond reasons.[617] That happening (the event in which I am appropriated to everything that is as important) is what provides the space of reasons with its

---

[614] Robert Pippin, "Necessary Conditions for the Possibility of What Isn't: Heidegger on Failed Meaning," in *Transcendental Heidegger*, eds. S. Crowell and J. Malpas (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007), note 51.

[615] Pippin, "Failed Meaning," p. 206, original italics. Cf. "Wherever Heidegger's Kantian talk might lead us, we have to keep in mind how bizarre it would sound to refer to some sort of 'breakdown' in the constitutive-conditioning function of the experience-enabling categories of causality or substance [for Kant]," p. 204.

[616] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[617] *Ibid.*, p. 208: "what it means to be Dasein is to be able to fail to be a 'concernful,' circumspective 'site' of meaning, and that the succeeding and failing cannot be a part of Dasein's project"; "What fails is care [i.e., the structure of Dasein's being], and this precisely not for any reason."

pull on me. Thus, in anxiety, I experience (among other things) precisely the collapse of care –

including care about reasons.[618]

Pippin locates an example of this in Herman Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener." The

title character stops working, but not because of any particular privation, not for any reason or

grand purpose. In Pippin's interpretation:

> The failure of meaning appears to be complete, not a response to the failure of humanism, of
> justice, not a response to the brutality of wage labor and so forth. […] Mattering just fails in the
> way it can […], *in the way that reveals the utter contingency and fragility of it succeeding when it
> does*. Its happening or not happening *is* the event of truth (the occasion for living 'in truth'). [… I]t
> is the radicality of this failure of meaning that reveals what is most essential about such meaning
> (that it can so fail).[619]

I want to emphasize the 'revealing' aspect that Pippin notes here, namely, that *attending to* the

finitude of meaning and hence of being, the radical and inexplicable failure or success of

mattering, allows the failure itself to be disclosive for Heidegger. The very contingency of the

failure of meaning displays something meaningful – the history of 'the event,' the non-

determinative conditions of manifestation – for us, *but only so long as we are thinking about it

from outside of the experience*, as if secure from the conditions of that experience.

Using this fourth phenomenon, what Pippin calls 'the failure of mattering,' I want to put

in question the ontological accounts that Heidegger gives on the basis of the first three

phenomena I have described. In doing so, my intention is not to challenge the analyses of *ontic*

phenomena in terms of crisis, constitutive concealment, and juncture. But I do want to ask about

the appropriateness of these analyses when extended to the particular *ontological* realm in which

Heidegger wants to use them, especially in his account of originary truth.

It seems to me, first of all, that the *radicality* of Heidegger's attention to failure in *Being

and Time* gets significantly relaxed in the transition to his later work, and that this is due in large

---

[618] Cf. Steven Crowell, "Conscience and Reason: Heidegger and the Grounds of Intentionality," in
Transcendental Heidegger, pp. 42-64. See especially pp. 54-58.
[619] Pippin, "Failed Meaning," p. 210, original italics.

part to greater focus on the experiences of crisis, constitutive concealment, and juncture. For Heidegger in the 1920s, when my own thrownness is disclosed in anxiety – the glance into nothingness, in which nothing matters in a structured, meaningful way,[620] i.e., the demands of things no longer reach me in terms of a world – I can no longer maintain a posture of everyday indifference. Encountering what is uncanny about being-there requires of me some response.

Heidegger recognizes two such possible responses, neither of which is simply cognitive: I may own up to my finitude, the determined quality (*Bestimmtheit*) of my particular opening onto and exposure to the world, or I may disown it, fleeing back into what everybody agrees about with regard to death – namely, that it is an admittedly troubling occurrence that happens to everybody someday, a tragic necessity of life, etc. Taking up such everydayness acts like a sedative, soothing my existential anxiety by covering it up, thus also modulating the depth of my exposure to things. As is well-known, Heidegger calls these two possibilities 'authenticity' (*Eigentlichkeit*, owning up to my finitude) and 'inauthenticity' (*Uneigentlichkeit*, disowning the radicality of my exposure).

Heidegger's work after this period seeks to further characterize the life of authenticity (which he begins to label '*Da-sein*,' emphasizing that being-there means being-the-there at which being shows up). But starting already in the late 1930s and early '40s,[621] he moves toward a description of authenticity as *dwelling* in the uncanny, free from power and will, attentive to the danger but also to the saving power within it.[622] Heidegger seems in part to abandon his inquiry into the conditions of failed meaning, even while his language remains at times apocalyptic,

---

[620] Cp. Pippin's emphasis (*Ibid.*, p. 207) on Heidegger's claims that in anxiety "the world has the character of *complete insignificance*" and that "the *totality* of involvements […] collapses into itself" (*Being and Time (BT)* 186/231, my italics).

[621] See especially *The History of Beyng* (from 1938/40; GA 69), *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* (from 1942; GA 53), and *Country Path Conversations* (from 1944/45; GA 77).

[622] Cf. Richard Capobianco's tracing of this transition in chapters 3-4 of *Engaging Heidegger* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), where he focuses first on the change in meaning and relative primordiality of being 'at-home' versus alienation, then on Heidegger's gradual switch in focus from anxiety to astonishment as basic moods.

warning of the possible "annihilation of the human essence."[623] As L.M. Vail has put it, although one never simply becomes authentic once for all, there seems to be a kind of tranquility that ensues from repeatedly making the turn back to being, allowing oneself to be drawn back to a recognition of its finitude and multiplicity rather than fleeing from them.[624] One can become, in other words, somewhat accustomed to the shock of the nothingness in which our openness is uncovered.

Such tranquility, we should note, is supposed to be distinct from resignation. In resigning myself, I close in upon myself and only open to the world in defiant and self-protective explosions. By contrast, releasing myself into tranquility is supposed to open up a way of creative dwelling as the *there* for being. Richard Capobianco puts it nicely in his characterization of the situation of being-there:

> In calm and thoughtful reserve, we take account of our fragile, finite openness in joyful nearness to the astonishing unfolding of all beings (including ourselves) in Being; and we graciously accept and courageously take up the risk of holding ourselves open unto the Open. And by virtue of this gentle resolve, we think, we dwell, we create authentically.[625]

Vail's and Capobianco's summaries do seem to me consonant with Heidegger's later work. But even if someone[626] wants to emphasize the more discordant moments of the late Heidegger, I will contend nonetheless that neither early Heidegger, nor late, nor even Pippin in his paper on failed meaning, attends to a third possibility, one that lies beyond either authenticity or inauthenticity as responses to what is disclosed in anxiety:[627] namely, that mattering can fail in

---

[623] Cf. *Vernichtung* in GA 6.2:355/*Nietzsche IV* 245 and GA 77:207/*CPC* 133, as well as *Wesenszerstörung* in GA 65:424/*Contributions to Philosophy* 335. My discussion is in chapter 3, section III, above.

[624] L.M. Vail, *Heidegger and Ontological Difference*, p. 65.

[625] Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, p. 85. The whole selection is italicized in the original.

[626] In different ways, Reiner Schürmann (*Broken Hegemonies*) and Richard Polt both emphasize this side of Heidegger's thinking. I will come back to Polt's work later in the chapter.

[627] We might think that indifference (*Indifferenz*) just is this third possibility. But as Havi Carel points out, "in the mode of indifference the call [of conscience] has neither been taken up nor ignored, but has gone unnoticed or never took place" (*Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger* [Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006], p. 103). Thus, indifference is indeed a third possibility, but it is not a *response* to the call of conscience as heard in the encounter with nothingness. Carel further distinguishes between genuine (*echte*) authenticity (which would be anticipatory resoluteness) and non-genuine authenticity (which would be

an enduring way, that the shock of being exposed to the world and to the finite structure of disclosure somehow, contingently, can turn out to be too much for me. The event of truth can fail to occur. In this case, anxiety would be neither temporary nor primarily disclosive. It would be, rather, *disintegrative* in a more lasting kind of way.[628] I shall try to show that *this* danger – not Heidegger's – is the one that calls for thinking if we are to discuss originary truth appropriately.

I want first to show some ways in which his work can be seen (and has been seen) as opening onto the possibility of such a danger without pursuing it. The stakes can be summarized as follows:

I mentioned much earlier that Heidegger's work is an attempt to describe the source from which fact and value, the shared world and one's own (i.e., what really matters and what matters to me), have their unity: the meaning of being (see chapter 2, section II.B). In that light, it would seem that the most extreme ontological danger would be a collapse of this unity, the failure of this source to bind the self and the world, in which case neither a stable self nor a structured world would show up. The individual would no longer be in the truth at all. This would be the height of an apocalyptic danger, to which we could not say that the possibility of saving necessarily attaches. It is the danger not merely that we would be unable to seek, but that seeking could happen *without* finding, if questioning turned out to be not only uncanny but uninhabitable. This kind of betrayal, unthought by Heidegger, would be like that experienced by the psychotic, in which self and world are fragmented when the I is overcome by mistrust as a grounding disposition. I cannot authentically dwell in questioning when anxiety about there being no

sheer anxiety as paralysis). This distinction would make sense of an otherwise puzzling passage involving genuineness (unexplained by Heidegger) at *BT* 146/186: "authentic understanding, no less than that which is inauthentic, *can* be either genuine or not genuine." And the distinction might yield non-genuine (*unechte*) authenticity as the kind of third possibility I am looking for, except that Carel, too, understands it as "temporary, an anxiety attack" (p. 105), in contrast to the continuousness of either inauthenticity or genuine authenticity.

[628] Such disintegration, like finding oneself betrayed by a person, may or may not be permanent. To say that again from within Heidegger's terminology: the appropriative event that places us into the truth is contingent. It may or may not take place; when it fails to happen, that tells us nothing about whether it will happen again.

coherent, trustworthy world to question overwhelms me – nor can I simply carry on inauthentically, as one does, for in this case I no longer understand or trust, no longer share the common world with, that 'one' (*das Man*).

If, on the other hand, the unity is so strong that such a failure is impossible, then – as I have tried to show at length (chapter 3, parts II-III) – at a fundamental level our stance in the truth is guaranteed. Maybe we will never be as free as is essentially possible for us (in the sense of 'freedom' that means authenticity, explicitly taking up our openness to beyng and to what is). Maybe the multiple meanings of being, the multiple modes of unconcealment, will remain covered up in a technological discourse. But at least the *concrete possibility* of fulfilling our essence (being-there as waiting, authentically being-free for what is and for the happening of being) would remain in each case available. There would be no complete technological desolation but only a continuous exposure to the things that require our care.[629]

I. Some Openings in Heidegger's Thinking

Let us consider first the height of the apocalyptic danger. One way to think about it would be, with Karsten Harries, to conceive of the event as granting meaning, unifying in a particular configuration being-there with being, where the latter is understood as making a claim on us. Thus the meaning of human existence depends on the meaning of being, but the meaning of being is only ever given as elusive. Harries puts it this way: we "may wait for the call of Being and yet hear nothing" – or even hear something that radically fragments us.[630] We may let an encounter with the nothing turn us out of metaphysics, as Heidegger proposes in the lecture *Time*

---

[629] This last claim is from Andrew Mitchell in a private communication, but see also Mitchell, "Grace," pp. 328-9: "Protecting and taking-under-care name ways in which we can accept the relationship that these dimensional forces offer [i.e., earth and sky open us up to be a Between, exposed to both beyng and things]. It is not a matter of making these forces wholly present or of preventing their annihilation. Either option is still thought too absolutely in terms of a logic of presence and absence."

[630] Harries, "Search for Meaning," pp. 194-5.

and Being … and find only nothingness.[631] "Meaning is given to man as a task, not as a fact. Man can fail in this task, he can lose meaning, either out of weakness or because the meaning of Being conceals itself."[632] If the event does not take place, then the thinker may turn toward being, seeking a meaningful source, and simply not find it. As Harries reminds us, it seems that something like this is what happened to several of Heidegger's favorite thinkers: Van Gogh, Hölderlin, and Nietzsche, all of whom were overwhelmed in a way that turned out to be irreparable.[633] Harries' description of the danger seems to me to fit Heidegger's apocalyptic language quite well: "If meaning were altogether absent, dread would leave man absolutely indifferent. Were this indifference to swallow all care, *Dasein* would have to cease to be"[634] – or, let me add, at least cease to be *as being-there*.

Phenomenologically, how can we account for such a possibility? I will return to the question in more depth (chapter 5), but my proposal so far is that we should understand our belonging to being, our self-investment in the world as such, along the lines of a trust that can be radically betrayed.

Another way to think of the danger would be as the genuine other of truth, something oppositional or resistant (*Widerständiges*) that, unlike concealment, would not be subsumable within truth itself. John Sallis has pointed out[635] that such an other is systematically counted out in the *Contributions*, where Heidegger claims (without argument) that the essence of truth (as

---

[631] *Ibid.*, p. 184: "But what if the meaning of Being is nothing? If instead of hearing its mysterious call, dread only lets us stare at the nothingness pervading all things and forces us to turn away in nausea? At this point of the investigation the possibility that 'nothing' might possess the last word cannot be excluded."
[632] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[633] *Ibid.*, p. 201: "Such a fascination with the fragmentary can easily lead us to disregard the [global] structure of our existence and thus to lose the grammar [i.e., the order] of life. It is no accident that Heidegger's favorite poet, Hölderlin, and his favorite painter, Van Gogh, were schizophrenic." Cf. Heidegger's own comment in the *Contributions*: "Hölderlin – Kierkegaard – Nietzsche. No one today may be so presumptuous as to consider it a mere coincidence that these three had to come to an untimely end, they who, each in his own way, at last suffered most deeply the uprootedness to which Western history is driven and who at the same time surmised their gods most intimately" (GA 65:204/*Contributions* 160).
[634] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[635] Sallis, *Double Truth*, pp. 86, 105. Cf. Sallis, "Deformatives," pp. 29-30, 44.

unconcealment) "prohibits every question of its relation to an other, e.g., to thinking."[636] In a chapter entitled "Deformatives: Essentially Other Than Truth," Sallis shows that the prohibition, in conjunction with Heidegger's thinking of even untruth as properly belonging to the essence of truth (as I explained earlier: chapter 2, section II.C), ends up licensing an experience of errancy itself – as if one could phenomenologically tame even what resists the process of unconcealment, so as to encounter concealment as the essence of anything at all.

We might take this constitutive foreclosure of a genuine other as indicating what I argued for earlier as the criterionlessness of originary truth. But Sallis closes his chapter by suggesting that we consider something "so essentially other than truth that it would be absolved from truth, as absolutely as madness can be."[637] This is, as I suggested above, to take very seriously Heidegger's own characterization of the leap into the essence of truth as a derangement (*Verrückung*) of the human being from its (errant) position amidst what is. But it is to turn this characterization around and ask whether there is not a different direction in which one might be dislodged (*verrückt*): not from errancy into the essence of truth to which errancy already belongs (nor from technology into the danger as danger) so much as from the whole of truth and its proper untruth out into chaos.

Again, in considering the matter of this most apocalyptic danger, we could also turn to an essay on the event by Francoise Dastur.[638] She describes the event as the *critical moment* of temporality (in the sense of crisis), "a critical moment which nevertheless allows the continuity of

---

[636] The example suggests that Heidegger means primarily that thinking would not be something over against unconcealing but what can only happen within it. Sallis is right to press the question of how far the prohibition extends, however.

[637] Sallis, *Double Truth*, p. 106. Cf. "Deformatives," pp. 44-5. We could think in this context of Plato's divine madness, the direction Sallis has indicated privately that he would have gone, had he pursued this opening in his own work. But my investigation seeks to show that we should think first of all of madness as insanity.

[638] In what follows, I cite Dastur's English translation of her own paper, which originally appeared as "Pour une phenomenologie de l'evenement: l'attente et la surprise" in *Etudes Phenomenologiques* **25** (1997): 59-75. The somewhat abbreviated version that I cite was given as a talk in Prague, September 1998, organized by the Institute of Philosophy, and was published as "Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise" in *Hypatia* **15**.4 (Fall 2000): 178-189.

time."[639] She identifies it with *ekstasis* for Heidegger, the way in which we are related to or stretched out toward things in their being. "Openness to the accident is therefore constitutive of the existence of the human being. Such an openness gives human being a destiny and makes one's life an adventure and not the anticipated development of a program."[640] A phenomenological account of such events would thus have to be a kind of hermeneutics, something that could attend to contingency and the *a posteriori*, not only the eidetic unity of the *a priori*. Her examples of such events are religious conversion and the death of a loved one.[641]

Dastur's first move is to locate, in both Husserl's and Heidegger's work, the basis for a phenomenological account of excess. In this she begins from their temporal accounts of expectation, thus opening the door for her to ask about a "phenomenology of surprise," in which we would find that "openness to phenomena must be identified with openness to unpredictability,"[642] to "the indetermination of the future."[643] She asks:

> what is happening when this excess implied in the event fractures the horizon of possibilities in such a manner that the mere encounter with the event becomes impossible? How can we account for these moments of crisis, of living death, of trauma, when the whole range of possibilities of a human being becomes unable to integrate the discordance of the event and collapses completely?[644]

As an example of such a complete collapse, she takes precisely psychosis, especially schizophrenia. Someone suffering from such a condition is "condemned to terror and to the impossibility of communicating with things and other human beings. Such a subject has lost the ability" to be open to the event, the capacity to integrate a new configuration of possibilities.[645] Normally, an event is both passively undergone and actively integrated; indeed, the event itself cannot be adequately accounted for on the scale of activity and passivity. It is outside choice but

---

[639] Dastur, "Phenomenology," p. 183.
[640] *Ibid.*, p. 182.
[641] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[642] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[643] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[644] *Ibid.*, p. 185.
[645] *Ibid.*, p. 186.

must be responded to freely; it requires a certain disposition in order to happen to us, but we are not sovereign over our dispositions. Indeed, this latter is the most powerful way of putting the point: the disposition to undergo an event "is precisely the 'disposition' which is missing in the psychotic person."[646]

What then does it mean for a person to be indisposed to the event, to temporality as the fundamental structure of being-there? Why does this emerge in psychosis? And what can it mean for our investigation, the inquiry into the grounding disposition (*Grundstimmung*) that integrates being-there into a sufficiently structured world, such that it can be exposed to things in their being?

Dastur refers to the psychotic situation, in passing, as a 'living death.' This description certainly echoes the reports of various psychotics (beginning already with Schreber, whose case Freud analyzed) of something like *soul-murder*, an ongoing emptiness of what used to be the self. But it is also – as she no doubt intends – philosophically acute. It speaks to the situation of having passed beyond a limit that normally marks the finitude of human being (death) while yet surviving, carrying on until brought to an end by a limit that is in some way still more absolute (a second death that would be the cessation of the individual as living thing). We are usually inclined to identify these two limits, and for good reason, yet in psychosis we encounter them as somehow pried apart.

The Freudian analyst Jacques Lacan – who made the treatment and theorization of psychosis one of his primary tasks in analysis – concludes one of his seminars with a reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*, in the title-character of which Lacan, on my reading, finds a type of the psychotic. Antigone, he claims, lives for a portion of the play between two kinds of death, beyond

---

[646] *Ibid.*

259

the limit of the human, as if she were "a still living corpse."[647] The first is a symbolic death (understood here as a death *in* language, 'symbols'), a kind of suicide carried out when she proclaims that her soul died long ago and so she will bury her brother, knowing that the penalty is death. Lacan explains that "from Antigone's point of view life can only be approached, can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost."[648] This is then made visible, "consecrated," in the play when she is punished by being sealed up alive in a tomb.[649] The second death is then her physical suicide, carried out by hanging herself in the tomb where she had been placed as punishment. This, by the way, drives Hemon mad, according to Lacan, as it had already driven the chorus (in a certain way) mad.[650] Lacan implies, I think, that the psychotic lives in a similar in-between: not the in-between (*Inzwischen*) of being-there, open to beyng and to what is, oscillating from one to the other, but rather in between symbolic death (now understood as the subject's death to language) and physical demise, the end of the person as biological cessation.

II. Death and Related Phenomena
"Thinking lives by an elective affinity [*Wahlverwandschaft*] with death."[651]

Heidegger, of course, has given us his own set of distinctions concerning varieties of death, and has even understood death as marking our existential finitude: our possibility for exposure to and thus for disclosure of entities. Even if madness needs to be understood as the collapse of this disclosure, as I will argue later in the investigation (chapters 5-7), we should not lose sight of the ways in which the psychotic remains human. At stake in parsing the various

---

[647] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*, ed. J.-A. Miller, tr. D. Porter (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), p. 268. Hereafter, *Seminar 7*. Cf. pp. 294-5: "I am interested in the second death, the one that you can still set your sights on once death has occurred…"
[648] *Ibid.*, p. 280.
[649] *Ibid.*, p. 280. Cp. Lacan's note that Sophocles's Electra is a kind of double for Antigone: "'Dead in life,' she says, 'I am already dead to everything.'" *Ibid.*, p. 271.
[650] *Ibid.*, pp. 268-9.
[651] Heidegger, GA 79:114/*Basic Principles of Thinking* 107.

senses of 'death,' then, is the possibility of understanding sufferers from psychosis as human, even though no-longer-being-there (*nicht-mehr-Dasein*) in Heidegger's sense.[652] In other words, if we are to see what significance psychosis could have for Heidegger's project – if we are to recognize that the philosophical problem is with his way of thinking about our relation to the truth, rather than with those outliers we call psychotic – we need to locate the kind of radical break that is involved within *his* terminology. This will then have ramifications for the ontological phenomena we have worked out so far, since it is precisely Heidegger's analysis of death that gets displaced into his analysis of the essences of truth, nihilism, and technology.

More simply: if we are to make sense of a third possible result of anxiety, one that Heidegger mostly overlooks by focusing on the pair authenticity/inauthenticity, we will have to develop that possibility on the basis of his understanding of being-toward-death.

First, following *Being and Time*, we should distinguish between what he calls 'perishing' or 'coming to an end' (*verenden*), which is the death of non-human living beings – more or less what Aristotle saw as always recuperated by reproduction into a kind of everlasting species-being – and 'demise' or 'decease' (*ableben*), which is the passing of the human organism. In the latter, "the end of the entity *qua* being-there is the beginning of the same entity *qua* something present-at-hand,"[653] which echoes Aristotle's insight that since a corpse is already something ontologically different from a living body, the living thing is not potentially a corpse.[654] Heidegger refers to decease as a phenomenon intermediate between the mere perishing of other

---

[652] Understanding being-there as Heidegger does in *Being and Time*: as constitutive for the human being. I address the modification of being-there to mean authenticity (in the *Contributions*, for example) in section IV, below, but we should keep in mind that Heidegger never simply stopped thinking of the human being as essentially being-there, even if we live this mostly in the negative mode of being-away. See my discussion in chapter 3, section III.C.1, and Heidegger's use of *Being and Time*'s sense of being-there in the *Zollikon Seminars* from the decade before his death. For further discussion, see Miguel de Beistegui, "The Transformation in the Sense of Dasein in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*," *Research in Phenomenology* **33**.1 (2003): 221-246.
[653] *BT* 238/281.
[654] Aristotle, *Metaphysics H*.5.

living things (whose ontological structure is not an issue for them) and the authentic dying of being-there.

But Heidegger *does* want to think of the living human being as potentially dead – or rather, of death as an essential possibility for being-there – just not at the level of living body and corpse. Secondly, then, we should distinguish between decease as the end of biological life and death (*Tod*) as the end of meaningful life, the end of being-there.[655] Heidegger calls the latter the "utmost possibility," since it is a possibility projected by being-there (i.e., from within the realm of meaningful relation to the world) but is projected as precisely the limit of that realm. It is, then, the existential possibility of the *impossibility* of any further projection, the possibility of passing out of the world (*Aus-der-Welt-gehen*).[656] We could call it the finitude (in German: *Endlichkeit*) or the end (*das Ende*) of the essence of a singular human being, *my* end.

Third, Heidegger further distinguishes between death as my possible impossibility and being-toward-death (*Sein zum Tode*), my essential relation to death insofar as I am the *finite* place for being to show up. This is no certainty of death as a coming event but a sense of my ownmost ability to be (*Seinkönnen*) or not be.[657] Since death, unlike decease, is not a possible happening but an existential possibility, there is nothing to actualize: it *is* only in one or another concrete being-toward-death. Hence, even suicide is not an actualization of death but remains decease (*ableben*).[658]

This third difference opens up one final distinction that is more complicated because it has to take into account what I signaled earlier (chapter 3, section III.C) as Heidegger's rethinking of authenticity and inauthenticity, in which the former alone comes to be designated

---

[655] "Death essences [*west*] not when someone is dead [… nor] when someone 'dies,' if dying is merely the extinguishing of 'life'" (GA 71:194/*The Event* 165, trans. mod.).
[656] *BT* §47, §50.
[657] *BT* §52.
[658] *BT* §45, §53.

(strictly) as being-there, the latter as being-away (but still belonging to being-there as its negative mode).

In *Being and Time*, then, being-there as the structure of all human beings *just is* toward-death, whether authentically or inauthentically (or indifferently). "Let the term *dying* [Sterben] stand for that *way of being* in which being-there *is towards* its death. […] Being-there can only decease [*ableben*] so long as it is dying [*stirbt*]."[659] Hence Heidegger's claim that "in each case my own being-there is in fact always already dying [*das je eigene Dasein faktisch immer schon stirbt*],"[660] i.e., actively relating to my own death. Here there is a phenomenological difference between *sterben* and *ableben* – the former ontologically makes the latter possible – but no possibility of chronological separation. To cease to be toward death (i.e., to cease dying) just is, considered in an ontic register, to decease, even though Heidegger already acknowledges that being-there "can end [*enden*, here equivalent to *ableben*] without *authentically* dying,"[661] i.e., can be toward death inauthentically up until and including the happening of its demise.

Ten years later, however, by the time of the *Contributions*, Heidegger has begun to distance being-there (as authenticity) from the human being and correlatively to distinguish dying (as authentic dying) and being-toward-death from the structural fact of human finitude. This is merely a terminological shift, and thus pretty easily translated, but there is a more surprising shift in thinking that accompanies it. In commenting on *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains that the goal was (and is) "to draw death into being-there"[662] – in other words, experientially to take up the criterionless (i.e., the ungrounded or abyssal) grounding of beyng that being-there is, to think being-there as inherently finite. He then claims that "not everyone needs to carry out [or

---

[659] *BT* 247/291, original italics, trans. mod.
[660] *BT* 254/298. Cf. *BT* 259/303: "That in each case even everyday being-there already *is toward* its end – i.e., is constantly confronted [*sich ... ständig ... auseinandersetzt*] with its death, even if 'by fleeing' [or fleetingly: *<flüchtig>*] – this shows that [death] is nothing at which being-there ultimately arrives for the first time in its demise [*Ableben*]" (trans. mod.).
[661] *BT* 247/291, emphasis added.
[662] GA 65:285/*Contributions* 224.

accomplish: *vollziehen*] this beyng toward death and, in this authenticity, to take over the self of being-there"! It is only the thinkers of the other beginning – not even "every essential human being" – who need to become authentic by accomplishing being toward death, although the latter group, those who are authentically appropriated to beyng, "can know of it."[663] In distinguishing between authentic being-there and authentic being-there *as a thinker*, Heidegger here admits to what one has to at least suspect about his work more generally: it is written for the few and the rare. Even though his analyses become more and more sweeping after *Being and Time* as he tries to account for culture and history, the suspicion of the crowd remains. Our collective relation to beyng, the granting of an epoch, is the special responsibility of those he calls 'thinkers'.

The other new and remarkable element of Heidegger's understanding of death in the *Contributions* is the emergence of an intimate relation between human finitude and what he will eventually call beyng's own finitude. Toward the end of the book, he introduces something he calls 'the last god,' which for our purposes we can take as a figure of the fact that we are thrown into a world we do not control. Heidegger indicates that this figure is to be thought in terms of his earlier thinking about death – namely, as that end or limit from which our exposed, disclosive existence begins.[664] Just as in *Being and Time* the authentic mode of being-toward-death involved resolute anticipating (*Vorlaufen*), so in the *Contributions* Heidegger says that what is last (or ultimate: *das Letzte*) "needs the longest anticipation [*Vor-läuferschaft*]."[665] And he closes the section with a question: "If we have such a poor grasp even of 'death' in its extremity, then how

---

[663] GA 65:285/*Contributions* 224.
[664] GA 65/*Contributions*, §§ 254, 256: Heidegger says that the last god "*essences* in the intimation." This intimation is then specified as a matter of our complicated relation to the gods, who once conditioned us but now find no place within the world set up by positionality. The passing-by (neither arriving nor leaving) of the last god would be a new beginning, in which beyng could be recognized as fully given in its withdrawal. The last god, as a kind of end or limit from which a new way of experiencing things begins, is not the event itself, but belongs (as we do) to the event of appropriation.
[665] GA 65:406/*Contributions* 321, trans. mod.

will we ever measure up to the rare intimation of the last god?"[666] That intimation, however, if we become receptive to it, reveals the "most intrinsic finitude of beyng," the "intimacy and pervasiveness of the negative in beyng."[667] We encounter this negative in the intrinsic hiddenness of beyng, which means that it can only be encountered historically, as the unfolding unity of the manifold senses of being.

In the Bremen Lectures, we find an arrangement of distinctions shifted back toward the need for everyone to become authentic, while splitting dying (still identified with authentic dying or being mortal) from being-toward-death. "The human is not yet the mortal." In one of the more difficult portions of his work, he contrasts dying – as "carrying out [or staging: *austragen*] death in its essence," hence as authentic dying – with "undying death [*ungestorbene Tode*]."[668] The latter he characterizes as being killed (*umkommen*), being put down (*umgelegt werden*), being turned into pieces of inventory for the fabrication of corpses, being liquidated in death camps, and even perishing of starvation (*verenden*) like animals. This death (*Tod*) in which one is not allowed to die (*sterben*) involves disguising the essence of death.[669]

How then can we become mortal? Heidegger's account follows the structure of possibility discussed earlier (chapter 3, section III.C.2). We must be enabled to die, capable of it (*vermögen*). And we are only enabled "when the essence of death favors [or loves: *mag*] our essence."[670] We are therefore only capable of dying – of becoming mortal or authentic – when our essence has been appropriated into the essence of beyng, when by thinking we explicitly correspond to our being-claimed.[671] For such corresponding allows us to recognize the essence of death as "the highest refuge [*Gebirg*] of the truth of beyng itself, the shelter [*Gebirg*] that in itself

---

[666] GA 65:406/*Contributions* 321.
[667] GA 65:410/*Contributions* 325.
[668] GA 79:56/"Danger" 53-4.
[669] GA 79:56/"Danger" 53.
[670] GA 79:56/"Danger" 53, trans. mod.
[671] "Corresponding in this way, the human is appropriated [*geeignet*] such that he looks toward the divinities as one of the mortals in the guarded element of world" (GA 79:76/"Turn" 71, trans. mod.).

shelters [*birgt*] the concealment [*Verborgenheit*] of the essence of beyng and gathers together the sheltering [*Bergung*] of its essence."[672]

To make sense of the 'essence of death' as 'the highest refuge of beyng,' we must think about it as marking the finitude of the human being. As the utmost possibility of being-there, death is what withdraws from all experience. I cannot have a phenomenological experience of my own death; it is the non-phenomenal *par excellence*. And, as we saw earlier, Heidegger thinks beyng as possibility. So death, like beyng, is the highest possibility that shows itself only in self-concealing; it is what marks the human as the place where the withdrawal of beyng can be encountered. This is how death invests my very being; I am stretched out toward death, finite; I belong to beyng and am drawn by it even in its withdrawal.

In *Death: An Essay on Finitude*, Dastur characterizes death as "the unwelcome guest at every table laid to celebrate life,"[673] i.e., as a kind of ultimate horizon or background for us in every encounter with phenomena. Human finitude, then, is what shapes our receptivity. We should think this by analogy with what Heidegger says of the finitude of philosophy – such finitude is neither the patchiness of knowledge, nor the fact that philosophy comes to an end. It is not simply the fact of an outside or a boundary, hence not a contrast with infinity but a connection or relation to it, an exposure to that which is beyond the range of our mastery.[674] "Finitude lies not at the end but at the beginning of philosophy, which means that finitude must in its essence be taken up into the concept of philosophy."[675] For finitude to be taken up into the essence (or, here, into the concept) of something means that the thing's failure or lack of wholeness is seen as a constitutive reverse side of the same phenomenon. Heidegger explains: "Because philosophy is

---

[672] GA 79:56/"Danger" 53.
[673] Dastur, *Death*, p. 42.
[674] Cf. Dastur, *Death*, p. 78.
[675] GA 27:24.

266

essentially a human (i.e., finite) possibility, therefore a sophist hides in every philosopher."[676] That is to say, the downfall or failure of philosophy (sophistry) is not an external threat but a built-in danger. Likewise, death is a built-in cost of being in the truth.

When Heidegger says, then, that to be capable of dying we must be opened up by the essence of death, or be capable of death *as death*,[677] this means we must be the entity that unconceals on the ground of a concealment that it can recognize. We must have caught sight of our essence in the event of insight that appropriates us to beyng as self-concealing. When that is granted to us, then our corresponding response is to die (not to decease), understood as *recognizing* and *preserving* this concealment as *self*-concealment. Heidegger elsewhere calls this *dwelling* (or waiting on beyng) because it involves seeing concealment, hiddenness, not simply as an external limit but instead as what spills us into a world that matters, makes us vulnerable to things by relating us to them, refusing to let us be self-enclosed.

This is the way in which death can be 'the refuge of the truth of beyng,' 'what shelters the concealment of the essenc[ing] of beyng,' since the essence of truth is self-concealing that clears, and the essencing of beyng is the withdrawal that gives concrete forms of import. But in what sense does this refuge 'gather together the sheltering of beyng's essence'?

What shelters beyng in its essence is authentic being-there, mortals who recognize and preserve self-concealment. But this dwelling requires recognizing both one's own finitude (the constitutive incompleteness of being-there itself) and the finitude of beyng (which is entrusted to being-there as the place of its appearing) – and thereby recognizing their belonging-together. Heidegger says in 1952 that those who have become mortals die continually (*fortwährend*) by saving the earth (what resists meaning), receiving the sky (as a gift, rather than harnessing

---

[676] GA 27:24.
[677] GA 79:17-18/"Thing" 17.

nature), awaiting the divinities (as conditions upon us that we cannot control), and ushering or conducting mortals into the essence of death.

We can unpack this ushering (*geleiten*) in at least two ways if we return to Heidegger's account of death in *Being and Time*. First, he characterizes death as inevitable, something that cannot be overcome (*unüberholbare*). On this basis we can understand his later claim that "[t]he law of beyng's inevitability [or inescapability: *Unabwendbarkeit*] is purely fulfilled in death."[678] I take this to mean that what we earlier saw as beyng's unrelenting quality – that it never stops requiring us to unconceal what is – is encounterable in the inevitability of death. Hence "death is the highest and ultimate attestation of beyng" in the sense that it indicates the indestructible belonging-together of beyng and being-there, even though it seems that beyng (like death) is always absent.

Second, within the greater project of *Being and Time* – to locate the horizon of intelligibility (the meaning) for being in general by interrogating the entity whose being is an issue for itself – the analysis of death is supposed to provide a way to gather together being-there as a whole. That is to say that the existential (the ontological meaning) of being-toward-death is being-there's 'ability to be a whole' (*Ganzseinkönnen*). It turns out, however, that because being-there is fundamentally future-oriented in its projects, it always runs ahead of or anticipates (*vorlaufen*) whatever boundary we might draw around it. The only cut-off, as it were, is death, the ultimate possibility that it can and must anticipate. Thus, being-there can either be or be a whole, not both at the same time. The cost of wholeness is precisely the experience of itself as something that is – death is unavailable to experience. In this way, death can be said to 'gather together' being-there, which in turn is 'the sheltering of beyng's essence.'

But this finitude of the human being – i.e., its basic temporal structure as running ahead toward its own death – is also what "rips open [*eröffnet*]" beyng for us, opening us up to the

---

[678] GA 71:194/*Event* 166, trans. mod.

openness of beyng.[679] That openness of beyng, that it needs (or demands) being-there, is what Heidegger means by the finitude of beyng.

In his late work, then, Heidegger clarifies that his interest is not primarily in human death but in the finitude of beyng, its self-concealment. This already begins to appear in the *Contributions*, where he characterizes being toward death as the *image* of beyng's finitude – specifically, its fissure, what we saw above to be the multiplicity in the very happening of beyng – as mirrored in the there, beyng's abode.[680] But the strongest formulation is from the report of a conversation held with Medard Boss in 1963: "That the human being must die does not follow from the human being's being needed [*Gebrauchtwerden*] in the event. It is simply the case that he must die."[681] This conversation took place only a year after Heidegger had told a seminar group that whereas for Hegel, the absolute involves overcoming human finitude, for him "it is precisely finitude that is made visible – not only human finitude but that of the event itself."[682] The focus here is already more on beyng (the event) than on the human, a shift that has been completed by the time of the 1969 Le Thor seminar, which Heidegger closes by reiterating his difference from Hegel: "If being needs something of the human's kind in order to be, then a finitude of being must accordingly be assumed; that consequently being would not be absolutely for itself, this is the most pointed contradiction to Hegel."[683]

Let me sum up this adventure through Heidegger's various distinctions concerning death and dying. What Heidegger begins by calling 'authentic dying' and eventually just names 'dying' (or 'being mortal by ushering mortals into the essence of death') is something we must do constantly in order to remain fully within our essence (mortality, the one who waits). This is

---

[679] From GA 65:283/*Contributions* 222-3.
[680] GA 65:282/*Contributions* 222.
[681] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 225/180, trans. mod.
[682] GA 14:59/*On Time and Being* 59.
[683] GA 15:370/*Four Seminars* 63.

because death, as an internal limit that spills us out into the world by binding us in relation to things, marks our finitude: we are the entity that can be a whole only at the cost of no longer being. Hence, as being-there, our receptivity to things and our openness to beyng are shaped ineluctably by this finitude.

In that light, to ask about a third possibility beyond authenticity (dying) and inauthenticity (undying death, forgetting the inescapability of beyng) is to ask what it would mean to plunge outside of Heidegger's thinking of mortality, to die to one's own being-toward-death. If anything counts as "estrangement" or as "what is most extreme,"[684] it would be that. For if our essence is being-there as mortality, then the apocalyptic desolation or emptying out of one's essence would be *no longer* to run ahead toward death in the same way, no longer to be finite in the same way. Of course, this would not mean to be infinite, but it *would* mean a broken (not only an obscured) relation to one's finitude.

One way to think about this kind of death, which we might call 'symbolic death' (meaning death to the order of language – the symbolic order – and thus to the coherent, shared world), is that finitude essentially involves mediation with regard to the truth. Finite knowers, as both thrown and projecting, are neither wholly shut out from unconcealment (i.e., capable of being deceived about *everything*) nor able to see from the perspective of full unconcealment (i.e., capable of a God's-eye view). But, as we shall see in the next chapters, one aspect of psychosis is what we might call a non-mediated relation to the truth. Since language is what provides mediation, foreclosure of language destroys being in the truth. Paranoia thus involves identification with the truth (understood as correctness – everything must fit the story; I cannot be incorrect), while schizophrenia may include a sense of being shut out from the importance of propositional truth or a sense of absolute betrayal (everything is false).

---

[684] GA 65:284/*Contributions* 222-3.

III. *A Priori* Structure or Apocalypse?

We can see more clearly why the kind of death I am proposing matters philosophically if we briefly return to the conflict between a strictly phenomenological and a more historically hermeneutic (or apocalyptic) reading of Heidegger's project. The immanent critique worked out in our earlier discussion (chapter 3, part III) has already demonstrated the extent of this tension in his thinking of danger. The question of a different kind of danger – a death that, like betrayal in personal trust, one cannot be taken up authentically, yet is also not simply demise – gives us a further way to think the stakes of that tension: such a danger remains (needlessly) covered up for Heidegger because of the internal conflict between phenomenology and hermeneutics. This path will also show that interpreting Heidegger in terms of various levels of betrayal of trust can cast some light on an ongoing struggle in Heidegger scholarship.

In a series of articles over the past 10 years, Thomas Sheehan has proposed what he calls a "paradigm shift" in the reading of Heidegger's work.[685] One slogan he has used for this reading runs: "being that can be understood is meaning,"[686] in which we are to understand that Heidegger, as a phenomenologist, is only interested in being that can be understood and in the source of this meaning. Indeed, according to Sheehan, everything is intelligible except this universal intelligibility itself.[687] Sheehan's interpretations thus focus on Heidegger's continuity with (and transformations of) Husserl's work, guided by the intuition that we should phenomenologically reduce being (*Sein*) in Heidegger to meaning (*Sinn*) and even being-there (*Dasein*) to the there of meaning (*Dasinn*).[688] I would claim that Sheehan's strategy is not the only way to read Heidegger as a phenomenologist, but as one of the strongest voices in English-language Heidegger interpretation at present, let us take him as a representative of the 'phenomenological' style.

---

[685] See, e.g., Thomas Sheehan, "A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research," *Continental Philosophy Review* **34** (2001): 183-202.
[686] Sheehan, "Facticity and Ereignis," in *Interpreting Heidegger*, op. cit., p. 43.
[687] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[688] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

As we have already seen in the previous section, this strategy emphasizes the always-already character of the things Heidegger thematizes, taking them as permanent structures of the human being.[689] Thus, Sheehan claims that "Heidegger refuses the usual, non-technical translation of *Ereignis* as 'event' and interprets it instead as *the appropriation of man to the meaning-giving process*. But this appropriation […] is an *a priori* and therefore inescapable state of affairs for human being. Man is, of and by its nature, *thrown* into meaning."[690] Notice that this comes down squarely against what Sheehan calls "apocalyptic language," "cosmic drama," and "Teutonic bombast" in Heidegger's work,[691] since it takes our being-appropriated as inescapable.[692] So long as there is human being, everything is potentially meaningful.

That implies, however, that the failure of meaning just is death, since meaning-making is "our very way of staying alive."[693] Sheehan acknowledges that our life is shaped by being toward

---

[689] "I argue that Heidegger's extensive corpus from beginning to end remained a hermeneutics of Dasein or an analytic of human existence [….] This entails that all the key terms in Heidegger's lexicon – *Ereignis*, *alētheia*, *Lichtung*, even *Seyn* – are existentials precisely in the sense that the early Heidegger gave this term: necessities and abilities that *a priori* determine the human way of being." Thomas Sheehan, "Astonishing! Things Make Sense!" in *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* **1** (2011): 1-25, p. 3.

[690] Sheehan, "Facticity and Ereignis," p. 53, original italics.

[691] Sheehan, "A Paradigm Shift," pp. 200-201.

[692] Notice also that Sheehan's way of translating – for example, *Seinsgeschehen* becomes 'the meaning-giving process' – makes Heidegger's most basic claims painfully obvious, just as Heidegger frustratedly characterized some of Husserl's work. In "Facticity and *Ereignis*," Sheehan cites a sentence from "Martin Heidegger in Conversation," an interview conducted in 1969, in which Heidegger explains that "the basic thought of my thinking is precisely this: that being, or the openness of being, *requires* the human, and that the human is only human insofar as he stands in the openness of being" (GA 16:704). Sheehan renders Heidegger's "*das Sein beziehungsweise die Offenbarkeit des Seins den Menschen* braucht" as "meaning – by which I mean the disclosure of meaning to understanding – *requires* human being" (53). So: instead of working out the contours of a fundamental relation between being and thinking that could respond to Nietzsche's claim that being is a vapor, Heidegger on Sheehan's account would have spent several decades trying to show that meaning (defined as what is disclosed in understanding) is *only* disclosed to humans, whose basic structure is understanding? This seems over-interpreted to the point of redundancy. I am not even sure that it is as interesting as the tautologies of which Heidegger is so fond, which at least sound strange and so may call on us to think.

It seems, further, that Sheehan is not yet ready to maintain his translation rule all the way, since he retains some references to being but modifies them to being-in-meaning. (See, e.g., *In-der-Welt-sein* as "being-already-engaged-with-meaning" [57], or *Seinkönnen* as "being-able-to," understood as "being-able-to-make-sense-of" [60].) Thus, although it is not *Dasein*'s being that is at issue for Sheehan but its sense-making, it seems one would still want to ask about its *being* as a sense-maker. What or how *is* it such that it makes sense of things?

[693] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

death – which he takes to mean "being ever at the point of death" – but understands this as "structural and essential to life" – to all life, "not just human being."[694] (What is unique to humans is that we stave off death by making sense of things and of ourselves.) There is here no distinction drawn between death (*der Tod*) and demise (*Ableben*); the death of the human organism is identified with the death of meaning-making (*Tod*), so "the alternative to being dead is to be making sense while living ever at the point of death."[695] If one removes this distinction, one also abandons any possibility of understanding what it could look like to be thoroughly overwhelmed by exposure to the world. This is why Sheehan can say that whether one responds to anxiety about death by owning up to it or by fleeing from it, "[i]n either case […] the outcome is the same"[696]: "in each case, the absurd [Sheehan's word for the nothing, *das Nichts*, within the reduction to meaning] will always be, as Heidegger says, 'slumbering' within your experience, with the possibility of awaking at any moment."[697]

On this reading, then, not only is there no apocalyptic ontological consequence to becoming-authentic or failing to do so, there seems to be no decisive significance *at all* to one's response to anxiety. And if we were to imagine the (unmentioned) possibility of being overwhelmed by that dread to the point of a more permanent (i.e., not merely punctuated) awakening of anxiety, one that would destroy coherent sense-making, that would immediately be the cessation of the particular human being.

As a contrast, let us look once more at Richard Polt's reading, since he has explicitly written in response to Sheehan's interpretation.[698] In an essay called "Meaning, Excess, and Event," Polt tries to show that although Sheehan's reading can take us some helpful way toward

---

[694] Sheehan, "Astonishing!" p. 5. He soon qualifies this as belonging properly only to human being but analogically to other forms of life (p. 6).
[695] Sheehan, "Facticity," p. 47.
[696] *Ibid.*, p. 64.
[697] *Ibid.*, p. 65.
[698] See also Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, the first two chapters of which constitute a long argument against Sheehan's reading.

understanding Heidegger's project, that reading needs modification in light of Heidegger's continued concern with two facets of being that go beyond meaning, or "ways in which meaning stands in relation to non-meaning."[699]

The first of these ways is what Polt calls 'excess': it includes the resistance to intelligibility that things display, the fact that their reality matters to us over and above their meaning, and the threat of interpretive collapse. "Beings show themselves as being more than they show themselves."[700] In other words, the very meaning of things *includes* a pointing outside of meaning, an irreducibility to the meaning they have or could ever have for me. *Contra* Sheehan, then, Polt claims that we are thrown not only into meaning ("meaningful openness") but also into the refusal of meaning ("a given opacity").[701]

Dastur makes roughly the same claim, characterizing finitude by pointing to a certain experience: "the authentic experience of that *independence* of what is thought with respect to the thinker which makes of *every* genuine act of thought an overwhelming event, since the parallel between […] the thought and its object, is here constantly affirmed and denied *at one and the same time*."[702] Thought reaches its object – what I encounter is meaningful in some way – and yet that very meaning simultaneously points beyond itself, indicating that here I am in contact with something excessive, something independent in the way that real things are.

If it is true that we are struck not only by the fact that things make sense but by the being of things at all (and not nothingness), if *things* matter and not only my projects carried out by means of them, then part of Heidegger's question of being must be about "the wonder that *there is* something at all, that *there are* beings instead of nothing, including ourselves, even if the

---

[699] Polt, "Meaning, Excess, and Event," p. 27.
[700] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[701] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[702] *Ibid.*, p. 77, original italics.

meaning of these beings is fragile or absent."[703] Sheehan, by contrast, translates Heidegger's famous question as "Why are there meaningful things at all instead of the absurd?"[704] If he were going to make this translation work, it seems to me that Sheehan would have to say that fragile or absent meaning is still meaning, just in a deficient mode. But then his account of meaning would draw quite close to the twofold description of meaning given by Harries – as both essential structure and claim on us – which corresponds roughly to what Polt calls 'import' and acknowledges as what Heidegger intends by 'being.'

The second way Polt understands meaning to relate to non-meaning is in the *Ereignis* as the giving of meaning. As we saw in the previous section, unlike Sheehan he reads this as an event, a happening, not a structural *a priori*. Furthermore, he takes such an event to be "the ultimate excess," since as the giving of meaning it cannot itself have meaning. "If *Ereignis* were a structure, it would be a meaning that could be brought out through phenomenological interpretation."[705] But at least in Heidegger's middle period, Polt argues, the *Ereignis* is no structure. "If Dasein is the entity whose own being is an issue for it, we could speak of *das Ereignis* as the event in which our own being *becomes* an issue for us."[706] This would mean that "traumatic moments do more than reveal an already operative uncanniness: at their most radical, they *generate* uncanniness and make us a problem for ourselves."[707]

If the ultimate excess that is the source of meaningfulness (i.e., of being-there as in a world) is an event that may or may not happen, rather than an *a priori* structure of the human being, then we can get a bit closer to thinking the desolation of an individual's essence as a kind of death. If, on the level of the individual, the event fails in a decisive manner to take place (or

---

[703] *Ibid.*, p. 32, original italics.
[704] Sheehan, "Facticity," p. 65n49.
[705] Polt, "Meaning," p. 44.
[706] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[707] Polt, "Traumatic Ontology" (forthcoming) in *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, eds. M. Marder and S. Zabala (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 12 of the MS.

takes place but overwhelms, disowns [*enteignet*] instead of appropriating [*ereignet*], not only along with it), if being-there becomes impossible, then that individual is no-longer-being-there (*nicht-mehr-Dasein*), precisely Heidegger's characterization of death. And as with death, the transition is excessive: it resists being understood and cannot be experienced: it is essentially traumatic (although not itself the essence of trauma).[708] Nevertheless, in order to think the finitude of being-there appropriately in its belonging to beyng, we who contingently continue to belong to our essence would have to face up to the radical contingency of our being-held-in-the-truth. Thinking our relation to beyng and to the truth would thus lose the vestiges of self-assurance that I have tried to make evident in Heidegger's work.

What is at stake here is introducing a separation between *death* (whether qualified as dying or undying) as the end of being-there and *decease* as the end of the human person. It is a matter of understanding death, too, as a concrete happening, not only as the finitude toward which I can comport myself. Heidegger thinks that we may live without dying (i.e., live inauthentically) and calls us instead to live authentically *by* dying (continually), but what if it turns out that one can live *after* a certain kind of death – what one might call an ontological death? The latter would clearly be much worse than either of the first two options, but if it is the appropriate way to think about madness – which clearly happens for some people – then any thinking of beyng must come to terms with *this* level of finitude. Though I do not wish to ascribe such a position to Polt, nevertheless the apocalyptic reading of Heidegger that he defends seems to open up this third possibility.

I have tried to show that such a possibility would not be simply foreign to Heidegger's thinking, even if it would call for a rethinking of the essence of truth – perhaps beginning from the phenomenon of trust. Recall, for example, the ontic phenomenon that I characterized earlier

---

[708] *BT* §47. This is not to say that all trauma is a failure of the event, a radical betrayal that brings about no-longer-being-there, etc. I claim only that such failure, if it occurs (see chapter 5), essentially is traumatic.

as the *failure of mattering*. Robert Pippin interprets Heidegger's project in *Being and Time* as attending to just such failures, learning from them, and the importance of that strategy to Heidegger's work is also part of Polt's claim about excess. Death, on Pippin's reading, involves a failure of the "horizon of mattering,"[709] which horizon I have been calling 'being in the truth.' Pippin explains:

> This failure, occasioned by the 'threat' to meaning posed by one's ever-impending death, is not a failure 'as yet' to make the proper sense of what seems without sense. There is no horrible fate that we are too fearful or too finite to make sense of. The failure Heidegger is trying to account for is not a failure to 'make sense' of death, but an occasion in which the failure to make sense of, be able to sustain reflectively, sense making itself 'happens.'[710]

In such an overwhelming happening, when anxiety does not only grip me for a moment but overcomes me for an extended (and indeterminable) period, I can neither flee into inauthenticity – the comfort of 'how one does things' – nor gather myself resolutely: for 'I' have in an important sense died. The world has betrayed me at the most fundamental level, yet what is left of me must carry on in desperation. Steven Crowell describes the disposition of anxiety as a breakdown of my ability to fit into the world as one (*das Man*) does. Facts and states of affairs remain for me – *something* shows up – but these no longer coherently suggest what should be done about them:

> things have properties but no affordances [that would suggest their functions], and the motives and reasons the latter once supplied now take on the character of something closer to simple facts [shorn of import], items in the world of which I can take note but which do not move me. […] This does not mean that significance and reasons disappear; I still register their demands, but they no longer grip me."[711]

As Dastur indicates, one only 'survives' such a severe collapse as mad, psychotic, closed-off from the event of appropriation. But I have argued that madness here must be thought not as an extreme version of being-away, as being maximally scattered among what is, so much as a

---

[709] Pippin, "Failed Meaning," p. 206.
[710] Pippin, "Failed Meaning," p. 211.
[711] Steven Galt Crowell, "Conscience," p. 54.

continuing on while no longer being there, a living death that differs essentially from what Heidegger understands by constant dying.

IV. Conclusion: To the Things Themselves

In one of Rilke's short *Stories of God*, a gravedigger says, "Death. What do we know of it? Apparently everything and perhaps nothing. [Sometimes] I dig like a wild beast, so as to draw all my strength away from my brain and use it up in my arms. […] And it is a kind of anger. You grow callous, you think you've got the better of it, and then suddenly… It's no good; death is something incomprehensible, terrible."[712] That incomprehensibility of death is precisely what Heidegger's work on concealment tries to preserve and yet think – to thoughtfully recall it, and so to *let* the incomprehensibility *be* without mastering it. But how far does he succeed? Does he end up simply reincorporating that incomprehensibility into a comprehensible structure of revealing and concealing?

Even when Heidegger's concerns become more cultural-historical in the 1930s and afterward, the point of entry remains the individual thinker or poet. This is more true the more apocalyptic his tone (cf. the *Contributions*), and so it serves as one reason for my examination of death as a spur to rethinking our relation to truth as disclosure. By thinking about this in terms of what, following Pippin, we have called 'the failure of mattering,' we have encountered within Heidegger's own thinking several openings onto a more radical betrayal, one that may not admit of integration into the complex phenomenon of truth as he seems to understand it.

These openings suggest that we should try to understand the human relation to being as vulnerable to a different kind of betrayal than the one that Heidegger explicitly takes up. Like the betrayal of personal trust, such a failure of mattering would in one sense always be possible, but somehow as radically contingent, rather than as an essential possibility of being-there. Here we

---

[712] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Stories of God*, tr. M.D. Herter Norton (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1963), p. 90. See Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*, *Bd. IV* (1961).

should understand being-there in the sense of everyday, inauthentic being-there (in *Being and Time*), what Heidegger also calls the human, or being-away (in the *Contributions*). As we have seen, when he introduces in the 1930s some distance between being human and being-there – so that the human is not yet being-there, not yet mortal, or not yet thinking – this opens space for an articulation of the danger. On this account, continuing on as we have been – remaining merely human, essentially free and essentially mortal but not owning up to that essence – can be understood as an unnoticed evisceration of our essence. But we need to ask if this thinking of danger does not yet capture the way in which even continuing on as we have been is radically threatened for each one of us. We are vulnerable to a different sort of death: a death to the very possibility of becoming authentic. This would be a separation from our essence (i.e., from being-there) that exceeds being-away, since being-away is still interpreted as a privation or deficient mode of that essence.

This difference has come into view for us over the course of our encounter with Heidegger's thinking because we introduced a distinction between background assuming and trusting proper into the context of his work. That distinction allows us to think differently about his consistent claim that we are essentially those who wait, even if we mostly fail to wait authentically or in the attunement of restraint. For to be essentially those who wait is to be those who find ourselves given over to the world and to being through primitive trust, even if we mostly fail to trust well. But we have seen that primitive trust is usually understood by Heidegger as a form of background assuming, and that trusting well therefore involves making better background assumptions, reorienting ourselves through being attuned by restraint. We can recognize that this is not quite what Heidegger is after, since he at least sometimes wants to articulate a radically contingent, existential belonging, but we have seen that because of the way he understands our relation to being, he can only work out primitive trust as another kind of

background assuming. This is why I have claimed that his account of truth remains a kind of self-assuring (chapter 3, part II).

We have seen that Heidegger's account is not adequate to what he himself sometimes wanted to say, but it does not seem to be faithful to what the phenomena demand, either. The problem becomes evident in this way: when Heidegger interprets being's givenness both phenomenologically (in terms of essential structures, especially errancy) and hermeneutically (as contingent and capable of widespread failure), these two modes of interpretation fall apart, and the danger remains merely disclosive (i.e., essentially always overcomable) rather than possibly disintegrative. This should lead us to wonder whether Heidegger's thinking gives us a way faithfully to account for the humanity of those who do suffer disintegration. Must he simply deny the extent of the collapse? Or do the openings we have traced offer the possibility of thinking with Heidegger about madness while attending to the limits of his account? For we have proceeded this far with Heidegger because his thinking of originary truth – as a kind of self-investment that exposes us both to what-is and to concealment in a patterned way – is the best anyone has yet done at articulating the essence of truth.

We have thus staged an encounter between my account of the varieties of trusting and Heidegger's thinking of the danger as inherent in the structure of truth's happening. The very fruitfulness of this interpretive standpoint both further confirms the connection of originary truth with primitive trust (each is a way of addressing phenomenality itself as a hidden phenomenon) and calls into question Heidegger's account of truth as a self-concealing that reveals. The task now is to turn more rigorously to the matters themselves, to think through this danger that would not simply be able to be incorporated into truth's historical structure, but to do so without falling back into the dichotomization of presence and absence that Heidegger designates 'metaphysics.'

What, then, might a radical betrayal of one's investment in and by being be like? Does it ever happen? And how is it related to our initial entry into this investment in the world as a

whole? We have already seen indications from other readers of Heidegger (Harries, Sallis, and Dastur, in section I) that such a betrayal might involve something like madness. To follow these hints, we will need to work out an account of madness that is both committed to *interpretation* (not only neurological explanation) and yet oriented primarily toward the variety of *failures* to which we are exposed as human beings. I thus turn next to some insights from Freudian psychoanalysis that I take to be exemplary of the phenomena of breakdown (and, sometimes, recovery) in which I am interested. The combination of an orientation to human meaning with an orientation to recognizing failure at the individual level has produced a healing practice that is heavily dependent on very unusual (hence both visible and interesting) relationships of trust. Moreover, led back to earliest childhood by the phenomena themselves, Freudian thinking has tried to articulate the complex interpersonal relations involved in individually taking up the fullness of what Heidegger calls being-in-the-world.

Chapter Five
When the World is Too Much With Us
wherein Phenomenality itself cracks under the Strain of Betrayal,
and We Freudians are faced with an Interpretive Task
requiring a Strange Mix of Trust and Distrust

> "Behind, or, better said perhaps, beneath every object, every representation,
> every physical or metaphysical ideality lies a phenomenon, which is the
> flesh and the blood of the world, the life that continues to live in and
> through being as it is represented in itself. This is being as it is *lived*.
> Lived by whom? By 'us.' But who is this 'us,' and what is this life?
> This is precisely what needs to be clarified: the meaning
> of this 'us,' for which being unfolds."[713]

Introduction

In the previous three chapters (2-4), I have tried to make clear what is at stake in

Heidegger's account of originary truth by reading it in light of the four levels of trust with which I

began this investigation (chapter 1): relying, assuming, personal trusting, and primitive trust. This

strategy allowed us to open up an internal tension that pervades Heidegger's work at least after

the Marburg period (i.e., beginning around 1929), a tension between the hermeneutics of our

historical situation in relation to being, on one hand, and a certain phenomenology (understood as

a mode of access to the essential, hidden structure of being's own presencing), on the other. I

tried to show that the stronger strain in Heidegger's work is on the side of essence, and that this

constrains him to think that our openness to the world is, most basically, inevitable. For

Heidegger, this openness is characterized by what we might call *minimally organized disclosure*:

we are affectively attuned to things in a way that opens them up according to a given pattern of

what is essential and inessential; both the attunement and the pattern are grounded in the *logos*

that lets things belong to each other and lets us tell them apart.[714] So long as we are alive and

---

[713] Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis*, p. 110.
[714] Cp. *BT* §§29-34 on affectivity (*Befindlichkeit*), projective understanding (*Verstehen*), and *logos* or
telling (*Rede*) as existentials of being-there. See also my chapter 2, section II.C, and chapter 3, section I.A.

human, according to Heidegger, the world shows up for us with at least minimal coherence. Being must appear, if only (ever) as withdrawing, so as to let *entities* appear in their being.

But if we look to the matter itself, there may be good reason to doubt certain features of Heidegger's account of being-there (*Dasein*), as we have already begun to see (chapter 4). Specifically, over the course of the next three chapters, I want to show that world-disclosure is much less secure than Heidegger's existential analytic – or even his later work on pain – seems to assume. One especially promising place to look for discussions concerning the fragility or instability of our relation to being is at the work of Sigmund Freud, including the tradition of psychoanalysis he inaugurated.

Where Heidegger tries to think first what is joyful, mystery-laden, and gracious – that is, as Aristotle might say, the form – and in that light to think the malevolence of evil[715] (i.e., the privation or distortion) as a negative mode, Freud *sets out* from pathology. Freud claims, for example, that "[u]nless we can understand these pathological forms of sexuality and can coordinate them with normal sexual life, we cannot understand normal sexuality either."[716] In Freud's thinking, failure or absence does not only reveal the context within which a useful thing normally functions, the way a broken or missing hammer discloses the horizon of use-references in *Being and Time*; failure also shows that success is a fraught achievement. To put it more bluntly, Freud claims not only that world-disclosure structurally includes erring (i.e., attending to what is only by concealing the disclosive horizon), but that world-disclosure as such is always already a kind of compromise, an ambivalence of wanting-to-know and not-wanting-to-know.

This psychological ambivalence is close to Heidegger's thinking of being-there as opened up by an ontological clearing that conceals itself – i.e., the tension of existence as claimed both by being and by what is – but I want to show that attending to the psychological tension involved in

---

[715] Heidegger, GA 8:32/*WHD?* 31.
[716] Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, volume **16**, p. 307 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, editor James Strachey; hereafter, SE.

world-opening allows us to think the danger of an ontological *break* with coherent disclosure. Such a break, the descent into madness, would be a betrayal of a different kind than mere deprivation. Heidegger, however, understands madness as just such a deprivation: it is being-there *as* being-away, a kind of supreme distractedness or lostness among beings.[717]

I have already explained[718] why a more careful reading of Freud's work would be thoroughly justified on Heidegger's part. In these final three chapters, I will begin to carry out some of what we might expect that reading to be. It will be a matter of *originary truth*: namely, of the entrance into (and possible exit from) being-in-the-truth. Jacques Lacan, for example, avows this quite explicitly, claiming that Freudian psychoanalysis "is absolutely inseparable from a fundamental question about the way truth enters into the life of man."[719]

Most of us find ourselves, when we bother to ask the question, already within the cleared realm of this truth, already opened up to what-is in a more or less coherent and shared way. Truth has already invaded our lives by shaping them; it is hard to see how that could change. Examining the real possibility of the loss of this truth, the disappearance of the world, is therefore a way to let the nature of our relation to it – and thus to being – become most visible. This approach is not only in keeping with Heidegger's frequent strategy of bringing hidden phenomena into view by attending to their absence; it is also taking up a question raised by Heidegger himself, when he asks in *Being and Time*, "must sickness and death in general – even from a medical point of view

---

[717] Cf. GA 29/30:95/*Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 63. See also Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 95/73, trans. mod.: "The way of being that pervades all openness [*Offenständigkeit*] is our immediate being alongside [*Sein bei*] things that affect us physically [*leibhaft*]. In schizophrenia the identifiable loss of contact is a privation of this just-named openness. Yet this privation does not mean that openness disappears, but only that it is modified to a 'lack of contact.'"

[718] See part IV of the Introduction.

[719] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses (1955-1956)*, ed. J.-A. Miller, tr. R. Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1993), p. 214. Hereafter, *Seminar 3*. In an echo of Nietzsche, Lacan adds: "The dimension of truth is mysterious, inexplicable, nothing decisively enables the necessity of it to be grasped, since man accommodates himself to non-truth perfectly well."

– be grasped primarily as existential phenomena?"[720] If we grasp them existentially, however, we find that a certain kind of sickness, something quite similar to death, threatens to upset our very characterization of the human as essentially existing (standing in the clearing). I will try to show that this extreme illness, named *psychosis* by psychiatry, constitutes a betrayal of our very being-in-the-world, one that is not already integrated into the existential structure of being-there.

Heidegger writes, for example:

> This everyday way in which things have been interpreted [through idle conversation] is one into which being-there has grown in the first instance, with never the possibility of extrication [*vermag ... nie zu entziehen*]. […] In no case is a being-there, untouched and unseduced [*unverführt*] by this way in which things have been interpreted, set before the open country of a 'world' in-itself, so that it just beholds what it encounters.[721]

According to Heidegger, then, being-there is not capable of withdrawing (*entziehen*) from the way one interprets things, for the latter is what seduces us into the shared world. Yet I will show over the course of the next two chapters both that, and in what way, it is possible for this seduction to go radically wrong. It is sometimes rejected or foreclosed from the outset, due to being enacted either insufficiently or over-enthusiastically. I shall thus begin my discussion of psychosis by characterizing the latter as a failure of common sense, i.e., of one's connection to precisely 'this everyday way in which things have been interpreted.'

We will also see, in the course of this Heideggerian reading of Freud, that it is a matter of trust. Recovery from such a break with the organized, shared world, if it happens, seems to require a re-forging of trust, which I take to be evidence that precisely what has gone wrong or been betrayed in psychosis is a global or primitive form of trust. Moreover, our attempt to understand something about what takes place in psychosis will be oriented by questions of how to

---

[720] Heidegger, *BT* 247/291, trans. mod. He adds that "[m]edical and biological investigation into demise can obtain results which may even become significant ontologically," on the condition that "the basic orientation for an existential interpretation of death has been made secure."

[721] Heidegger, *BT* 213/169-70. This is what Lacan refers to as *the symbolic order*, and it is this that Lacan thinks is rejected in psychosis (section I.G.1, below). See Lacan, *Seminar 3*, p. 124, where he speaks of having recently translated Heidegger's essay on Heraclitus entitled "*Logos*," in which Heidegger claims that Heraclitus's One (*hen*) and language (*logos*) are the same. Lacan then points out that Judge "Schreber's delusion is in its own way a mode of relationship between the subject and language as a whole."

trust its sufferers, in their speech and especially in their (often subsequent) accounts of the experience.

Although it falls far short of the richness of Heidegger's thinking, it may help, as we work through what follows, to keep in mind a straightforward phenomenological characterization of normal conscious experience as "streamlike, continuous, first-personal, tied to a point of view, embodied, action-oriented, coherent, and intentional."[722] We could add, from Heidegger's own work, that normal experience gathers up the real via an ever-renewed unification of the temporal ecstases (past, present, future), a unification structured by the gathering and setting apart that is the manner of the world's address to us. We may combine these as interpretations of what it means to be *immersed* in the real, as most of us normally are. David Jopling puts it this way:

> we live within our own skin and […] the prereflective perceptual awareness we have of our bodies and our coordinate movements (including kinesthesis) is (developmentally) one of the oldest and (epistemically) one of the most faithful connections to the real, upon which all other relations are founded […]. Even when we are lost in thought or imagination, the lived body and the lived space of the perceptual world it orients are always marginally present.[723]

Contrast to that a literary description of being overtaken by acute psychosis:

> The walls dissolved and the world became a combination of shadows. […] All direction became a lie. […] She did not know whether she was standing or sitting down, which way was upright, and from where the light, which was a stab as it touched her, was coming. She lost track of the parts of her body; where her arms were and how to move them. As sight went spinning erratically away and back, she tried to clutch at thoughts only to find that she had lost all memory of the English language […]. Memory went entirely, and then mind, and then there was only the faster and faster succession of sensations, unidentifiable without words or thoughts by which to hold them. These [sensations] suggested something secret and horrible, but she could not catch what it was because there was at last no longer a responding self. The terror, now, could have no boundary.[724]

Or consider the following situation, in which a woman suffering from long-term schizophrenia is about to fall into such an episode:

---

[722] David A. Jopling, "A 'Self of Selves?'" in *The Conceptual Self in Context*, eds. U. Neisser and D.A. Jopling, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 249-267. Quotation from p. 253.
[723] *Ibid.*, p. 263.
[724] Hannah Green, *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964), p. 103. This text is Joanne Greenberg's fictionalized autobiography, published under a pen name, of her own illness. She was treated at Chestnut Lodge by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, who shows up in the story as Dr. Fried.

When I took her to the hospital, she became calm, subdued, and depressed. […] "This is my soul," she said, handing [a little amulet] to me. "My soul is gone, my self is gone, I lost it. I am dead. Take it, keep it for me till I shall come out." Then, in sudden panic: "I don't want to die," and she began to attack and to beat me, only to fall back again into her depressed mood.[725]

In the latter case we find an illustration of far-reaching ambiguity (to say nothing of ambivalence) about one's own death – maybe even explicit recognition of something like the life between two deaths that I mentioned earlier (chapter 4, part I). She experiences herself, and explicitly her soul rather than her body, as already dead. And yet there is another mention of death, one that is yet to come and that induces panic. The relation between the two deaths is not clear, but neither seems to be in anything like a distanced, theoretical mode. I would like to suggest, thirdly, that there may be some hope she is clinging to in the gift of the amulet: entrusting her soul to her doctor, as if to some dear Charon. We shall have to consider what genuine hope there may be (along with what may be its origin, and even its ground).

I will do so (1) by laying out a rather eclectic account of the phenomenon of psychosis, following the lead of some Freudian diagnostic claims and emphasizing the philosophical (and therapeutic) problem that the non-psychotic will have in understanding what is going on for the psychotic person. In keeping with my theme, I focus on the betrayal of trust and the failed relation to truth that are centrally implicated in a person's falling out of the world.

(2) This will lead me to link the question of trusting the psychotic person's speech (especially the therapist's trust of what the patient says) to the more complex problem of trust in psychoanalytic therapy more generally, which of course involves the transference relation. That link will make clearer the central role of trust for opening up the truth of the subject in Freudian psychoanalysis. In this latter section, I focus on Freud's comments on therapeutic technique –

---

[725] Edith Jacobson, "On Psychotic Identifications," in *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, ed. Peter Buckley (New York: New York University Press, 1988), pp. 131-142. Quotation from p. 135.

comments which, incidentally, Heidegger found rather more palatable than Freud's theoretical constructions.[726]

I. "I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, Not Day"

I showed earlier (chapter 2, section II.C and part III) the extent to which, for Heidegger, the human being is essentially free, by which he means essentially engaged in (*eingelassen*) the world, even if only inauthentically. It can happen, however, that one is overwhelmed by the very world in which one is engaged. In such cases, one *suffers* one's freedom, one's investment in what matters, with special acuity, undergoing it as an exposure – i.e., as a vulnerability that cannot be mastered.[727]

We know that Heidegger himself had such an experience, after his experiment in complicity with National Socialism resulted in a ban from teaching at the university.[728] Not only his time but his own life of thought had for many years been structured by and worked out in his teaching. He was both angry at the way National Socialism had (he thought) betrayed him and guilty about the ways he had misled others by his own errant wager.[729] His homeland was

---

[726] "During his perusal of the theoretical, 'metapsychological' works, Heidegger never ceased shaking his head. He simply did not want to have to accept that such a highly intelligent and gifted man as Freud could produce such artificial, inhuman, indeed absurd and purely fictitious constructions about homo sapiens. This reading made him literally feel ill. Freud's 'Papers on Technique' [by contrast] made Heidegger more conciliatory. He immediately discovered the crass mutual contradiction [...] between the absolute, natural scientific determinism of [Freud's] theories and the repeated emphasis on the freeing of the patient through psychoanalytic practice." Medard Boss, quoted in Richard Askay, "Heidegger's Philosophy and Its Implications for Psychology, Freud, and Existential Psychoanalysis," a "Translator's Afterword" to *Zollikon Seminars*, p. 309.

[727] The title of this part of the chapter is borrowed from the first line of an untitled poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins. See *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. N.H. Mackenzie (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 181, poem 155, line 1.

[728] Heidegger checked himself into the sanatorium supervised by Dr. von Gebsattel, who treated him for three weeks in 1946-1947. Cf. Heidegger's letter to Medard Boss of Sept. 1, 1947, in *Zollikon Seminars*, p. 238.

[729] Heidegger's anger is clear in, for example, *The History of Beyng* (GA 69), §§61 and 64. His sense of guilt is more difficult to establish, since he famously refused to apologize and mostly pled *not* guilty, but one can hardly read his accounts of errancy without hearing some declaration of Guilty! to which he was responding. For discussion, see William J. Richardson, "Heidegger's Fall," in *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, ed. B. Babich, Phaenomenologica 133 (Springer, 1995), pp. 277-300.

occupied by foreign powers and in shambles; his sons were still prisoners of war in Russian camps. So it is understandable that he would be a bit overwhelmed, although at one level he seems to recover after a bit of talking and a bit of walking.

The name for that experience is trauma, which we might characterize more generally as the break with oneself that comes with being broken-in upon, overwhelmed by the conflicted relation between one's desires and the world in which one finds oneself. If Heidegger and Husserl are right that originary temporality [*Zeitlichkeit*] is the primary mode of self-integration – how being-there most fundamentally *is* – then trauma is what cannot be gathered up in temporalizing (*zeitigen*), what cannot be integrated.[730] In Heidegger's case, as in many cases, a level of re-integration seems to have been possible, so long as help is available to establish an appropriate context for that integration.

But trauma can prove more recalcitrant to healing. Being overwhelmed may mean finding all one's prospects and one's place in the world crushed by those to whom one is most attached. Shakespeare has dramatized such a calamity in the character of Ophelia.[731] Prince Hamlet, her erstwhile suitor, pretends to have gone mad, forswears his love for her, accidentally kills her father, and is shipped off to England. In a very short time, she has lost her future husband and her current protector – all she has in the world, since we neither meet nor hear of her mother. To make matters worse, her father was doing something shameful – hiding and spying – when he was killed, and he was killed by the very man to whom she was preparing to transfer her loyalties. Finally, it is unclear how much Hamlet can be blamed for the murder, so her ambivalence toward him cannot even find a margin of rest in assigning definite blame.

---

[730] Rudolf Bernet, "The Traumatized Subject," pp. 174, 178.
[731] Quotations are from "The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark," in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. J. Jowett, W. Montgomery, G. Taylor, and S. Wells (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2005). Citations are parenthetical, as follows: (Act.Scene.Line number).

In light of all of this, it is not exactly surprising, although a bit startling, when she is next announced on stage as one whose "speech is nothing" (4.5.7), who is marked by a pitiable mood. This is the first of only four more instances in which Ophelia appears or is mentioned in the play: first, and primarily, she appears in order to sing (and occasionally to speak) about love, death, and abandonment; second, to communicate through the language of flowers, some of which she interprets verbally; third, as the object of a report that she has drowned in a river (one that may as well be named Grief – cf. "the weeping brook" [4.7.147]), seemingly too insane even to notice or care as she was drowning; finally, she appears as a corpse, the reified body of grief over which her brother and her lover, Laertes and Hamlet, fight to prove their devotion.

In Ophelia's case, it remains at one level quite understandable that she should go mad. Who could endure such a situation without being overwhelmed? At another level, however, such a turn thwarts understanding – what exactly has happened here? Why has she been reduced to singing, to her seemingly nonsensical phrases ("They say the owl was a baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be" [4.5.41-43]), to flower-symbolism, and to what is either an inability or a refusal to care about her own welfare? Why is she both somewhat coherent and somehow inaccessible to everyday understanding?

Madness proper, which I will call *psychosis*, is – like the trauma that can provoke it – a problem of integration. As Ophelia's case suggests, however, the failure of integration here reaches a much more fundamental level than is seen elsewhere: the problem of integrating the events of the world into oneself recoils into a question about the possibility of oneself *being* integrated into the shared world. That more radical question opens up the ontological level; it emerges as a question, in different ways, both for the psychotic person herself and for us who encounter, love, or only observe her. For Ophelia, what is at stake is betrayal: she sings of a maid taken advantage of (4.5.47-65), speaks of a "false steward that stole his master's daughter"

(4.5.172-173), and proclaims that the violets (symbols of faithfulness or constancy) "withered all when my father died" (4.5.183-184). In other words, she speaks of herself as betrayed.

To others, however, she is a mystery: the queen's report of her drowning in the river of grief characterizes Ophelia as either "incapable of her own distress, / Or like a creature native and endued / Unto that element" (4.6.150-152). This focuses our attention on Ophelia's awareness of her own situation – and hence on her desire, whether consciously recognized or not, to drown. Likewise, before her *physical* death (but perhaps after another kind of death), when Horatio announces the mad Ophelia to the queen, he describes her mad speech as puzzling:

> … [Ophelia] speaks things in doubt,
> That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,
> Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
> The hearers to collection. They aim at it,
> And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
> Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,
> Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
> Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily (4.5.6-13).

As Shakespeare indicates here, the psychotic person *seems* to speak about something shared, aiming her hearers toward a matter, but then things get mixed up. It turns out to be unclear (both syntactically and experientially) whether we are aimed at collection, the work of speech that gathers things in the world, or at the speech itself as a set of words. For we, understanding too quickly, anticipate what she means and end up grasping a thought that we cannot be confident was hers. It is clear that she suffers deeply, but how much of that does she know or allow herself to recognize? In psychiatric terms, how extensive is her thought-disorder?

A) On the Possibility of Understanding
"This child is dead and not dead."[732]

I pointed out (chapter 4, part IV) that Heidegger's work is an effort thoughtfully to let-be the incomprehensibility of death. Since I want to show that psychosis is a kind of death – a way

---

[732] Proclaimed by a woman about herself, speaking in the persona of her older sister. See R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 219.

of no-longer-being-there, a radical plunge out of the world that cannot be accounted for by Heidegger's thinking of being-there – it is appropriate that psychosis, too, should bear the thoughtful weight of a certain incomprehensibility. This, at least, is how Naomi Eilan sets out the philosophical task of understanding the most radical form of psychosis, schizophrenia. Somehow, she says, we have to "solve simultaneously for understanding and utter strangeness."[733] Her paper responds to Karl Jaspers's claim (in *General Psychopathology*) that schizophrenic phenomena are – or, let us point out, schizophrenic *speech* about experiential phenomena is – incomprehensible. Jaspers means by this, she explains, that while we can gain one kind of understanding of such phenomena ('static understanding') simply by listening to and recording first-person accounts, what we cannot achieve is an empathic or 'genetic' understanding, in which we would comprehend, from the first-person point of view, how one psychical state emerges from or generates another in schizophrenia.[734] The things that psychotics say and do, as Shakespeare has already articulated, often seem to be tending toward rationality; but then something arises within the discourse that abruptly leaves us radically unsure whether we have understood.

Let us take as a clinical example a case of schizophrenic autism cited by Eugene Minkowski. 'Paul' is a 17-year-old who has become unable to spend fewer than several hours on each visit to the restroom. Paul explains as follows:

> When I have to go to the bathroom, I first check the time in order to not stay too long. It takes a certain amount of my time to look at my watch; I check exactly how the hands are placed. The little hand is sometimes not exactly in the middle between two numbers as it should be when it is half past the hour; this observation gives me something to dwell on. So I watch to be sure of the time. If the little hand is a bit farther or a bit closer than where it should be in relation to the big hand, I am no longer sure of anything; that is it.[735]

Here there is an extreme bit of obsessiveness, but it is not simply incomprehensible. I as listener can play along as if it were a fictional story, even identifying to some extent with the protagonist

---

[733] Naomi Eilan, "On Understanding Schizophrenia," in *Exploring the Self*, ed. Dan Zahavi (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000), p. 97.
[734] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[735] Eugene Minkowski and R. Targowla, "A Contribution to the Study of Autism: The Interrogative Attitude," tr. S. Ziadeh, *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* **8**.4 (December 2001): 271-278, p. 272.

(we all have our compulsions), until the last line pulls me up short, and I realize that something more has been going on than I could follow. He is 'no longer sure of anything'? There is more at stake here than seems even distantly appropriate. The experience is repeated a bit later, when we read further in Paul's explanation of the same phenomenon.

> After entering the bathroom, I am not sure of having closed the door. Then I look at the fanlight and think of the possibility of a draught. I pull the door several times to be sure that it is shut. […] Then, I look at a small nail that I noticed, since the beginning, in the door. The paint has come off the nail, but a small bit of paint remains. I look every time to see whether the nail is still in the same place and whether the spot is still the same size. I then look at the door and wonder whether I will be seen. Deep down, I do not mind being seen; it is on principle that I reassure myself and think about it. The thing has to be either done or not done. I must be sure that the door is closed or open. Then I think that the flush might work by itself and inundate everything; things like that can happen.[736]

Once more, things proceed relatively smoothly at the level of understanding; it seems within normal experience to be concerned about getting a door closed or to habitually notice a quirk about one's surroundings. It is perhaps a bit more strange not to mind being seen and yet to reassure oneself nonetheless, as if on principle (where the principle remains obscure); but none of this is simply inconsistent with our own experience. Yet something has definitely gone wrong for my empathic understanding when Paul seems to indicate that it is certainty as such that he is seeking with regard to the door, rather than a particular state of affairs. (It may be open or closed, no matter; the important thing is being sure which it is.)

With the final sentence of the excerpt, however, things really go off the rails; indeed, to my eye as a reader, it is especially the ultimate, justifying clause that opens onto a world I cannot share. Not only is he straightforwardly considering what I would think of as a kind of imaginative counterfactual – the fantasy that the flush might spontaneously flood everything – he then feels the need to generalize, to provide a reasonable space for this counterfactual in the real world. Suddenly, the earlier concern about being 'no longer sure of *anything*' lends its full weight to the possibility of the flush inundating *everything*, and it is no longer at all clear that he means some

---

[736] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

limited set of everything: that the flush might inundate the bathroom, presumably, or perhaps a bit of the rug outside. He could well mean a much more existentially fraught 'everything,' a kind of global flood…. While I can fleetingly feel a kind of sympathetic, inchoate terror, I do not know whether *he* is terrified,[737] or even what he could mean, at least in the same literal register in which he had seemed to be speaking.

There have been three basic philosophical attempts to deal with this Shakespearean juxtaposition of 'utter strangeness' and seeming coherence, according to Eilan.[738] One move is simply to shift registers: to interpret the especially strange claims, and perhaps even the whole discourse about clocks and doors and toilets, as a kind of metaphor that was simply not well-signaled. In that case, the global weight that I was tempted to give to 'anything' and 'everything' in reading Paul's words might well be the point of the conversation – he is displaying his world, in which everything can be at stake at any moment, and his obsessive checking, although dispassionate, is a way of dealing with that. This sort of path is most famously taken by R.D. Laing, although more recently George Atwood, Robert Stolorow, and Donna Orange have advocated a similar style of interpretation. I will come back to this way of thinking later; for now, let me just note that for Eilan, this is a way of *normalizing* schizophrenic speech that fails to adequately respect its strangeness.

A second move, following Wittgenstein, is to take psychotic claims literally but to recognize that they have no content. As I suggested earlier (chapter 1, section III.C), for

---

[737] A major symptom of schizophrenia is flat or blunted communication of affect, meaning that tone and body language may not have made Paul's terror or lack thereof any clearer in the live interview than in the written version. Minkowski argues, however, that this particular patient wonders about such things quite indifferently. "Paul is not anxious; he seems to be immersed in an unusual apathy. Sometimes, one gets the strong impression that he is speaking not about himself, but about a third party." Hence, "not only is the emotional factor lacking, […] but the personal element is almost entirely gone as well. The questions he poses are first and foremost concerned with the *objective order of things* […]." *Ibid.*, pp. 272-3.

Minkowski's point is to differentiate Paul's behavior from (neurotic) obsessional behavior, since the latter would be accompanied by anxiety; I can agree, so long as we specify: accompanied by *communicated* anxiety. That leaves open the possibility that a feature of psychosis (though not, of course, unique to psychosis) is precisely to hide or to be unable to share one's anxiety.

[738] Eilan, "On Understanding," pp. 101-107.

Wittgenstein such claims are not candidates for correctness or mistakenness, but rather empty speech acts, mere noise, with regard to which nothing could count as evidence either for or against. In this approach the strangeness is maintained, but 'genetic' comprehensibility is abandoned – we look for *causes* of the person's utterances, not psychological *reasons* why she spoke as she did. Eilan's worry about this strategy is that it goes too far in the opposite direction from the normalizing reading: it fails to attend to the hinting measure of comprehensibility that *is* available. It certainly seems like normal empathy, after all, that allows us to understand some amount of what is said by people suffering from psychosis.

The third and more recent attempt, then, has been to take schizophrenic claims literally *and* to maintain that they are rational beliefs. Following Donald Davidson, this path recognizes that reasons just *are* causes, albeit of a particular sort, so what we do in our various attempts to understand schizophrenic utterances (including searching for disturbing physiological factors) remains throughout a matter of rationalizing 'from inside,' as it were, even if it cannot always involve normal empathy. This strategy relies on distinguishing between *experiences*, as input for beliefs, and *connections between beliefs themselves*. Considered in themselves, schizophrenic beliefs can be fully rational and their connections coherently understandable, even if the input pathways of experience are faulty or very strange.[739] Thus, it seems, we have managed to 'solve for both strangeness and understanding', as Eilan had originally characterized the project.

I am not at all confident that we can separate input and beliefs neatly enough for this account to work. Leaving that problem to one side, however, I think Eilan's own, rather different concern about this third attempt is also on the right track. Eilan's claim has to do with the level of

---

[739] Davidson himself, Marcia Cavell, and Linda Brakel all take this approach to irrational (or a-rational) beliefs, although in rather different ways. See Donald Davidson, *Problems of Rationality* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2004), as well as "Actions, Reasons, and Causes" in *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2001); Cavell, *The Psychoanalytic Mind: From Freud to Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Brakel, *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and the A-rational Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

generality of the utterances in question. It is certainly strange, she admits, to encounter someone who is 'visually disoriented,' who identifies visual objects but maintains that these objects are not given as located in space. Such a situation plausibly involves a kind of malfunctioning of visual experience. Eilan claims, however, that the kind of 'utter strangeness' we need to account for in schizophrenia is on the level of someone maintaining "that she does not believe that physical objects *in fact* have location in space,"[740] presumably regardless of how they are given in her experience. Eilan's point is that our shared world is ineluctably structured spatially as regards physical objects, so any attempt at genetic understanding in this case seems inherently blocked, even if we appeal to faulty visual experience.[741]

I think we can see a similar difficulty in the example from Minkowski. Paul maintains that if his watch does not match up quite correctly, he is no longer sure of anything (at all). When he looks at the toilet, he thinks that it might operate by itself and inundate everything, since (*as we all know*, the implication seems to be) 'such things can happen.' The level of generality to which the boy seems to appeal, especially in the latter claim, is similar to Eilan's spatial location example. If Paul had said that he needed to be sure about the door's being open or closed, then added, *after all, bathroom doors are not really in space*, would we know any better how to understand this? Or he might have said the following, which is at least a plausible construal of his earlier claim: *my knowledge of anything is contingent on the behavior of my watch*. It does not seem like the assumption that his *perceptions* of his watch are odd, even very odd, can get us anywhere; confusing one's time-keeping device for originary temporality, or for God, or for whatever reasonable guarantor of knowledge you like is not an input malfunction. It is a confusion on the level of meaning.[742]

---

[740] Eilan, "On Understanding," p. 108.
[741] *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.
[742] For an example that is more confusing right from the start, we might take R.D. Laing's patient Julie, so long as we do not forget that the following is already somewhat translated and organized by Laing:

Since none of these three philosophical options works very well, Eilan then proposes a fourth way out, which involves a sort of hybrid taken from the literature. Following John Campbell, she understands primary delusional beliefs to be orientations for a whole framework of thinking, starting from which one necessarily ends up with a different world than the shared one.[743] This would yield a person rather like Don Quixote. In trying to understand such a person, then, we can adopt those primary beliefs as *restricted* hypotheses, on the basis of which we can then join the psychotic's world (via a sort of suspension of disbelief, as one does in joining a fictional or virtual world). But since we cannot *really* reorient our whole framework around them, we remain surprised by the way that other claims get worked into the whole. This inability on our part to fully step out of the world would account for the surprising twists we encountered in Paul's story.

Eilan then complements Campbell's account by citing Louis Sass (whose work on psychosis has been prolific over the past 20 years) to the effect that we can understand schizophrenic utterances if we first do our best to think in line with philosophical solipsism (i.e.,

---

"[S]he said she had the Tree of Life inside her. The apples of this tree were her breasts. She had ten nipples (her fingers). She had 'all the bones of a brigade of the Highland Light Infantry'. She had everything she could think of. Anything she wanted, she had and she had not, immediately, at the one time. Reality did not cast its shadow or its light over any wish or fear. Every wish met with instantaneous phantom fulfilment and every dread likewise instantaneously came to pass in a phantom way. Thus she could be anyone, anywhere, anytime. 'I'm Rita Hayworth,
I'm Joan Blondell. I'm a Royal Queen. My royal name is Julianne.' 'She's self-sufficient,' she told me. 'She's the self-possessed.' But this self-possession was double-edged. It had also its dark side. She was a girl 'possessed' by the phantom of her own being. Her self had no freedom, autonomy, or power in the real world. Since she was anyone she cared to mention, she was no *one*. 'I'm thousands. I'm an in divide you all [*sic*]. I'm a no un' (i.e. a nun: a noun: no one single person). Being a nun had very many meanings. One of them was contrasted with being a bride. She usually regarded me as her brother and called herself my bride or the bride of 'leally lovely lifely life'. Of course, since life and me were sometimes identical for her, she was terrified of Life, or me. Life (me) would mash her to pulp, burn her heart with a red-hot iron, cut off her legs, hands, tongue, breasts. Life was conceived in the most violent and fiercely destructive terms imaginable. [...] Notwithstanding having the Tree of Life inside her, she generally felt that she was the Destroyer of Life. It was understandable, therefore, that she was terrified that life would destroy her" (Laing, *The Divided Self*, pp. 221-2).

[743] M.G. Henriksen points out that these are not really beliefs (in the sense of affirmed propositions) but assumptions, or action-guiding certainties that are merely implicit in our activities. See Henriksen, "On Incomprehensibility in Schizophrenia," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* **12**.1 (2013): 105-129.

297

not by engaging normal empathy), then recognize (perhaps with Wittgenstein) the paradoxes that this generates.

Eilan's crucial move is to remind us of the affective component involved in one's world crashing down around one: the terror that shows up in some psychotic patients, and is later reported by others who had presented flattened affect at the time of their acute suffering. She then suggests, tentatively, that we think about Campbell's and Sass's accounts in light of the tremendous affect somehow involved in what can rightly be called 'annihilation states.'[744] Thus, Eilan proposes that we could expand Campbell's theory to attend to the way that affective charge is involved both in making (or maintaining) something at the level of a framework belief and in orienting the ways that other beliefs get incorporated into the framework. We could also recognize that terror is in part constituted by isolation, which is precisely what existing solipsistically in a non-solipsistic universe *would* involve and (as is clear from testimony) psychosis *does* involve.[745]

These suggestions seem very promising, and I will return to them shortly in more detail, but I would like to dwell for a moment on Eilan's reintroduction of the question of affectivity in psychosis. Her general concern is that all five of the other proposed models are overly cognitive (including those of Sass and Campbell), which seems to me already an important point. But she additionally wants to make use of this observation in pursuit of her original aim, which was to 'solve simultaneously for understanding and utter strangeness.' As she concludes, then, "the reason we find normal empathy [with schizophrenic utterances] psychologically impossible is not (only) the cognitive distance from everyday beliefs, but, rather, our very deep resistance to allowing ourselves to engage fully, [empathically], with the kinds of world- and self-losing

---

[744] The term is from George E. Atwood, *The Abyss of Madness* (New York: Routledge, 2012), *passim*.
[745] Eilan, "On Understanding," p. 112.

emotions embodied in these states."[746] In the presence of a psychotic person, we tend to be frightened by the other person's abyss, as if we had a distant sense that such a fall is possible for us, as well. It is thus *our normal affective investment* in (or even *as*) the structure of the shared world that makes for the utter strangeness of psychotic utterances.

Eilan freely admits that for this claim to make sense, we would have to supplement it. "The nature of such glimpses into the emotional ingredient in schizophrenia [i.e., of the kind of understanding at work here] needs an explanation, and I do not have one to hand."[747] We might turn for help to a group of claims that George Atwood makes in his beautiful (and relentlessly clinical) recent book, *The Abyss of Madness*. He, too, refers madness to terror or anxiety, only he locates its potential in everyone, by virtue of our humanity.

> The abyss lies on or just beyond the horizon of every person's world, and there is nothing more frightening. Even [physical] death does not hold a terror for us comparable to the one associated with the abyss. [… That abyss] is the end of all possible responses and meanings, the erasure of a world in which there is anything coherent to respond to, the melting away of anyone to engage in a response. It is much more scary than death, and this is proven by the fact that people in fear of annihilation – the terror of madness – so often commit suicide rather than continue with it.[748]

This terror that lurks at or beyond the horizon of our participation in the shared world, then, would in part constitute our affective investment in the holding-together, the structural wholeness and order, of the shared world. And the panic that we feel at times when we are overwhelmed, when the world threatens to slip away, would not be categorically different from that experienced by people suffering from psychosis, people in annihilation states. That, perhaps, is why some understanding of psychotic speech is possible – why, as Atwood puts it, someone who is "fall[ing] away, limitlessly, from being itself into utter nonbeing," someone who "has

---

[746] *Ibid.*, p. 113.
[747] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[748] Atwood, *The Abyss*, pp. 41-2.

fallen out of the world" and may "live in a felt state of non-being," is somehow nonetheless "not for that reason inaccessible to communication."[749]

We will shortly discover puzzles aplenty in the nature of both 'annihilation states' and this problematic 'communication.' We will also have to ask whether and in what way it makes sense to speak of a psychotic person's 'world.' But let us not fail to notice that, phenomenally speaking, we are not maintained in the common world merely by a flight from anxiety or terror, whatever Heidegger's analyses of inauthenticity might initially suggest.[750] As we saw (chapter 2, section I.B), there is a positive holding-oneself- (or being-held) in-the-truth at work here, a holding which is likewise affectively tuned, and one which (I contend) has its negative mode in the specific shape or tenor of psychotic terror. To put it quite plainly, then, our normal affective investment in the world, that fundamental affection or attunement [*Grundstimmung*], is trust – more specifically, what I have called *primitive trust*. Its destruction, in which one plunges out of the world and thus into the terror of annihilation, takes place as some sort of betrayal.

B) Psychosis Suffered as Betrayal

"In psychopathology the absence of basic trust can best be studied in infantile schizophrenia, while lifelong underlying weakness of such trust is apparent in adult personalities in whom withdrawal into schizoid and depressive states is habitual. The re-establishment of a state of trust has been found to be the basic requirement for therapy in these cases."[751]

For one sort of confirmation of my thesis, we should listen to the stories of those who have survived such states,[752] beginning with Susanna Kaysen. Although she was 'only' borderline psychotic, she explains that even at that level, "[s]omething had been peeled back, a covering or shell that works to protect us. […] And this was the main precondition, that anything might be

---

[749] *Ibid.*, pp. 40, 46, and 59.
[750] Were this the case, authenticity would not give us back the shared world in a new light but some other world, solipsistically severed from the upshot of Heidegger's lengthy discussion of being-in (in the first division of *Being and Time*). Whatever one thinks of his account there, authenticity as solipsism is much too simplistic.
[751] Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, p. 248.
[752] Throughout, unless it confuses the sense excessively, I leave the grammar of first-person accounts uncorrected. One can only ask so much of people.

something else."[753] As we saw with 'Paul,' a major feature of the abyss is an utter lack of trustworthy structure in the world.

The susceptibility of all things to radical change is echoed by Wilma Bovink, whose schizophrenia is partly rooted in the trauma of abuse. "A psychosis involves a severe distortion of meaning. It renders the world unfamiliar, unrecognizable, a threat. […] Nothing can be taken for granted."[754] Included in the set of things that can no longer be taken for granted, of course, is the self. "I distrusted myself because at any moment my disorder could get worse. I had a dark side inside myself, a side I didn't know and didn't dare to explore."[755] Once the bottom has fallen out, it is never clear how deep the rabbit hole could go. But Bovink, in particular, identifies her distrust as *learned*, and specifically as learned from previous betrayal.

> I don't think that abuse itself is a strong cause for psychosis. It hurts, but it is rather simple. I think that the threat and the betrayal that come with it feed psychosis. The betrayal of the family that says, 'you must have asked for it,' instead of standing up for you. That […] forces the child to accept the reality of the adults. […] You are forced to betray yourself. That is what causes the twilight zone. What makes you vulnerable for psychosis.[756]

In Bovink's argument, we begin to see the central role that adults play in providing the child's world with minimally coherent structure. (Recall Wittgenstein's claim about learning how to make judgments: "From a child up I learnt to judge like this. *This is* judging.")[757] When the child has to play along with the (false) story told about her, in such a way that the very reality or importance of the difference between truth and falsity comes into question for her, then a person is especially vulnerable: then the shattering of the world into globalized confusion can come at any moment.

Peter Chadwick, a psychologist who fell into paranoid schizophrenia while qualified for practice, explains that already in the pre-psychotic stage (in his case, schizotypal personality

---

[753] Susanna Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted* (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 42.
[754] Wilma Bovink, "From Being a Disorder to Dealing with Life: An Experiential Exploration of the Association Between Trauma and Psychosis," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* **32**.1 (2006): 17-19, p. 17.
[755] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[756] *Ibid.*
[757] Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, §128. Cited in chapter 1, section III.B.

disorder), his judgments about what was probable had become "incredibly skewed by betrayal."[758] With the shift into full-blown psychosis, his paranoia became acute. "After all betrayal was what I was used to, why should it not be carrying on now? […] I was alone and now trusted no one (if indeed my capacity to trust people had ever been very high)."[759] He felt "transparent, invaded, betrayed,"[760] since what he thought of as The Organization swept away all privacy and all loyalty in a concerted effort to destroy him. "Sadly[,] normal feelings of trust in other people are terribly damaged. One is no longer really quite sure that anything (even a hearse going by) is quite what it seems or anyone quite what he or she seems. One is on the lookout for deception, practical jokes, lies or misleading information."[761] One of M.L. Hayward's patients agrees, saying quite bluntly that "[t]he problem with schizophrenics is that they can't trust anyone. They can't put their eggs in one basket."[762]

We can find a hint about *why* mistrust must be so prevalent for people in such situations in psychoanalyst Harold Searles's claim that for someone with paranoid schizophrenia, "his suspicion provides his only mode of processing, of sifting out, the data from a world which is as bewilderingly complex as the adult world is to a little child."[763] We already know that mistrust can be a positive epistemic tool, but when the structure intrinsic to the world falls apart, it turns out to be the only tool remaining. (Glancing ahead, we should note that, however helpful Searles's analogy may be in indicating how utterly overwhelming life is for a schizophrenic, the

---

[758] Peter K. Chadwick, "Peer-Professional First-Person Account: Schizophrenia From the Inside – Phenomenology and the Integration of Causes and Meanings," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* **33**.1 (2007): 166-173, p. 169.
[759] *Ibid.*
[760] Chadwick, "Psychotic Consciousness," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* **47**.1 (2007): 52-62, p. 56.
[761] *Ibid.*, p. 58.
[762] Quoted in Laing, *The Divided Self*, p. 180.
[763] Harold F. Searles, "Sources of Anxiety in Paranoid Schizophrenia," in *Essential Papers*, pp. 98-117. Quotation from p. 104.

situation is precisely *not* the same as that for a child, whose primary orientation to the excessively complex adult world is normally one of trust.[764])

One of the most vivid witnesses to the role of betrayal in psychosis is the famous Judge Schreber, whose published *Memoirs of a Nerve Patient* Freud wrote about in 1911 (the year Schreber died) as if they were a case study. There is some debate about whether Schreber's illness should be classified as paranoia or as paranoid schizophrenia, but Freud at least takes him to be straightforwardly paranoid. Over the course of the *Memoirs*, it emerges that Schreber's principal concern has to do with being forsaken or abandoned.[765] He tells us that "the dread of 'being forsaken' played a major role, so that every night I went to bed in my padded cell I doubted whether the door would open again at all in the morning."[766] In the course of his delusional elaboration, this dread is eventually referred to a kind of self-defensive plot carried out against him by God, whose workings Schreber accordingly describes as unfaithful.[767] Similar to the patient cited earlier (see the introduction to the present chapter), who gave her dead soul to the doctor in an amulet, Schreber tries to understand this betrayal as a soul murder.[768] He elaborates as follows:

> [A] plot was laid against me (perhaps March or April 1894), the purpose of which was to hand me over to another human being after my nervous illness had been recognized as, or assumed to be, incurable, in such a way that my soul was handed to him, but my body […] was then left to that human being for sexual misuse and simply "forsaken," in other words left to rot. One does not

---

[764] See below (section I.F), for discussion of the relation between schizophrenia and childhood. Notice that children who find themselves in a basically secure environment have a remarkable ability to simply let something too complex pass them by, to take it as unimportant for the time being, although this is in tension with their curiosity.

[765] "Always the main idea […] was to 'forsake' me, that is to say abandon me [*liegen lassen, d.h. verlassen*]; at the time I am discussing it was thought that this could be achieved by unmanning me and allowing my body to be prostituted like that of a female harlot, sometimes also by killing me and later by destroying my reason (making me demented)." Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, trs. Ida MacAlpine and R.A. Hunter (New York: New York Review of Books, 2000), p. 96.

[766] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[767] *Ibid.*, p. 205 and fn 97.

[768] For glimpses of Schreber's efforts to find in 'soul murder' a concept to fit his experience, see *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 33-35.

seem to have been quite clear as to what was to happen to such a "forsaken" human being, nor whether this actually meant his death.[769]

Schreber here displays a confusion over his own death that we should recognize as overdetermined. On one hand, he is terrified of being abandoned, left to fall apart (to decompose). With this fear of a planned 'soul murder' he must cope continually. On the other hand, he is *already* in some way betrayed: his sense of this oscillates between the feeling that he has died previously and the feeling that the rest of the world has perished. Thus, Schreber at one point has a vague experience of encountering his own obituary in the newspaper, followed by the sense that he existed in a new, lesser shape – in which lesser shape he remembers quietly expiring one day. And, in contrast, he was for a while convinced that the world would soon end in a great catastrophe, before he came to believe that this had already happened during the course of his illness. Freud characterizes the situation like this: "He himself was the 'the only real man left alive,' and the few human shapes that he still saw – the doctor, the attendants, the other patients – he explained as being 'miracled up, cursorily improvised men'."[770]

On what is now a third hand – and here the sense of overdetermination grows strong – in the quotation above, Schreber admits to being (now) and having been (at the time) 'unclear' as to whether the planned soul murder that he fears, namely, abandonment, was supposed to involve his own death. He, like the patient with the amulet, also seems unclear about whether or not the soul murder has already happened. Death itself becomes ambiguous. The voices that speak to him tell him of "somebody having committed soul murder" (and indeed latterly of his *own* responsibility for this murder, which he denounces as revisionist history), yet he is convinced that

---

[769] *Ibid.*, p. 63. 'Rot' translates *verwesen*, which means to decompose but also (in a philosophical context) could mean a distortion of something's essence (*Wesen*) or an essential distortion.

[770] Freud, "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (*Dementia Paranoides*)," SE **12**:68. Hereafter, "Schreber." Regarding the obituary, Schreber adds: "I took this as a hint that I could no longer count on any possibility of a return to human society" (*Memoirs*, 85). Regarding the death of his mentally inferior shape, he says, "I can recollect that […] I was lying in bed with the distinct feeling that my soul was slowly expiring" (*Memoirs*, 78). In both instances, he adds the caveat that he cannot now decide whether it really happened.

someone *unsuccessfully* tried to murder his soul. He resolves the contradiction by positing a successful soul murder sometime in the past involving his family and Flechsig's.[771]

It seems to me that it is just this overdetermined flailing about among worldly entities in an attempt to describe what has happened that attests to the ontological status of Schreber's transformation. The catastrophic end of the world is not separate from the death of his self that he nonetheless survives; this unique event is primarily a matter of being forsaken by a world that thereafter shows up as chaotically untrustworthy.[772]

We can find further evidence that primitive trust is at stake in psychosis by attending to the importance of a trusting relation to the therapist for the chance of recovery. Psychoanalyst Norman Cameron reports on a woman he calls 'Grace,' who was tormented by hallucinations, including voices with persistent, identifiable characteristics. Cameron claims that "the slow growth during therapy of a new sense of trust made it possible for the patient to dare regress to a point where [her] mother appeared as a hallucinated, separate existence outside herself."[773] That is, a certain amount of trust was required in order to gain some mediating distance from her mother's voice. At a later stage in her recovery, Grace began hallucinating her therapist, as well. Cameron's interpretation is that it was helpful for her to be able to put her mother and her therapist on equal footing, both outside of herself. He writes: "When my image was hallucinated, in a moment of urgent need, it could stand for the first time as an entity on the threshold of the patient's psychic system before entering it – to make use of Grace's imagery, [my image was]

---

[771] Schreber, *Memoirs*, p. 34. Cf. p. 67, original italics: "All attempts at committing soul murder, at unmanning me for *purposes contrary to the Order of the World* (that is to say for the sexual satisfaction of a human being) and later at destruction of my reason, have failed."
[772] This 'showing up' implies minimal reintegration into the world; I have tried to indicate both sides of the limit here by marking the situation as both chaotic and disclosive of the whole as untrustworthy.
[773] Norman Cameron, "Introjection, Reprojection, and Hallucination in the Interaction Between Patient and Therapist," in *Essential Papers*, pp. 233-255. Quotation from pp. 249-50.

like a trusted friend about to be invited in."[774] Grace no longer had to be transparent, invaded, and

betrayed, as Chadwick had been, because she had found someone she could come to trust.

In a similar vein, the following appeared anonymously in *The New York Times*,

introduced as a first-person account of schizophrenia:

> Life for most schizophrenics is a nightmare full of fears and doubts about oneself and about
> reality; they have a distorted view of that most profound question of how they relate to the world
> around them. Boundaries become unclear and other people are frightening and not to be trusted.
> Thus, the very thing which could bring relief – closeness to other people – is shunned as
> something horrible and dangerous. For this reason it is absolutely essential to have someone to
> depend on, to draw the schizophrenic out of his jungle of terrors and eventually more into the less
> frightening world of reality.
>   One of the hardest issues for me to deal with has been trust. My mind has created so
> many reasons to fear the real world and the people in it that trusting a new person or moving to a
> new level of trust with a familiar person presents a terrifying conflict that must be hammered out
> over and over until I can find a way to overcome my fears or in a few cases give up the battle,
> even if just for the time being. The intensity of this conflict makes it hard to build relationships.
> […]
>   Therapy with schizophrenics can go on for years before a level of trust is built up
> sufficiently for the patient to use his therapist as a bridge between the two worlds he is confronted
> with.[775]

To begin to understand these last two examples, recall my earlier, phenomenological

typology of different levels of trust (chapter 1). It is due to a failure (or betrayal) of primitive

trust, that which integrates one into the shared world (what this anonymous author in the *Times*

calls 'reality'), that the particular difficulties with trusting people emerge. Note that the problem

is not simply a complete inability to trust people, since 'familiar' people are still trusted at a

certain level (even if much less than previously). Rather, there is something going on in the

background that inhibits but does not completely rule out trusting people – and this *something* is

precisely a failure of trust in the world as a whole. That is also why it is possible for a therapist to

become a bridge, after long years of work, back to gradual trust in the world (i.e., to a rebuilding

of primitive trust): because the ability to form trusting relationships is impaired but not simply

---

[774] *Ibid.*, p. 251.
[775] "I Feel I am Trapped Inside My Head, Banging Against Its Walls, Trying Desperately to Escape," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1986. I owe the reference to Peter Buckley, from p. xvi of the editor's introduction to *Essential Papers on Psychosis*.

gone (indicating that the problem is not primarily located at the interpersonal, or even ontic, level), and because the transcendental relation of genesis between particular trusts and global trusts goes both ways, just like the genetic relations between *trusting* a person in the full sense and *relying on* a person in some way (see chapter 1, part IV). I can be moved to rely on someone because I trust the person as a close friend, but I can also come to trust a person more fully through instances of relying on him, even though this is not a calculable process. (Since I can decide to rely but cannot simply decide to trust, there is no determinate predicting of how reliable someone must show herself to be before I find myself trusting her.)

All these various witnesses, then, attest to the centrality of the problem of trust for psychosis, but they do not yet tell us *why* it is central. For that, we shall have to say more clearly what goes on in the development of a psychosis – what it means for a person to fall out of the shared world.

C) Modes of Addressing the Psychotic

When contemporary psychiatric medicine tries to come to grips with the variety of annihilation states, it seeks some bounded disease entity amidst the chaos. This involves identifying similarities across cases that seem very different, thus reducing the bewildering volume of unconceptualized material through which the practitioner must sort. To this end, psychiatric medicine produces lists of symptoms, just as physical medicine does, which it tries then to gather or correlate into diagnostic syndromes. Even if this way of generating a common language makes a certain amount of sense practically, it will not be of much help philosophically, since it purposefully sets aside the lived experience of the particular sufferer. Hence, although we will need to begin by locating our own discussion within that common language, I will then offer some evaluative remarks indicating the limitations of this medical model, leaving the ground clear to proceed with the greater insight available from phenomenological psychiatry and

Freudian psychoanalysis.[776] (Those already familiar with the symptoms of psychosis and willing to suspend psychiatry's categories may wish to proceed directly to section I.D, below.)

Positive symptoms are the most visible signs of psychosis. They include *delusions* (beliefs that are in no way open for discussion) and *hallucinations* (sensory experiences that do not correlate with real happenings) of various sorts.[777] Paranoid delusions involve breaches of psychic integrity – your thoughts are known to me, or mine to you. Schizophrenic delusions add breaches of bodily integrity – pieces of my brain are in your head.[778] Such delusions may include alienation of control: a sense that there is a grand conspiracy against me, an automatism of movement, speech, or thought, or even the inability to distinguish between oneself and others (called 'transitivism'). The most common kind of hallucinations are auditory-verbal: hearing voices or running commentary, even voices arguing with one another, independently of one's own input; hearing one's thoughts as if spoken aloud; experiencing one's thoughts as broadcasted to others. Hallucinations can, of course, affect any of the five senses.

Negative symptoms mark the failure of assumed cognitive functions. They include *alogia* (not talking much or not responding to questions), *affective flattening* (a general lack of social responsiveness, including facial and gestural expressiveness, verbal inflection, and eye contact),

---

[776] The terms in the three-part schema are very common in the literature, but they have been conveniently gathered in Louis A. Sass and Josef Parnas, "Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* **29**.3 (2003): 427-444; see also Louis A. Sass, "Schizophrenia, Self-Experience, and the So-Called 'Negative Symptoms'," in *Exploring the Self*, pp. 149-182.

[777] Including hypochondria (or somatic paranoia: an intense focus on the body and fear that it is breaking down), conjugal paranoia (or paranoid jealousy: absolute conviction that my significant other is cheating), erotomania (conviction that another person, often someone who does not even know me, is deeply in love with me), persecutory paranoia (someone – or everyone – is out to get me), megalomania (or grandiose paranoia: I am the spouse of God, or I am God, or the fate of the universe depends on my actions), and shared psychotic disorder (or *folie a deux*: a delusion shared between two people who are very close). More specific varieties of delusions include the Capgras delusion (that people close to me have been replaced by impostors) and its inverse, the Fregoli delusion (that my persecutors have disguised their faces to resemble people familiar to me), the Cotard delusion (that I am dead, rotting, lacking all internal organs or a brain, etc.), and several others without proper names, including the delusion that others are exact replicas of me, impostors (subjective doubles). Cf. Alistair Munro, *Delusional Disorder: Paranoia and Related Illnesses* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[778] Cf. Johan Cullberg, *The Psychoses*, p. 32.

avolition or *apathy* (a lack or slowing of spontaneous activity, surprisingly poor grooming, or a lack of initiative and persistence in goal-directed activity), *anhedonia* (a lack of energy or motivation for work, recreation, socializing, and sex, or an inability to feel intimacy), and *asociality* (general inattentiveness to the social and practical world).

Finally, disorganization symptoms deal with thought, speech, and attention. They include inabilities to focus, speech that runs off the rails, incoherence, and a kind of pressure to speak. In mania, one finds a racing of thoughts and an inability to stay with particular objects; in schizophrenia, the difficulty is with sticking to one frame of reference or perspective. Similarly, schizophrenic speech involves confusion about what is public and what is private – which things count as already understood (shared) background and which things need to be provided as context.[779] Here is an (admittedly fictional) example of this latter problem:

> A young nurse had said too loudly, "That kid looks through me as if I'm not here at all." Trying to give comfort, Deborah [the teenaged patient in question] had later whispered to the nurse, "Wrong *not*." She was saying that it was not the pretty nurse who was not there but the ugly patient.[780]

The nurse, however, fails to understand, in part because of a lack of shared context.

These three general kinds of symptoms may be combined in any given psychotic person, and may show up singly in various non-psychotic situations. For completeness, we would also have to add mood extremes – the depths of depression (melancholia) and the heights of mania – to the list.

As has already become clear, there are then various syndromes into which this variety of symptom-types have been gathered. Considered from this perspective, in what follows I will be interested in just four syndromes: *schizophrenia* (including its pre-psychotic variants: schizotypal

---

[779] One study found that diagnoses of thought-disorder in schizophrenia are strongly correlated with high degrees of implicit reference in the patient's speech. 'Implicit reference' assumes that the context is sufficiently public that one's interlocutor will understand. See S.R. Rochester and J.R. Martin, *Crazy Talk: A Study of the Discourse of Schizophrenic Speakers* (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), summarized (pp. 171-174) in R.W. Rieber and Harold Vetter, "The Problem of Language and Thought in Schizophrenia: A Review," *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* **23**.2 (1994): 149-195.

[780] Green, *I Never Promised*, p. 116.

and schizoid personality disorders),[781] *paranoia* (or delusional disorder, along with *its* pre-psychotic variant: paranoid personality disorder), *mood disorder* (the depressive spectrum, including bipolar disorder and major depression/melancholia), and *reactive psychosis* (arising from evident trauma, like Ophelia in the example from Shakespeare). I am restricting consideration to the 'functional' (or 'endogenous') psychoses.[782] The first two syndromes may be combined (in *paranoid schizophrenia*), as may the second and third (in *schizoaffective disorder*). Mood disorders usually do not reach the level of psychosis, and some reactive psychoses are quite brief, lasting for less than a month with full recovery.[783]

Although these lists provide some orientation to what is meant by psychosis, they also begin to emphasize just how badly a more structural account is needed if we are to understand what is given in the phenomena. Psychiatric medicine, after all, focuses on managing symptoms by modifying the body's neurochemical interactions. This is accomplished via trial and error adjustment of the same 8-12 medications, more or less regardless of the diagnosis. For such a practice, a rough definition of functional psychosis as 'anything involving delusions or hallucinations that is not due to brain damage or drug use' suffices. As an example of the mode of differential diagnosis involved, take the DSM-5 criteria for schizophrenia:

> Two (or more) of the following, each present for a significant portion of time during a 1-month period (or less if successfully treated). At least one of these must be (1), (2), or (3): 1) Delusions. 2) Hallucinations. 3) Disorganized speech […]. 4) Grossly disorganized or catatonic behavior. 5) Negative symptoms […].[784]

---

[781] Schizotypal individuals are more eccentric in their behavior, thoughts, and perceptions than schizoid individuals. I will treat *schizophreniform disorder*, which is basically a short-course (1-6 month) schizophrenia with unusually good social integration, as a combination of schizophrenia and schizoid personality disorder. See "Schizophreniform Disorder," "Schizoid Personality Disorder," and "Schizotypal Personality Disorder," in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), online at dsm.psychiatryonline.org. Hereafter: *DSM-5*.

[782] Arguments from the side of neurochemistry that all psychic problems are caused by brain problems notwithstanding, there remain noticeable differences between psychosis arising from traumatic brain injury or dementia and psychosis arising endogenously, even if we take the latter to mean no more than 'caused by neurochemical imbalances.' As a matter of interpretive access, certainly, the distinction makes a tremendous difference, but there are also obvious differences in psychiatric medical treatment.

[783] *DSM-5*, "Diagnostic Criteria" for Brief Psychotic Disorder.

[784] *Ibid.*, "Diagnostic Criteria" for Schizophrenia.

Additionally: there must be social or occupational dysfunction ("markedly below the level achieved prior to the onset"); the duration must be at least six months; mood disorders, substance use, general medical conditions, and pervasive developmental disorders (like autism) must be ruled out.[785]

This way of looking at things seems largely uninterested in why a person with a particular life-history has a delusion with particular features. At most, one wants a category of delusion (Capgras, Cotard, jealousy, etc.); at minimum, one needs a differentiation between bizarre and non-bizarre.[786]

We have already emphasized the affective dimension of psychosis (section I.A) – namely, that it is marked by terror or anxiety. Since this will become important for my claim, against Heidegger, that in psychosis anxiety stretches on endlessly, beyond all possibly disclosive bounds (chapter 7, part I), a few reservations about the consistency of these diagnostic criteria are in order.

First, we may follow Sass and Josef Parnas in noting that the difference between positive and negative symptoms, although meaningful on its face, is not especially sound. Positive symptoms do indeed involve the presence of something normally absent, but they also involve the absence of something normally present: "the sense of ownership or intentional control."[787] Likewise, negative symptoms may seem to be simply deficits, but appearances may be deceiving. "Asociality [for example] is often accompanied by the presence of strange or socially inappropriate, self-directed behavior."[788] Moreover, as Kaysen points out, although madness may be experienced as *velocity* (radical speeding up of thoughts and experience) or *viscosity* (radical

---

[785] *Ibid.*
[786] The DSM-5 provides such a distinction: "Delusions are deemed *bizarre* if they are clearly implausible and not understandable to same-culture peers and do not derive from ordinary life experiences" (in "Key Features" for Psychotic Disorders).
[787] Sass and Parnas, "Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self," p. 431.
[788] *Ibid.*

slowing down of the world, vanishing of time), both can be manifest to the outside observer in roughly the same way: as lack of movement or engagement, the extreme of which is called *catatonia*. This 'lack', however, which seems from the outside like completely flat affect, may be the stillness of fascination (velocity, an excess of stimulation) or the stillness of utter disinclination (viscosity, closer to a genuine complete lack of stimulation).[789]

Bovink, for example, reports that for her, "the world, including myself, began to move in slow motion. […] The strange thing is that time did not exist for me in that situation. Time was also in thick water. It is a kind of vacuum, no-man's-land."[790] As an example of velocity, by contrast, we may cite an anonymous general practitioner, author of a first-person account of bipolar disorder, who explains that although sometimes in a manic state she is "sociable, talkative, and fun, focused at times, distracted at others," in other periods of mania, her "thoughts speed up and I can lie in bed for hours at a time watching pictures on the inner sides of my eyelids. Sometimes words are present and I read them as if engrossed in a good novel. […] They are a fascinating blur of words and pictures, snatches of poetry and music."[791]

We should recognize, second, that what is observed as avolition or disinterest can have many origins. One patient claims, "The professionals call it apathy and lack of motivation. But they don't understand that giving up is a highly motivated and highly goal-directed behavior. [… The goal is] to protect the last fragile traces of our spirit and our selfhood from undergoing another crushing."[792] And it is worth noting that people in annihilation states, for whom self, others, and world are all highly problematic, are unlikely to make communication of the

---

[789] Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*, pp. 75-78. The terms 'velocity' and 'viscosity' are Kaysen's. Cf. *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*, in which Deborah Blau has far too much stimulation going on and yet presents her face as a stiff mask to everyone around her. She herself is still able to be surprised by another patient, Sylvia, who usually seems catatonic but reveals, in brief moments of communication, that she is somehow registering perceptual details even in the midst of her catatonia.

[790] Bovink, "From Being a Disorder," p. 17.

[791] Anonymous, "On Madness: A Personal Account of Rapid Cycling Bipolar Disorder," *British Journal of General Practitioners* 56(530): 726-728.

[792] Quoted p. 334 in Paul Lysaker and John Lysaker, "Schizophrenia and Alterations in Self-Experience: A Comparison of 6 Perspectives," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* **36**.2 (2010):331-340.

distrusted self to distrusted others a high priority. A schizophrenic patient interviewed by Matthew Broome in 2008 reports that although he felt emotion, he could not communicate it because he was so cut off from other people, even if they were his family and sitting right beside him. "I felt sad but I didn't feel like I could express to [his mother] how sad I felt about it. … There was sort of a mental block, I couldn't really interact. I had so much stuff going on in my head – so much fear and paranoia – that I couldn't talk and I couldn't show people how I felt about them."[793] According to these patients, for one reason or another, what presents clinically as a lack does not necessarily indicate a genuine void but could, for example, indicate quite the opposite: *too much* is going on for the person to be able to select out something determinate and communicate it or visibly respond to it.

It should be clear by now that even if the psychiatric medical model were logically consistent and appropriately fit the experiential data, we would want a *philosophical* account of a different kind. But since it does not seem to accomplish even those goals, after acknowledging its usefulness as a starting-point and generator of common language, we have every reason to turn elsewhere. And there are many other places to turn.

Psychoanalytic practice, for example, addresses itself to the delusional content of a particular person, in light of that person's own psychic history. It is still looking for a more or less causal explanation, but it does so via interpretation: seeking another context or set of motivations in which these *specific* delusions would make sense. Although Freud himself thought that analysis of psychotics was impossible, due to their inability to form trusting, affective (i.e., transference) relationships with the analyst and their resultant refusal to speak in accord with the

---

[793] Quoted, with elision, on p. 372 of Matthew Ratcliffe and Matthew Broome, "Existential Phenomenology, Psychiatric Illness, and the Death of Possibilities," in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. S. Crowell (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 361-382.

fundamental rule, abundant experience since then has shown that such analyses are possible, if difficult, and can sometimes be very helpful.[794]

Phenomenological psychiatry, at a slightly more general level than the individual's own psychic history but still in contact with reports of individual experience, begins by trying to describe the individual patient's world and ends by describing a world in which the *kinds* of experiences typically encountered within a diagnostic category would make sense. Thus, the phenomenologist sets herself to imagining or describing the altered experiential structure of the world in which a given sort of delusion arises. Sass's proposal for understanding the psychotic world by thinking solipsistically and attending to the paradoxes thereby generated is an important example of this approach.[795]

Finally, philosophy and psychoanalytic metapsychology try to account for the structural modifications of subjectivity that are at work in psychosis as such, or at least in its major varieties, and to say what this entails for philosophical anthropology – or, in the present study, for the relation between thinking and being.

D) Regression as Withdrawal from Common Sense

We can glimpse *why* psychosis gives rise to such a plethora of approaches[796] if we recognize one of its central confusing features: as a splitting or shattering of the self in relation to

---

[794] Cf., *inter alia*, Herbert Rosenfeld's 1969 survey of the history of psychoanalytic approaches to psychosis, "On the Treatment of Psychotic States by Psychoanalysis," in *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, pp. 147-176; Silvano Arieti's psychoanalytic textbook, *Interpretation of Schizophrenia*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Basic Books, 1974); and any number of publications in the Lacanian tradition. The principal technical debates have to do with whether (and how) to interpret the transference.

[795] See especially Louis A. Sass, *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). By a careful reading of Wittgenstein's work, Sass can go really quite far in making sense of what is going on for the schizophrenic.

[796] I have not even mentioned psychosocial rehabilitation, dialogical psychology, or the distinctions within phenomenology between existential psychiatry, phenomenological psychiatry, and post-Cartesian psychoanalytic contextualism. For an account of most of these, see Lysaker and Lysaker, "Schizophrenia and Alterations of Self-Experience." For an account of contextualism, see Atwood, *The Abyss*, or Robert Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma* (New York: Routledge, 2011) and *Trauma and Human Existence* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

the world, it confronts us with a series of inconsistencies (or even absurdities) when we try faithfully to account for its structure. (Sass refers to a subset of these as the 'paradoxes of delusion.') To display that structure, I will first give what I propose is the most helpful general account of the functional psychoses: as failures of what, following Wolfgang Blankenburg, we will call *common sense*. I will then work out a more specific account, with attention to these major inconsistencies, which are inherent to the phenomena. For the latter task, I will take as a starting-point certain claims made by Freud. His claims will require interpretation, in the course of which I will bring to bear insights from the other fields of inquiry into psychosis. This means that I will go as far as possible with phenomenological psychiatry, since it is heavily influenced by Heidegger's philosophy, but eventually I will need to leave it behind in order to get clearer about the structure and genesis of psychosis as a phenomenon. Since I take it that psychoanalysis is uniquely helpful in talking about and accounting for suffering, and since phenomenological psychiatry in some ways is also indebted to Freud's insights, I shall mainly follow his lead.

1. General Account of Psychosis

I have suggested that the terror of psychosis is only subsequent to an original failure, one which is undergone as a betrayal of trust in the world and which issues in such sheer terror because of the global implications of the break. (As we saw Atwood put it earlier, the fall away from the world is endless.) I say that the implications of this betrayal are *global* because it affects one's relation to the self, to others, to the world's meaningful connections, to language, to (propositional) truth and falsity, to time and space, and to one's own body. What normally integrates and maintains these relations has been termed *common sense* in the philosophical tradition,[797] and Blankenburg is the phenomenological psychiatrist who has best characterized

---

[797] Cf. Aristotle's *koinē aisthēsis*, St. Thomas's *sensus communis*, Descartes's *bons sens*, Kant's *gemeine* (or *gesunde*) *Menschenverstand* and Hannah Arendt's reflections on this whole tradition in *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1: *Thinking*, where she ascribes to the common sense the discrimination of objects' reality.

psychosis as a failure of precisely this common sense, or, as he also names it, *natural self-evidence*.[798]

Since our investigation of psychosis is ultimately meant to put into question Heidegger's claim that one cannot cease to be-in-the-world short of physical cessation (see chapter 4, part II, and chapter 7, parts I-II), we should make clear that 'common sense' is another name for the phenomenon of openness that Heidegger interprets as care (*Sorge*). We can see this by attending to three features of Blankenburg's conception. First, common sense is inherently withdrawn from conscious awareness;[799] second, it is "a pre-predicative, nameless understanding and communicating" (308); third, it is "an original unity of thinking, feeling, and willing [that] is primarily related to a shared world [*mitweltbezogen*]" (307, trans. mod.).[800]

The first of Blankenburg's characterizations should remind us of Heidegger's talk of being's withdrawal, as that which is given only in remaining tacit (chapter 3, section II.B).[801] It also explicitly recalls the difficulty with articulating trust that we have already encountered (chapter 1). There, we met the challenge by attending to various levels of *failure* of trust (i.e., betrayal); Blankenburg, similarly, claims that in order to research common sense, "it is best to start with examining when it fails. In doing so, we enter the realm of psychopathology" (305).

Blankenburg's second characterization should remind us of Heidegger's discussion of being in the truth as a kind of pre-predicative belonging (chapter 2, section I.B), always already shared with others who are being-there along with me – especially when Blankenburg clarifies

---

[798] Cf. Wolfgang Blankenburg, *Der Verlust der Natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit* (Stuttgart, Germany: Enke, 1971), and Blankenburg, "First Steps Toward a Psychopathology of 'Common Sense'," tr. A.L. Mishara, *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* **8**.4 (December 2001): 303-315.

[799] Blankenburg, "First Steps," p. 305; further citations parenthetical in the text.

[800] We could add to these a characterization from Parnas and Sass that recalls Heidegger's discussions of affectivity: common sense is a "non-reflexive, automatic attunement to the world." See Josef Parnas and Louis A. Sass, "Self, Solipsism, and Schizophrenic Delusions," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* **8**.2-3 (June/September 2001): 101-120, p. 105.

[801] Blankenburg quotes a patient to the effect that "[t]his mysterious 'something' [i.e., common sense] appears to obstinately oppose conscious awareness. It furnishes the greatest resistance – and this has its reasons" (308).

that "[t]he 'what' and the 'how' of this knowing are inextricably related" (308). He seems to be getting at something like this: common sense involves a kind of everyday and socially necessary knowledge (about what is appropriate when, what things are probable or improbable) but also involves the very modes of picking up on such things (how to sort the relevant from the irrelevant, how to determine levels of shared context). The latter are not so much matters of content-knowledge as ways of understanding that first *enable* content. This should recall the analysis we saw Heidegger work out in the *Contributions* about an originary knowing (*Wissen*) that would be a faith or a believing (*Glauben*), an unjustifiable but invested holding-oneself-in-the-truth that enables any higher-level knowledge for which one could give a reasonable account. Thus the subject of Blankenburg's main case study, Anne, says of natural self-evidence, "It is *not* the question of knowledge; it is *prior to* knowledge."[802]

Blankenburg's third characterization emphasizes the role of common sense in structuring our experience. *Koinē aisthēsis* for Aristotle unifies the various particular senses so that we encounter objects in a world, rather than unrelated colors, smells, tastes, etc. We might call it the unity of bodily intentionality. Similarly, Blankenburg assigns the unity of mental intentionality – thought, affectivity, and volition – to common sense as he understands it. (We may add that the Aristotelian version assigns to it perception of time and motion,[803] two crucial integrative relations that often go wrong in psychosis.) This is why Blankenburg can claim that the life-world is the intentional correlate of common sense (306) – meaning that common sense is another name for the phenomenon that Heidegger calls *being-in-the-world*.

Blankenburg's account tallies well with Sass's conception, according to which what fails in schizophrenia (at least) is what Edmund Husserl referred to as operative (*fungierende*)

---

[802] Quoted in Parnas and Sass, "Self, Solipsism, and Schizophrenic Delusions," p. 106.
[803] And sensing motion lets us perceive rest, place, shape, magnitude, and even number, according to Aristotle. See *On the Soul* III.1.425a15ff on the perception of motion (and its components or derivatives); on the perception of time, cf. *On Memory and Recollection* 1.451a17.

intentionality, that which "constitutes our primary presence to the world." Even prior to perception, it "procures a basic texture or organization, and hence a coherence and familiarity, to the field of experience" (105). We could say that it simultaneously structures the world and structures the self, precisely by integrating the self into that world. In Heidegger's terminology, this is the event (*Ereignis*) of originary temporality, which constitutes a sphere of ownness (*Eigentum*): that is, it discloses the world to me as more or less coherent, and it does so not only cognitively but affectively. I encounter the world as coherent, as mine, only insofar as it matters to me. Thus, the world is disclosed as coherent in virtue of my being disclosed to myself as *invested in* that world – which is always also a world that resists or disowns (*enteignet*) me. This is what we have so far designated 'primitive trust.'

We can see more clearly what Blankenburg means if we consider his particular accounts of schizophrenia and of bipolar psychosis. Both involve what could be called *failures* of common sense – the dissolution of being-in-the-world – albeit in different ways. In schizophrenia, common sense is straightforwardly *lost*, or even abdicated. In psychotic depression, by contrast, the person is often *too strictly attached* to the dictates of common sense (before falling ill), while the illness itself involves "an enveloping loss of affective relationships to [the] world" (305). In psychotic mania, there is a different kind of misrelation to common sense: the latter "enables an astonishing accuracy in [a manic person's] ability to provoke, even hurt those around them" (305).

Blankenburg's work focuses mostly on schizophrenia, which involves the withering of a sense of tact or of the feeling for the proper thing to do in the situation, along with a general indifference to what might be disturbing to others (305). (Psychotic mania, by contrast, involves retaining this sense of tact but disregarding it.) The sense for nearness and distance, i.e., for relevance in general as well as pertinence to oneself; the sense of proportion; the sense of what can be taken for granted or understood as a matter of course – all can be lost in schizophrenia,

318

leaving an inability to play along with the unstated rules of social behavior. (Recall that psychotic speech typically involves an excess of implicit reference, which is just the other side of confusion about the assumed, shared context.) Judgment is fundamentally impaired in distinguishing between the probable and improbable, and while logic and abstract thinking are often quite good – since these are like games whose rules are made explicit – Blankenburg claims that the schizophrenic has great difficulty adhering to the boundaries of a *topic* because the ordinary judgment of relevance is impaired (306-7).

According to Blankenburg, Anne complains, "Every child knows these things! It is the kind of thing you just get naturally" (308), although she does not know them. He gives the example of her attempt to choose a dress for a given occasion:

> This becomes a tortured asking herself which material the dress should have. She tries to make clear to herself up to the smallest detail why it should be precisely this color and this material for this occasion. It is quite easy to see how this becomes an endless undertaking. After all, the particular qualities that one finds pleasing in the material of a dress are, in part, complexly determined by processes of social judgment. We should not suppose that it is possible to completely analyze – i.e., without remainder – these processes into their component parts (309).

It is as if there were an inability to invest in the kind of background assumptions that guide everyone else, except that we would have to understand 'inability to invest' as an experience of oneself as *not* given over (i.e., of distrust). It is not that Anne's assumptions are wrong. She is not simply disoriented; rather, she does not find herself within a minimally coherent, shared world, unless she actively forces coherence upon it. Hence, these deficiencies in the background for everyday living give rise to attempts at recovery that oscillate between stereotyped use of maxims and retreat into non-interaction (autism).[804] As an extreme case of the former strategy, take an example from Michael Schwartz, who tells us of a gentleman

---

[804] Blankenburg credits Kant with already having seen this in the *Anthropology*: "The only universal characteristic of madness [*Verrücktheit*] is the loss of common sense (*sensus communis*) and its replacement with *logical private sense* (*sensus privatus*)." Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. R.B. Louden (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 113.

hospitalized many times over a stretch of ten years with paranoid delusions, but now free of hospitals for twenty years, completely without medication.

> He does nothing but listen to radio commentators; he refers to them as "professionals of speech." From their broadcasts he writes his own "principles" on little scraps of paper. Gradually he became more stable "by following the principles." He introduces himself as a "philosopher" and always has a small bundle of notes that represent the latest copy of his "principles." No delusions have been noted in his file for over 20 years; at most there are brief periods of anxiety that bring him to the outpatient mental health service when "a new idea brings disorder" to his principles. He explains, "My principles allow me to effect a rational reconstitution of my biography after the event." He is now capable of a stable mode of daily living – his routines and behaviors are best characterized as idiosyncratic rather than as negligent. When his mother went to hospital, S.A. proved perfectly capable of living alone and had some contact with neighbors.[805]

Certainly, the very *fact* that this gentleman manages to live literally from a set of maxims testifies to his loss of common sense, but the *content* of his principles also supports Blankenburg's theory. They are divided into three sections, namely, 'natural method,' 'psychology,' and 'corporal ergonomics,' of which the last is necessary because he has to think in a rule-governed way about how to move. The first principle of his psychology is that "for others life is simple"; another is, "the schizophrenic has lost sovereignty over himself; he is obliged by his illness to hang on to simple principles."[806]

Examples of the other strategy, autistic retreat, are numerous, but one that has been explored at some length and is intriguing because it involves what seem like interactions was already cited from Minkowski (section I.A): 'Paul,' the 17-year-old who is indifferently curious about everything, not only taking hours for every bathroom trip but avoiding all real interaction by asking endless (often unanswerable, certainly publicly irrelevant) questions about whatever object happens to present itself.

---

[805] Michael Schwartz, Osborne Wiggins, Jean Naudin, and Manfred Spitzer, "Rebuilding Reality: A Phenomenology of Aspects of Chronic Schizophrenia," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* **4** (2005): 91-115, p. 105, italics removed.
[806] *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

2. Specific Account of Psychosis

I will have much more to say a bit later (section I.E) concerning these symptom-producing attempts at recovery, but let me now introduce some reflections from Freud, as an aid to developing a more specific account of psychosis. If it can be generally characterized as the failure of common sense, what is involved in that failure? How does it come about? As a way in, we might notice from the previous three examples that, despite all appearances, the bizarre-sounding assertions made by sufferers from schizophrenia (at least) are not simply due to lack of reflection on their part. Indeed, one could almost say there is a good deal *too much* reflection – but reflection misused or misplaced, along with an (often panic-producing) inability to bring reflection to rest through reinsertion into the shared world of what is already understood. Recall that I characterized this earlier (chapter 1, section III.C) as the snowball effect of distrust, if that distrust is not constrained by primitive trust.

It is this excessive reflection, and specifically self-reflection – one could almost say, a *fixation* on the self – that leads Freud to talk about *regression* in psychosis and brings phenomenological psychiatry to highlight *self-disorder* as central to schizophrenia. It will be helpful to think of the failure of common sense as a radical *withdrawal* from what is normally lived-through or inhabited, what mediates our relation to the world; the theoretical difficulty is then to specify the sense of this withdrawal.[807]

Regression for Freud may be understood as a motivated retreat and retrenchment under the pressure of conflict (i.e., of frustration, *Versagung*). It is, in other words, a defensive measure taken against something overwhelming. He distinguishes three types of such withdrawal.[808] There

---

[807] In what follows, I elide important distinctions in just *what* is withdrawn – especially the distinction between ego drives ('interest') and sexual drives ('libido') – but I take them up in some detail in chapter 6, section I.C ff. Sass puts the 'defensive regression' interpretation into question in *Paradoxes* (pp. 12, 44, 113-17, and 129).

[808] See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE **5**:548, and J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, "Regression," in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973).

is *topographical* regression, which is a retrograde change of register between intrapsychic systems that would normally proceed from perception to responsive motion. For example, the regression in dreams takes an idea (understood as a linguistically formed thought) and turns it "back into the sensory image from which it originally derived."[809] Thus, topographical regression usually involves a move from the linguistic order to the order of images, from what is preconscious to what is unconscious. That is to say: the movement begins in an ordinary engagement with the realm of the implicit (in dreams, this is the collection of thoughts I have had during the day, along with their near associations). These implicit thoughts *can be* brought to thematic consciousness (if one lays awake, for example), but they work primarily by providing the structured background or context for our attention. The movement terminates, then, by enmeshing me in the realm of nonverbal memory, perception, and (involuntary) imagination. When I am awake, these functions are normally mediated by differential investments in the preconscious, which then disallows some of them from entering into consciousness, lest they become overwhelming.

There is also *temporal* regression, in which a person returns to previous phases of development or of satisfaction. This may pertain to the organization of desire in different libidinal stages (i.e., what activity one desires to do) or object relationships (i.e., with whom or with what one wants to perform that activity), or it may involve earlier identifications with other people or patterns of affect. One might see a non-psychotic version of this kind of regression in, for example, an adult who feels the acute, a-rational need to be physically held and comforted when confronted with a situation that he would normally be quite capable of handling; or, again, in someone engaged in a desperate search for affirmation concerning an activity about which she would normally have no fear.

---

[809] SE **5**:543.

Thirdly, there is *formal* regression, which involves a return from differentiated psychic structures (i.e., later developmental achievements) to archaic modes of thought, especially when one moves from an emphasis on identity of meaning to a focus on perceptual identity. This includes the fight-or-flight response (to the extent that it takes over and suspends rational deliberation), but it can also manifest in, for example, the free association involved in creativity, or an unusual concern about the omnipotence of thought. (Think of an otherwise mentally mature adult who categorically refuses even to *think* about his mother's cancer, for fear that he will thereby make it spread.)

These three types of regression are meaningfully bound together but need not all occur in any given regression, either at all or to the same extent. Indeed, one can have a temporal regression with regard to libidinal *objects* (e.g., a concentration of one's desire on one's primary caretakers) without switching libidinal *stages* at all, as Freud claims happens in hysteria.[810]

Now Freud is principally interested in the psychoses (or the narcissistic neuroses, as he calls them at some points) insofar as they reveal things about the *self*[811] – specifically, about the I (the ego), which for Freud is early on invested as a love-object and hence always bears a certain amount of idealization.[812] And the psychoses are particularly suited to give us information about this because the break with the world that they involve is, according to Freud, precisely a withdrawal of one's worldly psychic investments back into the body, i.e., a regression. The energy one had previously invested in other people and the world as a whole then has to go somewhere, and it is invested in the self. But investing the self (and particularly the unified body)

---

[810] Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:343.
[811] SE **16**: Lecture 26.
[812] For more on the development of the ego, see chapter 6, section II.A.

as an object was a very early psychic accomplishment.[813] The withdrawal of worldly investments is thus a *temporal* regression to (at least) what Freud calls *primary narcissism*.[814]

We have already looked at that from which psychotic regression withdraws: common sense, as Blankenburg has understood it. Now we must get clear about the destination, as it were, of the temporal regression: the place of retrenchment. In general, for Freud, this is known as a *fixation-point*, an especially intense investment of drive energy that has been superseded but not simply abandoned. We have already suggested that psychotics' excessive self-reflection seems to constitute some sort of fixation on the self. To understand specifically psychotic regressions, we shall follow Paul Moyaert in distinguishing two different senses of narcissism.

a) Prodromal Hypochondria

There is a broad sense of narcissism in which the body (as source of the drives) just is the place where the tension of the drives is concentrated when they are withdrawn from interactions with other objects. We may think of this as a kind of forced interest in the self, or what Sass calls 'hyperreflexivity.' It is the excess of self-reflection mentioned above, and it shows up in something called *hypochondria*. As Moyaert explains, in hypochondria "[b]odily sensations emerge in the foreground through the fact that the libido has been cut off from objects in the external world and has been withdrawn into the self. The horizon of existence is narrowed down to an over-sensitivity for corporeal sensations."[815] Or, as Sass puts it, the tacit dimension of life (the workings of the body *through which* we interact with the world) becomes both derealized (as

---

[813] Freud describes it as a self-integration carried out by imitating others, who were thus taken as ideal 'I's – as those who seemed to have gotten themselves together in their coordinated motor functioning.

[814] Freud's language for this is that megalomania results from a "reflexive turning-back" of libido from objects to the self (SE **16**:415), and that paranoia is "almost invariably accompanied" by such hypochondriacal symptoms ("Schreber," SE **12**:56n3).

[815] Paul Moyaert, "Body, Drive, and Affect in Schizophrenia, From the Psychoanalytic Perspective," tr. Jo Köhler, in *Psychosis: Phenomenological and Psychoanalytical Approaches*, eds. J. Corveleyn and P. Moyaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), pp. 43-57. Quotation and distinction are both from p. 44.

it is moved out of its familiar context, the implicit realm) and objectified (as it is observed from a distance: externalized, reified, and spatialized). Background phenomena no longer withdraw, so they can no longer constitute or structure the world.[816] Instead, they precisely obtrude themselves and command one's concern.

At the level of hypochondria, however, we have not yet reached the clinical situation of psychosis. We remain in the prodromal phase (literally, the 'run-up' to psychosis).[817] Most of the following phenomena are experienced (and reported) in the 'as if' modality (*I feel as if…*); many of them subsequently continue in the psychosis proper, but subject to a loss of the modal inflection. Here, according to recent in-depth patient interviews, we can situate the following prodromal (schizoid and schizotypal) phenomena:[818]

> **In general:** There is a nonspecific pressure toward something impending and inevitable (a sense that something big or disastrous is coming) or a sense of profound but still unspecifiable change (no particular *entity* has changed).
> **Self and World:** One feels depersonalized, as if one is bereft of the foundations of one's being. Nothing is any longer self-evident; a dominant point of view is lacking. One is not immersed or absorbed in the world, which seems derealized. One "witnesses [one's] own sensory processes rather than living them." With the fragmentation of meaning comes an inability to be affected by things or people (indifference).
> **Thought:** "Mental content becomes quasi-autonomous, bereft of its natural dimension of myness." Thoughts intrude that may bear excessive significance. They are still *understood* to be one's own, though not *experienced* as such. Inner speech is no longer a medium of thinking but becomes objectified. It acquires quasi-perceptual qualities (acoustic or location in space). There is a tendency to obsessively reproduce conversations or events that do not even seem important, perhaps to maintain continuity of self-awareness. One is bombarded by the pressing-in of chaotic thoughts.
> **Corporeality:** One encounters one's body mainly as an object, opening up a "distance between corporeality and subjectivity." There is difficulty in localizing oneself,

---

[816] Sass, "Schizophrenia, Self-Experience," pp. 158, 171.

[817] The remainder of this subsection is intended to serve as a further introduction to psychopathology for those laymen who, like me, require more introduction to the realm of psychotic phenomena if they are to be convinced by the argument. Those already suitably familiar may wish to move ahead to section (b), on narcissism.

[818] Integrated from two (not really independent) sources: 1) From Henriksen, "On Incomprehensibility," pp. 121, 123-4, who mostly extracted them from J. Parnas, P. Møller, T. Kircher, J. Thalbitzer, L. Jansson, and P. Handest, "EASE: Examination of anomalous self-experiences," *Psychopathology* **38** (2005): 236–258. 2) From Parnas and Sass, "Self, Solipsism, and Schizophrenic Delusions." All direct quotations are from this latter source. Most of the material in (2) reappears in J. Parnas and P. Handest, "Phenomenology of Anomalous Self-Experience in Early Schizophrenia" (2003), which was used by Henriksen and presumably by the authors of EASE.

especially in relation to mirrors. Movements are mechanical. Self-estrangement and self-detachment take over, including a sense that one's body somehow does not fit quite right – as if it were clothing. This initiates self-monitoring, followed by a loss of bodily coherence and a feeling of morphological alteration. Motor or verbal action may occur without or despite one's own intention (but is not yet felt as caused by external forces). One is unable to live spontaneously because one must consciously consider *how* to move one's body, even in everyday motions.

Self-demarcation: One finds an inner emptiness or lack of identity, along with an inadequacy of the body-ego as a separating boundary. This produces social anxiety centered on immediate confusion of oneself with others (i.e., 'transitivism') and a sense of complete exposure to others.

Solipsism: One is preoccupied with metaphysical or supernatural themes in order to explain the sense that everything pertains to oneself, accompanied by feelings of centrality and solipsistic grandiosity.

One reason for pausing over this prodromal phase is that it gives us clues about the underlying vulnerability in psychosis. If it can be recognized *before* the elaboration of a full-blown psychotic system, one is afforded greater insight at a time when communication with a patient – or from a patient to a therapist – is still quite possible. It seems to be a time of questioning, seeking to discover whether the world (or some central feature of it) has really betrayed me.

Let me note that this phase has its phenomenal parallel in the time between beginning to suspect that a person has broken my trust in a particularly important way and the never-quite-predictable dawning of the full force of the betrayal. The latter moment marks a decision (made somehow affectively, not directly by volition) as to whether I will still trust the person despite the particular betrayal. But in between, I still want to cover (to myself) for the person; I still assume that the event is justifiable or that I am mistaken; I preserve a kind of space for the testing of my trust. There is a sense that something big is coming, a sense of profound but non-specifiable change in our friendship.

R.D. Laing speaks of this period for schizoid (pre-schizophrenic) individuals in terms of *ontological insecurity*, in which the person "may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity

and autonomy are always in question."[819] Such a person must spend his time contriving ways to be real (which may include inflicting suffering on himself or others so as to be evidently a 'real' cause), to keep himself and others alive (including protecting them from what he fears as his own magical destructiveness), and to preserve his identity.[820]

Laing's argument is that these defensive strategies cohere in a fundamental experience of the being of the self as under attack from the demands of the world and of others. They are structured by the ultimately self-defeating attempt to preserve an inner (abstract) 'true' self over against a bodily, false self that complies with social norms and the expectations of others. This attempt at withdrawal to a place of safety is self-defeating because it only makes the self feel less real and thus makes reality more threatening. Furthermore, it issues in an experiential oscillation between the transcendent, 'true' self and the false, compliant self (or selves).

Schizophrenia, according to Laing, can then emerge from this pre-psychotic division when these efforts at protective self-alienation reach a crisis that provokes the murder of one side or the other.[821] At that point, a decision defiantly to express one's inner, 'true' self by dropping the external façade means that a secret, decayed, attenuated self abruptly appears to others with a kind of shattering force. Alternatively, an attempt to kill off the 'true' self, while not necessarily suicidal in the strict sense (since the body is already alienated from the inner self), shows up to others as a kind of shutting down or ultimate withdrawal from the shared world.[822] This death of the self (in one version or another) is what Laing takes to be the basic defense in all psychosis: dying so as to avoid either killing or being killed, hence preserving a margin in which one can remain alive after this death.

---

[819] Laing, *Divided Self*, p. 43.
[820] Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 99 and 156.
[821] "Even the efforts of the self to become separated and non-identified with the body and practically every thought, feeling, action, or perception, have failed to free it in the long run from being subject to anxiety; it is left with none of the possible advantages of detachment, and is subject to all the anxiety it originally sought to evade." Laing, *Divided Self*, p. 161.
[822] *Ibid.*, pp. 158ff.

George Atwood corroborates this latter claim by giving a very similar account of (at least one) prodrome for bipolar psychosis.[823] He speaks of *enmeshment* with caregivers, in which the autonomous person vanishes under a structure of compliance with others' expectations. Her desire, lacking space to flourish independently, is instead subordinated to that of others, until some event or memory triggers a sudden re-emergence of her buried possibilities. The eruption of a manic state is, on this account, a transitory liberation from a long enslavement. Of course, it is not a mature autonomy that is revealed, for the independent self never found the space to mature; as such, mania can be both exhilarating and terrifying for the sufferer.

Descent into depression is, correlatively, a matter of resubordination, the reinstatement of a self-annihilating tie to particular others. The self-hatred observed in bipolar depression is thus doubly determined: it is like the self-hatred in melancholia (major depression), which arises from the systematic rejection of the autonomous self in order to please others, but it is also related to the revelation of the suppressed, independent self as an out-of-control manic. Depression is thus a matter of sacrificing one's independence because one's real self can only be seen as an unmanageable monster.

We can find support for this way of thinking about the prodrome for mood disorders in separate papers by Giovanni Stanghellini and by Michael Schwartz and Osborne Wiggins. Both papers recall Blankenburg's claim, mentioned earlier, that depression and mania are failures of common sense by being excessively or rigidly attached to it. These papers interpret Blankenburg's insight in terms of the self as mediated by social roles, which a person both *is* and can shape.[824] Mood disorders would then arise from overidentification with social roles – i.e., with the expectations of others – by contrast especially with the schizotypal person, whose main

---

[823] See Atwood, *The Abyss*, pp. 26-8, 33-4, 60, 104, 172-4, and 178. His account is an elaboration on Bernard Brandchaft's.

[824] Michael O. Schwartz and Osborne P. Wiggins, "Pathological Selves," in *Exploring the Self*, pp. 257-277. See p. 264.

concern is to preserve her inner self as pure, separated from the false, compliant self that has to be role-identified.

Stanghellini goes so far as to say that the bipolar type "cannot distance himself from the other's mind"[825] – and when he does, we may add, he swings all the way into mania. As beings dependent on our caregivers, we are all attuned initially to the other's expectations. Depression arises from hypercompliance with this attunement, being so thoroughly attuned by it that it alone or primarily shapes the experience of the self. Schizophrenia, by contrast, arises on the ground of rejecting this attunement, for a variety of reasons to which I shall come shortly (section I.G, below).

Investigations of the prodromal, hypochondriacal period thus help show what recognizably human motivations are at work in bringing about full-blown psychosis. But narcissism as hypochondria or hyperreflexivity is only the broader sense of the word.

b) Narcissism

There is also a second, narrower sense of narcissism, in which one's body (as imagined) becomes the object of love, care, or idealization. Here we find a response to or defense against the betrayal that has been encountered prodromally, the betrayal in which withdrawal from the world took place. This is a reinvestment, but a reinvestment of (a certain image of) the self as central – an overvaluation. According to Freud, this is what happens in *paranoid psychosis*: it is a regression to *narcissistic* investment, a retrenchment at the last successful or reliable object investment. The purity of this imaginarily unified I (which Freud calls the *pleasure ego*) is then preserved at all costs, over against the thoroughgoing and constant threats of whatever is 'bad,' or fragmenting. These threats have been (and must continue to be) expelled from the self, located in the external world (as persecutory delusions or hallucinations). Normal ambivalence about the

---

[825] Giovanni Stanghellini, "The Phenomenology of the Social Self: The Schizotype and the Melancholic Type," in *Exploring the Self*, pp. 279-294. Quotation from p. 290.

self is grossly exaggerated here, but in order to handle that inflation, the hatred side of ambivalence is simply refused. All doubts and concerns about the self are henceforth rejected before they can even be thought, condemned to be encountered only as hallucinatory intrusions from the outside.[826] In the retreat to narcissism, even that very outside, the not-me, is modeled on the ego as its counterpart.

Alternatively, it may be the case, as Moyaert points out, that even the imagined unity of the body is overwhelmed, and the regression must move back still further.[827] In *schizophrenia*, the body, too, has betrayed me, insofar as the drives themselves (my own desire) are experienced as evil, as only a source of destruction. Since the body of drives cannot be expelled – there is no unity prior to it that would be adequate to make a stand – it is in this case a fragmented body that is invested, the body of the infant with minimal motor control and unintegrated desire. Moreover, here it is not the image but the real body that is at stake in every interaction. This presents us with the clinical picture of schizophrenia: temporal regression to *autoerotism*, a collection of libidinal investments in the self that are not yet unified. Thus Moyaert can mark the difference between paranoia and schizophrenia in this way: "The schizophrenic is perforated by evil. The paranoiac is persecuted by it."[828] That is to say, the schizophrenic lacks even a unified body by which to keep the persecution outside himself.

Another way of describing the same experiential phenomena has been worked out by Sass, who understands the schizophrenic response to the breakdown of the world to be a combination of *hyperreflexivity* and *altered ipseity*. In other words, it combines an attempt to recover or preserve the self through constant, minute attention to what are no longer implicit processes – an attempt that is ultimately misplaced because it only further alienates one from the

---

[826] Cf. Freud's famous conclusion: "what was abolished [*das Aufgehobene*] internally returns from without." Freud, "Schreber," SE **12**:71.

[827] Moyaert, "Body," p. 45.

[828] *Ibid.*, p. 53. Cf. Kimura Bin's account, as summarized by Sass, "Self and World in Schizophrenia: Three Classic Approaches," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* **8**.4 (December, 2001): 251-270, p. 265.

shared world – with an experience of diminished auto-affection, the derealization and objectification of what would normally be "inhabited as a medium of taken-for-granted selfhood."[829] Sass accordingly defines schizophrenia as "a self-disorder in which phenomena that would normally be inhabited, and in this sense experienced as part of the self, come instead [i.e., ipseity alters] to be taken as objects of focal or objectifying awareness [i.e., hyperreflexivity]."[830]

Schizophrenic experience, on this account, is hypochondria to a psychotic degree. Self-preservation, at the most physical level, is taken to be entirely up to the individual's conscious effort. There is a breakdown in the autonomic or "preconscious processes that sustain connections between embodied feelings, judgments, and a world shared by others."[831] It feels as if one's very temporal continuity (one's originary temporality) can only be attained by constant thought; breathing must be purposefully maintained; in general, the constant need to think is matched only by a constant failure to understand. We can get a first glimpse of this via an example from Laing: "I must never forget myself for a single minute. I watch the clock and keep busy, or else I won't know who I am."[832] A different example given by Sass, however, shows more clearly that the question of reflexivity is not so much a matter of reflective thought as it is a matter of the reflexive experience of basic bodily processes. Sass quotes Antonin Artaud describing his own

> human face flattened out, deflated, as if sucked up by shriveling leeches. And this lubricating membrane will go on floating in the air, […] this double membrane of multiple degrees and a million little fissures, […] so capable of multiplying, splitting apart, turning inside out with glistening little cracks, its dimensions…[833]

---

[829] Sass, "Schizophrenia, Self-Experience," p. 170.
[830] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[831] Cf. A.L. Mishara, "Disconnection of External and Internal in the Conscious Experience of Schizophrenia," *Philosophica* **73** (2004):87-126. Quotation is from a summary of this paper in Lysaker and Lysaker, "Schizophrenia and Alterations in Self-Experience," p. 335.
[832] Quoted in Laing, *Divided Self*, p. 116.
[833] Quoted in Sass, "Schizophrenia, Self-Experience," p. 171.

According to Sass, then, we can say more than that schizophrenia is frantic hypochondria. It is a self-disorder in which Cartesianism is almost literally lived out,[834] a strange combination of objectivism (altered ipseity) and subjectivism (hyperreflexivity). In a paper comparing the famous "Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl" with Heidegger's account of Cartesianism, Sass shows why the psychotic relation to the world would lack relationships between objects as well as those between subjects. The internal relations between things in the world are given in part by the human context in which they are meaningful, and these structured contexts have been destroyed or abandoned in schizophrenia. But human contexts are, of course, oriented by modes of interactions between persons (taken here as subjects), so the defensive isolation spoken of by Laing finds its psychotic flowering in the general disappearance of genuine human interactions.[835]

E) The Meaning of 'Symptoms'

We have now seen that psychosis involves a temporal regression from mature common sense back to an infantile fixation-point. But this is only part of the psychotic phenomenon; we can think of it as the *break* with reality. We have yet to address what I take to be Freud's greatest contribution to the understanding of the psychoses.

> The clinical picture of [schizophrenia] (which, incidentally, is very changeable) is not determined exclusively by the symptoms arising from the forcing away [*Abdrängung*] of the libido from objects and its accumulation in the ego as narcissistic libido [i.e., from regression]. A large part, rather, is played by other phenomena, which are derived from the striving of the libido to attain objects once more and which thus correspond to an attempt at restitution [*Restitution*] or recovery [*Heilung*]. These latter symptoms are indeed the more striking and noisy; they exhibit an undeniable resemblance to those of hysteria [i.e., hallucination] or, less frequently, of obsessional neurosis [i.e., compulsive doubt], but nevertheless differ from them in every respect.[836]

---

[834] Cp. the thesis of Sass, "Consciousness Machine," p. 222. In schizophrenia, my consciousness haunts my body like a ghost in a machine – a machine whose parts are easily exchangeable with other items in its environment.

[835] Louis A. Sass, "The Truth-Taking-Stare: A Heideggerian Interpretation of a Schizophrenic World," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* **21**.2 (Fall 1990): 121-149, pp. 132-4. The paper's title is a play on the German term for perceptual rigidity (*Wahrnehmungsstarre*), which names a frequent symptom of schizophrenia.

[836] *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, SE **16**:422. See section I.G.1, below, for a discussion of the difference between 'forcing away' (Ab*drängung*) and repression (Ver*drängung*).

These 'more striking and noisy' symptoms are precisely what psychiatric medicine names "positive symptoms" (hallucination and delusion) and "disorganization symptoms." According to Freud, they are in fact repeatedly elaborated attempts to *reintegrate* oneself into the world after psychic death ('soul murder'); that is to say, they are attempts at recovery, in some measure of conflict with the initial, overwhelmed regression. Restitution in paranoia takes the form of projection, by which it seems we have to mean something like expulsion from the ego of all that is bad, false, or even uncertain.[837] Restitution in schizophrenia, by contrast, which involves a further regression, is accomplished through hallucination.[838]

By taking psychotic symptoms as restitutive, Freud both warns against mistaking the symptoms for the disease and maintains his general insight that symptoms are compromises in the midst of a conflict.[839] In the case of psychosis, there is the withdrawal and retrenchment in the face of overwhelming betrayal, but there is also the desire to return to the world; much of the mental suffering of the psychotic is thus the violent undergoing of this tension. (Hence, for example, Schreber's uncertainty as to whether soul murder had *already* occurred or still *threatened* to occur.)

If correct, this account shifts the question of what has gone wrong in psychosis back onto the prodromal phase, or at least highlights the (unseen) transition between prodrome and full-blown psychosis. Once a person presents with delusional formations or hallucinations, these are already *responses* to the end of the world. Focusing on the prodrome, as we did earlier (section

---

[837] My gloss here takes into account Lacan's critique in *Seminar 3*, which accuses Freud of overhastily applying the term 'projection' to paranoia and substitutes Freud's discussion of the pleasure ego's identification with all that is good and foreclosure of all that is bad, found in the essay "Negation" (SE **19**). For my reading of the key moves in Freud's essay, see chapter 6, section II.A. For Lacan's critique and substitution, see *Seminar 3*, pp. 41-47, 81-86, and 148-51. For Freud's original argument, see "Schreber," SE **12**:66, 71.

[838] For this distinction, see SE **12**:77.

[839] "The delusional formation, which we take to be a pathological product [i.e., the disease process itself], is in reality an attempt at recovery, a process of reconstruction" (SE **12**:71, italics removed from the entire sentence).

I.D.2.a), is a way of getting close to the catastrophe without overshooting it. It reveals, above all, the stakes of a person's bid to rebuild a livable world.

Already in an early letter to Wilhelm Fliess, Freud included a diagnostic scheme sensitive to the observation that "the *delusional idea* is maintained with the same energy with which another, intolerably distressing, idea is warded off from the ego. Thus they love *their delusions as they love themselves*."[840] There is something inadmissible, something that is fled or withdrawn from (the 'idea' here may be quite complicated or quite simple), and the delusion is a kind of remodeled world, intended to maintain (or recover) some connection to reality by substituting for it a coherence that would not have to recognize this overwhelming idea.[841] That substitute coherence attempts a connection with the shared world by making use of the remembered investments – loves, hates and stories – even if it has to alter their value in order to avoid what is inadmissible.[842] If I am right that one becomes a self by integration into a world (usually, the shared world), then the delusion is loved (or clung to) 'as the self' because it is the propping up of the self, what enables a minimal level of self-coherence.

As Freud puts it, "everything has become indifferent and irrelevant to him, and has to be explained by means of a secondary rationalization […] his subjective world has come to an end

---

[840] Freud, "Draft H," in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, ed./tr. J.M. Masson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Belknap Press, 1985), p. 111, original italics.

[841] Cf. Freud, "The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis," SE **19**:185, where he characterizes psychosis in two ways: as an initial flight from intolerable reality followed by an active phase of remodeling (*umbauen*), and as a disavowal (*Verleugnung*) of reality that seeks to replace or substitute for (*ersetzen*) it.

Here we draw quite near to Lacan's account of foreclosure, in which the rejected 'idea' is some particular signifier that cannot be accepted by the infantile pleasure ego. Bound by the structure of language to all other signifiers, this foreclosed signifier, by going missing, may pull apart all the rest of the world's symbolic structure if that signifier is vigorously demanded at some point in the person's life. See Lacan, *Seminar 3*, and my summary via de Waelhens (section I.F.1, below).

[842] Freud claims that "the transforming [*Umarbeitung*] of reality is carried out upon the psychical precipitates [or 'registrations': *Niederschlägen*] of former relations to it – that is, upon the memory-traces, ideas, and judgments which had been previously won from reality and by which reality had been represented [*vertreten*] in mental life." SE **19**:185, trans. mod. (GW 13:366).

since his withdrawal of his love from it."[843] The attempt to rebuild the world is never wholly successful, but it can produce something at least minimally livable. "But the human being has recaptured a relation, and often a very intense one, to the people and things in the world, even though the relation is a hostile one now, where formerly it was hopefully affectionate."[844]

We may see this in the case of Judge Schreber's extensive delusions. Rosemary Dinnage explains, in her introduction to the *Memoirs*, that Schreber's "own identity having been invaded, fragmented, distorted, and annihilated, a story had to be found that made sense of it. The more massive the violations, the more grandiose the explanations."[845] The weight of this 'had to be found' can be measured by the strength with which Schreber clings to his story, modifying it when absolutely necessary, but more often retreating into metaphysical distinctions.

Both aspects are visible in Schreber's attempts to account for the plot against him: he first blames his doctor, Professor Flechsig, but is careful to maintain that the antagonist was a sort of spiritual version of Flechsig, not the real, incarnate, conscious one with whom Schreber must interact. Later, however, the persecutor's identity changes (or perhaps gets absolutized) into God – albeit a god who is explicitly constructed as Schreber's double. Thus Lacan can claim that Schreber is governed by an "essentially ambivalent relation": namely, that

---

[843] "Schreber," SE **12**:70.

[844] SE **12**:71.

[845] Schreber, *Memoirs*, p. xvii. Dinnage traces this (pp. xvii-xviii): "He was forsaken; so 'since the dawn of the world there can hardly have been a case like mine, in which a human being entered into continual contact … with the totality of all souls and with God's omnipotence itself.' He was shut away and forgotten; so 'since God entered into nerve-contact with me exclusively, I became in a way for God the only human being, or simply the human being around whom everything turns.' Nobody cared if he lived or died; so 'what detailed measures God would have to adopt after my death I feel I can hardly as much as speculate on.' All meaning had left his life; so 'it is still my conviction that this is the truth – that I had to solve one of the most intricate problems ever set for man and that I had to fight a sacred battle for the greatest good of mankind.' He was totally lonely; so crowds of shadowy figures flitted in and out of his body (at one time, no less than 240 Benedictine monks, led by a Jesuit Father!). His mind had been emptied; so it was taken over by compulsions – 'the nature of compulsive thinking lies in a human being having to think incessantly; in other words, man's natural right to give the nerves of his mind their necessary rest ... was from the beginning denied me by the rays.' So the emptiness of his cell was filled up with tormenting activity."

whatever the painful, weighty, troublesome, unbearable character of these phenomena, maintaining his relationship with them constitutes a necessity the rupture of which would have been absolutely intolerable to him. When this rupture is realized, that is, whenever he loses contact with God […], all sorts of variously intolerable internal phenomena of tearing apart, of pain, break out.[846]

A psychotic person loves his delusion as he loves himself because the minimal coherence of his self depends on the delusion as a reconstructed mode of access to the world. This is why psychotics seem to non-psychotics both to have a world and not to have one. It is also why a psychoanalysis can be helpful, insofar as it attends to a) the person's particular symptoms, which are attempts at recovery, b) within his particular life-history, which can yield clues about the conflict and what has forced the regression, c) in the context of an affective relation to the therapist, in which the terror can be managed but not denied and personal trust can be rebuilt.

F) Some Inconsistencies

Following Freud in distinguishing between the moment of rupture (regression) and the moment of recuperation (psychiatric symptoms) in the phenomenon of psychosis allows us to make sense of two central puzzles about that phenomenon. First puzzle: if psychosis involves an annihilation state, a falling out of the world (as I am claiming), why is it episodic? This itself is really two questions: why, even in long-term schizophrenia, paranoia, or bipolar disorder, does one go through acute episodes as well as what could be called stabilizations? And, secondly, how can something like brief reactive psychosis (as in Ophelia's case) make sense?

To answer the first version of this first puzzle, we can appeal to the typical inadequacy of the rebuilding effort. Schwartz and Wiggins follow Freud in pointing out that although the overwhelmed person does manage to rebuild some coherent world, through a combination of delusion/hallucination and new genuine investments, this neither fully reaches the shared world

---

[846] Lacan, *Seminar 3*, p. 127.

nor eliminates the failed synthetic connections that dissolved the world in the first place.[847] This means that the person's connection to the shared world will be both tenuous and somewhat misaligned – or, as Parnas and Sass put it, psychotic developments are "progressive organizations of novel coherence patterns with various degrees of stability."[848] Subsequent crises, therefore, are likely to expel the person from the shared world once more. This vulnerability opens onto an oscillation that will mark the lives of most long-term sufferers from psychosis.

To respond to the second version of this first puzzle, it will be helpful to think about the context-dependence of such a rebuilding project. We have already seen that it is possible, even if difficult, for a psychotic to form a trusting relation to a therapist, and that this plays a major role in recovery from full-blown schizophrenia or paranoia. In reactive psychosis, by contrast, the inciting trauma is fairly clear, opening the possibility of support from those around one. This cuts away at the acute loneliness of most psychoses by making one less of a mystery to others. Further, it means (in most cases) that one has not followed the developmentally predisposing path that I will lay out shortly (I.G.1). What cannot be borne happens more nearly all at once – some intense, global betrayal pushes a person's merely neurotic predispositions beyond all bounds – rather than also involving an initial, dramatic weakening of the person's connection to the shared world.[849]

---

[847] See p. 278 of Osborne P. Wiggins and Michael A. Schwartz, "'The Delirious Illusion of Being in the World': Toward a Phenomenology of Schizophrenia," in *Founding Psychoanalysis Phenomenologically*, Phaenomenologica 199, eds. D. Lohmar and J. Brudzinska (New York: Springer, 2012), pp. 269-281. They interpret these new investments as 'passive syntheses,' i.e., as our fundamental receptivity to an organized world.

[848] Parnas and Sass, "Self, Solipsism," p. 117. For a (complex, Lacanian) psychoanalytic account of such stabilizations phenomena, see Fabien Grasser's paper "Stabilizations in Psychosis," in *Ornicar?* **85** (February 1999).

[849] My account retains the Freudian double structure of trauma, in which later experiences become traumatic by repeating certain conflicts from earlier in one's life, by distinguishing between a genuinely psychotic predisposing conflict (see section I.G.1, below) and a neurotic predisposing conflict that can be triggered by something more or less overwhelming (producing, respectively, a brief reactive psychosis or a neurotic symptom).

Second puzzle: on one hand, after the dissolution of the world, psychotic experience is inherently chaotic; on the other hand, in response to this chaos, people suffering from psychosis tend to be immediately certain of things that do not seem at all evident to the observer. We may put the same puzzle again in a different way by reference to what has been called 'double bookkeeping': people with psychotic delusions seem to be deeply convinced by them, to organize life in terms of them, yet a 'dead' person will walk around, a person convinced she is being poisoned will eat, and a person whose 'tongue has fallen out' will use it to tell you this. In some ways, then, people do not seem compelled to act on otherwise firmly held delusions. One more version of the difficulty, related but slightly different: unlike the buried fantasy underlying neurosis, it seems quite clear what fantasy structure is at work in psychosis – patients report it more or less directly in delusional claims and reports of hallucinations. Yet it is much easier to find and restore the repressed portion of reality in neurosis than it is to restore an appropriate relation to reality in psychosis.

All three versions of this second puzzle trade on a baffling split between certainty and reality. We are back to Eilan's challenge to solve for both familiarity and utter strangeness (from section I.A), now interwoven in confusing ways. The phenomenon at issue is quite simply the following: someone who is hallucinating can come to recognize that others do not hear or see what she does; even someone who is delusional can act as if she were not. Lacan is worth quoting at length here for his forcefulness of presentation:

> Reality is not the issue. The subject admits, by means of all the verbally expressed explanatory detours at his disposal, that these phenomena are of another order than the real. He is well aware that their reality is uncertain. He even admits their unreality up to a certain point. But, contrary to the normal subject for whom reality is always in the right place, [the psychotic] *is* certain of something, which is that what is at issue – ranging from hallucination to interpretation – regards him. / Reality isn't at issue for him, certainty is. Even when he expresses himself along the lines of saying that what he experiences is not of the order of reality, this does not affect his certainty that it concerns him. The certainty is radical.[850]

---

[850] Lacan, *Seminar 3*, p. 75.

It seems to me that we can find something like a key to this puzzle in Lacan's last sentence. When someone in the grip of psychosis tries to rebuild an inhabitable world, the problem motivating this construction effort is precisely the radical uncertainty of everything. Anything could be different at any time. So, the first criterion for the world's new structure, the condition lying at the root, as it was for Descartes's philosophy, is certainty. From this perspective, *of course* the real is uncertain (which is also how a healthy person understands it: the real is what allows for me to be wrong, allows me to be at a distance from it without it disappearing) – for the person in an annihilation state, the uncertainty of reality is so radical that the difference seems uncrossable. That is precisely the problem. The psychotic solution cannot simply fix that, so it tries to smooth it over by substituting a world that *is* structured by certainty.

We can see, then, why someone might be quite certain about a delusion and yet not act on it. If one lives in a private world that is barely holding together, there is the possibility that action may destroy it. Furthermore, at the times when one can distinguish between the real world and one's private world, it may not even make sense to act in the shared world in a way consistent with the private world. What good could that do?[851] And if the shared world (reality) is so radically uncertain that anything could be different at any time, then most of the time the boundaries between one's private world and reality are not going to be very clear or easy to discern, which is likely to make one even more hesitant to act.

The difficulty of making sense of the situation is not simply one for the observer; it is felt in a way much more acutely by the sufferer. Depending upon the level of elaboration of the delusive system, he approaches the limit in which there is nothing that does not fit, that is not in some sense him, and yet everything that is so crucially meaningful in the delusion is somehow

---

[851] See Sass, *Paradoxes of Delusion*, pp. 41-2 and 79. Also cited in Henriksen, "On Incomprehensibility," p. 116.

empty, void of the living person.[852] Thus Schreber is participating in the redemption of all mankind, but everyone around him is a fleeting, improvised person. He is on intimate terms with God, but God turns out to know only corpses and nothing of living people.[853]

The chief way in which the observer or the therapist feels the difficulty is articulated in the third version of this second puzzle: although that which takes so much work to locate in neurosis is right on the surface in psychosis, neurosis is much easier to cure. Freud says that "in schizophrenia a great deal is expressed as being conscious which in the transference neuroses can only be shown to be present in the Ucs. by psychoanalysis."[854] This nearness of the unconscious to the surface is quite vivid in an excerpt of a patient's direct speech provided by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, an excerpt that sounds just like Freud's paraphrases of the unconscious motivations of a hysteric caught up in resistance:

> I warned you against becoming friendly with me. I told you you'd find out that I am an unbearably hostile person. Do you think it pleases me to behave that way? I assure you it does not. Why then do you trespass that way by forcing me to let you see what I'd rather not see myself… ?[855]

Here the fantasy world and the resistance to relationship need no digging to discover. But this does not help the patient in giving them up. Joining Freud with Lacan, perhaps we could put the matter this way: the psychotic is somehow ignorant of the very language he speaks, and this puts him and the analyst in the same situation with regard to his speech – to begin with, neither knows how to interpret it, but both bear witness to it.[856] Even the partial discovery of how to interpret it, however, does not necessarily make any claim on him, any more than reality already does. He remains, rather, in the same position as the analyst. But Freud tells us, somewhat ruefully, that the analyst's knowledge cannot directly become effective knowledge for the patient; for knowledge to be healing, there must be an affective investment in what is known. This

---

[852] Cf. Lacan, *Seminar 3*, pp. 79-80, emphasis added.
[853] Schreber, *Memoirs*, pp. 24, 62, 135, 278.
[854] Freud, "The Unconscious," SE **14**:197.
[855] Quoted in Lysaker and Lysaker, "Schizophrenia and Alterations in Self-Experience," p. 334.
[856] Lacan, *Seminar 3*, pp. 11-12.

investment is precisely what Freud found he could not bring about in those suffering from psychosis. They remained affectively indifferent.[857]

G) Schizophrenia as Infantilism?

"Is the brittle fragility of common sense merely a matter of pure deficiency[,] or does it involve, rather, a basic risk or vulnerability which belongs to the very structure of being human?"[858]

So far, we have considered psychosis as in part the failure of common sense, which we specified as a withdrawal from the shared world in the form of a temporal regression to narcissism (or beyond, to autoerotism). We have then recognized in the full phenomenon of psychosis a second part, consisting of 'noisy' attempts to rebuild the world. But what is the real import of this regression? The developmental strand of psychoanalytic theory suggests that it is a return to infancy, but some phenomenological reservations about that seem warranted. Withdrawal of investments from the world back into the self is quite different from becoming an infant once more. Sass, for instance, points out that attempts at restitution, at least for the schizophrenic, tend to involve the intensification of abstractions that would be impossible for even a young child, not to mention a pre-linguistic infant. And he thinks that primary process living should involve increased affect, not flat affect.[859] Yet Freudian psychoanalysis nevertheless maintains not only that schizophrenia involves a retreat to infantile or archaic ways of thinking, but even that the childhood developmental achievement of *language* – precisely what brings one out of in-fancy – is vulnerable to the breakdown involved in withdrawal from the world.

---

[857] *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:281, 436, 447. Nevertheless, he says with regard to delusions that eventually "every little fragment of knowledge will be transformed into power, and into therapeutic power as well" (SE **16**:256), thus granting hope to those analysts who wished to find a way to analyze psychotics.
[858] Blankenburg, "First Steps," p. 312.
[859] See Sass, *Paradoxes of Delusion*: Introduction, note 12, and pp. 12, 114, 121ff.

I take there to be two replies to the objection available for psychoanalytic theory.[860] By addressing them each in turn, we can take two more important steps toward revealing how psychosis works.

1. The Failure of Primitive Trust Leaves a Person Outside of the Truth

A first response is to *agree* with the objection that regression is inadequate by itself to account for psychosis, although it does describe *how* the failure of common sense happens, making clear that this failure is a defensive withdrawal from what cannot be endured. In an attempt to sort out the structure of hallucinations, for example, Freud first suggests topographical regression, then immediately discounts this as a false trail. "If the secret of hallucination is nothing else than that of regression, every regression of sufficient intensity would produce hallucination with belief in its reality."[861] But strong memories are regressions without being hallucinations, and much less severe regressions (including sometimes hallucinations) also appear in neurosis. So, something more is needed at the structural level of the account. We need to be able to say what is involved when psychotic regression goes so much farther back than neurotic regression. Furthermore, if it really is a matter of returning to some prior state, how are we to differentiate between the situation of the real infant and the situation of the adult who flees back into infantile modes of relation?

This something more awaits us in a pair of observations already made in the previous section: namely, 1) that something is radically unbearable or inadmissible, i.e., rejected point-blank from integration into the person's life, and 2) that the most florid symptoms of psychosis are attempts to rejoin the shared world, albeit on one's own terms. In other words, what is needed

---

[860] Sass acknowledges the possible rapprochement between his account and some version of psychoanalysis in *Paradoxes of Delusion* (chapter 1, note 30), but his reading would inflect the problem epistemologically (see his Conclusion). Schreber's "homosexuality," then, would be more a matter of the imaginary dual relation Lacan articulates (*Seminar 3*) than a sheer being-overcome by unconscious sexual desires.

[861] Freud, "A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams," SE **14**:231.

in addition to regression has to do with the person's fundamental intrapsychic conflicts. We have already seen certain shapes of that conflict, as described by Laing and by Atwood (section I.D.2.a); now we must make sense of it at a structural level.

To do so, let us follow Alphonse de Waelhens[862] by beginning with Freud's attempts to distinguish between repression and primal repression. Repression in general is a form of flight, in which what is fled from always returns in the form of a symptom. Put another way: this flight involves reinscription into a different register. But in order for us to be drawn to repression as a solution to conflict (rather than other possible defenses), Freud recognizes that there must be something already in that other register that attracts whatever I am repressing. So, typical (or neurotic) repression turns out to require a more originary flight, one that has already occurred and that functions in me as a center of gravity. De Waelhens characterizes this prior flight as a more basic excision, or perhaps acceptance of excision, in which one pays a price for fully joining the ordered, shared world. It is in his study of Schreber's *Memoirs* that Freud distinguishes between these ways of fleeing as two (of three) *stages* of repression. Here he calls the earliest, primal repression (*Urverdrängung*) a 'fixation' and posits it as "the precursor and necessary condition"[863] for repression proper (*Verdrängung*); the latter may thus also be called 'after-pressure' (*Nachdrängen*).[864]

This initial fixing of a center of gravity that cannot be integrated (i.e., primal repression) is a way of taking distance from one's drives by first establishing the difference between conscious and unconscious. It "consists in the psychical […] representative of the drive being denied [*versagt*] entrance into what is conscious."[865] It means, in other words, that what I want

---

[862] For the following, see de Waelhens and Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, pp. 143-166.
[863] Freud, "Schreber," SE **12**:67. Cf. "Repression," SE **14**:148.
[864] Or, in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," *Nachverdrängung* ('subsequent repression'), SE **23**.
[865] Freud, "Repression," SE **14**:148, trans. mod. (see GW 10:250).

(the object of the drive) and the way things are (the real situation of which I am conscious) can sometimes be different, without producing catastrophe.

We will have much more to say about what this denial involves developmentally later (chapter 6, section II.A), but for now let us attend to its effects. With this fixation, an experience of unreflected immersion in or immediate identification with the real (an experience that is probably only ever fantasized) is definitively given up, substituted for by a coherent world within which the real appears as meaningful and (relatively) bearable. Primal repression functions, therefore, as the source (for me) of the world's structure. In order for consciousness to function as part of a shared world, some desires and ideas must be repressed.

The distance from one's drives opened up by primal repression is thus the origin of *mediation* (as de Waelhens calls it), a person's access to the shared world as minimally coherent, structured by an interrelation of presence and absence (what I earlier called 'the juncture,' following Heidegger [chapter 2, part II]). I may desire something in that thing's absence, and this desire need not therefore either vanish or take over the entire world; I may, in other words, make the thing present for myself in its very absence. The reverse, however, is also true: even when the thing is present, it will in some ways be absent or grounded on an absence.[866] Furthermore, I may *have* a desire without *being* (wholly) that desire. And since desire is often (if not always) a wanting to be desired by others, I may also be in relation to others – '*have* a relationship,' as we say – rather than fully identifying with and *being* nothing other than whatever (I imagine) those others desire. Even my own experience will be open to interpretation, a space of meaning-making, without it ceasing thereby to be my own; I can from now on recognize a difference

---

[866] Cf. Richard Boothby, *Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology After Lacan* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 50: "Every moment of revealment is ineluctably bound up with a moment of concealment. Presence is inseparable from concomitant absence. The openness of Dasein to being involves at the same time a closedness and loss." (The addition of 'loss' here seems already to move us away from Heidegger and toward Freud.)

between reality and fantasy; I am aware of reality *as such*, not merely engulfed in it, even if I have a long way to go in learning which entities are real.

Acceding to, fully entering, this shared and limited world is known psychoanalytically as accepting castration, since it introduces a limit or cut into the fantasized bodily plenum of immediacy; phenomenologically, it is understood as recognizing and accepting one's finitude. In either mode of thought, this acceptance is a matter of more or less, never simply finalized. One is always more or less in protest, more or less inauthentic, and clothed with the possibility of further change. What Freud shows us, however, is that an absolute mode of *rejection* is possible – a complete refusal of finitude. This would be precisely the failure to accede to primal repression, according to de Waelhens.

Freud thus distinguishes between neurotic repression, in which one splits the memory of the thing or event from the affect that accompanied it,[867] and psychotic repudiation or foreclosure (*Verwerfung*), in which one refuses or throws out both idea and affect "and behaves as if the idea had never occurred to the ego at all."[868] Such repudiation, which he elsewhere refers to as 'forcing away' (*Abdrängung*) by contrast with repression proper (*Verdrängung*), is the refusal of castration. Put differently, it is the refusal to submit to the world as structured by language – a language that I do not create, but in which I am always already caught up. It can be understood as a motivated solution, if not necessarily a conscious decision, when we think about the costs of entering the world. Richard Boothby explains those costs by reminding us that

> castration involves both an anxiety of fragmentation, as it implies the giving up of the imaginary
> unity of the ego, and a corresponding anxiety of separation, insofar as it requires tolerating the

---

[867] Cp. Boothby's reading of repression as a Gestalt switch (a displacement in the order of images) plus a verbal translation (a symbolic reinscription). *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

[868] Freud, "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence," SE **3**:58. Cp. the Wolf-Man case study, where Freud says that "repression is something very different from a rejection [*Verwerfung*]" (*From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, SE **17**:79-80, 84-5, 109), and Lacan's reading of it in *Seminar 3* (pp. 12-13, 46, 83, 149). Lacan interprets GW 12:117, *daß er von ihr nichts wissen wollte im Sinne der Verdrängung*, as 'that he did not want to know anything about it, [not even] in the sense of repression,' which is possible and fits with Freud's earlier distinction, but it is not the only possible reading, since 'in the sense of repression' could be epexegetical for not-wanting-to-know.

absence of the [loved] object (or at least absence of resemblance to the object) that is constitutive of linguistic signification.[869]

To enter the shared world, then, is to let the world's laws apply to me, to internalize them as structuring me despite my uniqueness, as well as to give up on having it all under control. I must make use of words that do not perfectly present things; indeed, things themselves, including what and who I love most, must be structured by absence. It means that *I* must suffer absence with regard to myself, both the absence that is my eventual death (including the irreversibility of my temporal passage) and the absence that is an imperfect, destroyable body or a limited identity. If I am to pay such prices for world-entry, I must find myself suffused by a deep trust in that world on whose cusp I stand – a world in which I as yet participate only very imperfectly, and which both oppresses and excites me. As we will eventually make clear (chapter 6, sections II.A.3-4), it is in a circulation with trust in one's caretakers that such primitive trust emerges.

But not to trust in this way, as has become evident, is no better option. To forgo castration is both to remain at the immediate mercy of the world – crushed by impossible demands, which are initially and (in such a case) irrecoverably embodied by one's caretakers, from whom one is not psychically well-differentiated – and to remain alienated from a reality that is somehow structured linguistically and socially for everyone else. It is a failure of primitive trust that manifests in the rejection of the organizing force of language.

I speak of the 'organizing force' of language, and not of 'language' simply, because foreclosure does not rule out the use of words or reason, but does leave a kind of hole or weak spot in the system of language, at the place where the organizing principle should be.[870] One's (linguistic) center of gravity goes missing or comes up empty, so that one feels oneself at some

---

[869] Richard Boothby, *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 152.

[870] Cf. Grasser, "Stabilizations in Psychosis," who points out that although we are all embedded in the field of language, one can be "lacking in the organizer for this tongue. This is what prevents the separation between the word and the thing on the one hand, and the tie between the signifier and the signified on the other."

level to be playacting, participating explicitly in a game, rather than dwelling in language.[871] Metaphor in a broad sense, as the substitution of word for thing, has been repudiated. To compensate, one has to place excessive weight on some other symbol, some other phrase or piece of language, which then remains essentially enigmatic because it stands in for – it signifies – the whole system of language itself.[872] As an example, maybe I become convinced above all that 'Money can't buy happiness,' but I have no idea what follows from this. (Can something else buy it? Is it not for sale at all?) Now I have this proverb, this refrain, on which depends for me the whole weight of the world's structure.

Foreclosure of some inadmissible element, then, bears the weight of a structural refusal of finitude. Henceforth, the person is exceptionally vulnerable to being overwhelmed, should the meaning that was refused be demanded too rigorously at any point in the future. Of course, it is not evident from the outside (nor even, many times, from the inside) that this foreclosure has taken place, still less *what* was foreclosed, until the symbol in question is required of the person – and she is thoroughly overwhelmed. Until then, at most what appears is a brittleness or fragility to her psychic achievements, at least those that go beyond the fixation point. Her structural weakness *may*, however, remain simply hidden, as we saw in the prodromal accounts above. Or maybe she will be clinically recognizable as having a personality disorder.

Let us be more concrete. What is it that happens in this being-overwhelmed? A question is posed, a problem arises, something is demanded by my situation in life, and the only adequate response would be that symbol which I have not only not understood, but have rejected out of hand, have avoided as the bane of my very life. For Schreber, it was *paternity*, or perhaps more

---

[871] Boothby adds (*Death and Desire*, p. 152): "From a Lacanian point of view, castration is the central moment of the child's acquisition of language not in the sense of its becoming able to voice words or to use them in some way (of this both the pre-Oedipal child and the psychotic are capable) but rather in the sense of becoming able to dwell in language, to rely on language for the guidance of thought and action, genuinely to appropriate language and to be appropriated by it."

[872] Lacan, *Seminar 3*, p. 194.

basically *procreation*, into which he could not integrate himself. Lacan describes the basic psychotic phenomenon in this way: "the emergence in reality of an enormous meaning that has the appearance of being nothing at all – insofar as it cannot be tied to any [other meaning], since it has never entered into the system of symbolization – but under certain conditions it can threaten the entire edifice."[873] The world's tentative structure implies a certain flexible coherence, a safety in being wrong up to a certain point. But put too much pressure on one point, and if it collapses, the rest of the threads get pulled down, as well. Language, as a system of words that have meaning in terms of each other and contexts that operate by mutual implication and exclusion, falls apart. When I find myself thoroughly betrayed, I reinterpret all of what used to be evidence of good faith as evidence of an even more cunning trap (see chapter 1, section III.C).

We have already said (section I.D.2) that this collapse involves a *temporal* regression, a return to the point of the fixation – to narcissism (melancholic, manic, or paranoid) or autoerotism. We may add that it also involves *formal* regression: a return to primary process connections, immediate and fully fluid identifications.[874] To the extent that it further involves a *topographical* regression,[875] there is a move from preconscious word-presentations to unconscious thing-presentations: what cannot be symbolized but is demanded anyway can only show up in terms of images – in hallucinations, feelings of complete exposure, and transitivism. There is, as Boothby puts it, "uncontrolled slippage of the signifier, compensated for by delusional overgrowths of the imaginary."[876] And there is a *confusion* of these registers: everything claims me as symbolically meaningful, as if everything were part of language, and everything is meaningful *for me*, as if everything bore an immediate, narcissistic relation to me.

---

[873] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[874] For further discussion of the primary process, see chapter 6, section I..
[875] Freud claims explicitly that it does not (SE **14**:229), but I am inclined to follow Lacan in thinking that it must.
[876] Boothby, *Freud as Philosopher*, p. 122. Following Lacan, Boothby understands the 'imaginary' as the realm of images.

To complete this structural articulation of psychosis as something more than simply temporal regression, let us draw out the consequences of the psychotic break for a person's relation to the truth. We shall look first at schizophrenia, then at paranoia, and last at affective psychoses.

If we were right to follow Blankenburg in saying that all psychosis is a failure of common sense, we should not fail to notice his claim that common sense is what allows one "to put things in their proper place" – i.e., to see what is essential, what belongs to what – and to distinguish "the probable from the improbable." For "the probable is encompassing and provides the basis for what is true, which is here meant in the sense of what is correct and demonstrable. […] Without [common sense], all manner of correctness simply hangs in the air" (306). Having this sense for the probable is included in what Heidegger calls 'originary truth,' being-held or holding-oneself in the truth, which I have argued may also be called primitive trusting (chapter 2, part I). Hence, as we saw more recently (section I.D), common sense is here a name for Heidegger's *being-in-the-world*,. When it fails, propositional truth and falsity do not simply become impossible, but the person is no longer appropriately related to them.

A person suffering from schizophrenia, de Waelhens claims, borrowing an image from Francoise Dolto, "talks about the real the way a blind man talks about colors. This does not necessarily imply that what he says about it is false, but, in any case, he does not know the truth of the matter, because truth has disappeared for him."[877] Such a conclusion may be drawn from Blankenburg's account, in which the loss of natural self-evidence involves a failure of appropriate distance, or from de Waelhens's, in which mediation and negation are rejected. Language no longer represents and therefore mediates bodily sensations, so words move immediately to

---

[877] De Waelhens and Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, p. 246.

corporeal sensation. As Moyaert puts it, even "the images and perceptions that arise in [the body] *are too close to the skin and, as it were, break through it*."[878]

A person who suffers both language and imagination in this fashion is just indifferent to the fact that speech is structured as an appeal to public evidence, an attempt to show something in a way that would in principle make sense to any observer. (To see this, try to make sense of a propositional truth "which I alone could know and express,"[879] i.e., one that can have no other witness, real or imagined.) Speech has such immediate effects for such a person that propositional truth, as correctness, is no longer worth getting excited about, even if the 'truth-game' is one that can be played. Someone with schizophrenia speaks only a dead language, since words gain their life from lived contexts, and it is just such contexts from which she is alienated.[880] Human discourse requires engagement, since attention to tone and context is what allows for transcending the literal meanings of words toward their partially hidden meanings. It is just this engagement that has become foreign for the schizophrenic, who may be able to get along linguistically at various times in life but feels like the rules of natural-language engagement are never quite clear.

Someone suffering from non-schizophrenic paranoia, by contrast, is in one way excessively concerned with propositional truth. Words do not have such immediate, bodily effects as for the schizophrenic, but they *are* straightforwardly equivalent to the things they indicate. They are not signs that point beyond themselves to a partially opaque (i.e., absent) meaning. Their meaning, rather, like the meaning of every possible occurrence, is immediately clear, fully given to anyone of good faith – and unquestionably given to the paranoid person.[881] Not only that, but any number of occurrences, physical objects, and so on, which most people would not take as signifying anything, are without any doubt meaningful, even if it is not entirely clear to the person

---

[878] Moyaert, "Body," pp. 47-48, original emphasis.
[879] De Waelhens and Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, p. 237.
[880] *Ibid.*, p. 288.
[881] *Ibid.*, pp. 238-241.

just *what* they mean.[882] That is to say, everything has to fit within the delusional story. No risk is tolerable with regard to the truth; nothing can be partially right and partially wrong. Thus other people cannot play a real role in reaching the truth, for truth is not something to be sought. Truth is already possessed, fully, by the person who is paranoid, and others are simply called upon to testify that it is so, especially those who bear some official capacity in the shared world.[883]

A person in the grip of psychotic mania or depression is not attuned to the world in a way that allows her to care about propositional truth one way or the other. Speech does not have the kind of immediate bodily effects it does in schizophrenia, nor is the speaker the immediate guarantor of truth. Instead, the submission to a judgment of correctness is just not worth the effort in depression and requires an unattainable coherence in mania. In both cases, the failure of affect regulation – of the experienced submission of affect to any boundary at all – yields wholesale reorganizations of even the familiar world.

In mania, on the one hand, there is an uncontrollable chaos of meaning characterized by racing thoughts. "My thoughts were going so fast that I couldn't remember the beginning of a sentence halfway through," Jamison reports. "Fragments of ideas, images, sentences, raced around and around in my mind [until] they became meaningless melted pools. Nothing once familiar to me was familiar [anymore]."[884]

In depression, on the other hand, the world takes on a deeply malevolent cast, and things offer themselves to one's desire only in terms of destruction.

> I become unable to recognise something as familiar as the palm of my hand or my children's faces. My sense of space alters and rooms that are familiar appear to have changed dimensions. Simple objects in a room can take on sinister meanings for me. […] I become passionate about one subject only at these times of deep and intense fear, despair and rage: suicide.[885]

---

[882] Lacan, *Seminar 3*, p. 78.
[883] *Ibid.*, pp. 241-2.
[884] Jamison, *Unquiet Mind*, p. 83.
[885] Anonymous, "On Madness," p. 727.

To the extent that psychosis is a betrayal of trust, then, it is also an ejection from the realm of originary truth, from that which enables a mediated relation to propositional truth and falsity, although this takes place in different ways for different psychoses.

Thus, we can see that the psychoanalytic account does not wish *only* to understand psychosis as a matter of temporal regression, as if one simply reverted to infancy. The world comes apart due to both an initial foreclosure that solves an intense conflict and a later crisis that demands what has been foreclosed. These are two distinct psychical steps, the first one lending itself to psychic structuring and thus understandable as predisposing, the other a contingent event that arises only partially due to the predisposition. When the world splinters, however, it does so in such a radical way (i.e., a way that reaches back into the roots of oneself) that one retreats into modes of functioning that cannot provide an appropriate distance from and mediation to things. The resulting excessive exposure is still freighted with the meanings accrued over one's lifetime, but they now threaten one's extinction unless one can artificially rebuild something coherent from them. The fragmented drives and body of those who suffer from schizophrenia are therefore not merely traversed by things without organization – they are invaded by things that bear various remnants of previous, fragile organization, to which the real infant could have had no access. While it may be true to say of both the small child and the schizophrenic that he "has a body, but he does not inhabit it; his body does not belong to him,"[886] or that he is "able to voice words or to use them in some way [without being] able to dwell in language,"[887] still the child and the schizophrenic are as different as the 'not yet' and the 'no longer.' Freud's formulation in a different context turns out to be helpful here, too:

> the influence of childhood makes itself felt already in the situation at the beginning of the formation of a neurosis [or, we may add, of a psychosis], since it plays a decisive part in

---

[886] Moyaert, "Body," p. 51. Notice that in neither case does this prevent some *awareness* of one's having a body.
[887] Boothby, *Death and Desire*, p. 152.

determining whether and at what point the individual shall fail to master the real problems of life [i.e., be overwhelmed].[888]

It marks out, in other words, the extent and shape of a person's fragility.

2. The Failure of Language Brings Overwhelming Meaning

Now we come to the second response to phenomenology's objection about regression. It involves pointing out that in approaching the question of infantile thought we encounter a problem genuinely belonging to the inconsistent experience and expression of schizophrenia – something Sass acknowledges as the "characteristic combination of what seem to be hyperconcrete as well as hyperabstract tendencies."[889] Let us see what this means.

On one side, Freud, for example, "attempt[s] a characterization of the schizophrenic's mode of thought by saying that *he treats concrete things as though they were abstract*."[890] As one of Minkowski's patients testifies, "I feel that I can reason quite well, but only in the absolute [i.e., abstractly], because I have lost contact with life."[891] On the other side, however, we have clinical examples, including some given by Freud, which at least on their face suggest that schizophrenia involves the exact opposite: *treating abstract situations (or verbal stimuli) as though they were concrete*. Freud borrows an example from Victor Tausk:

> [A] girl who was brought to the clinic after a quarrel with her lover complains: 'The eyes are not straight [*richtig*], they are twisted [*verdreht*].' She herself explains this by producing, in coherent [*geordnet*] language, a series of reproaches against her lover. 'She cannot understand him at all, he looks different every time; he is a hypocrite, an eye-twister [*Augenverdreher*]; he has twisted her eyes [*verdreht*], which are no longer her eyes; she now sees the world with different eyes.[892]

Furthermore, George Atwood makes the case that for people in annihilation states – i.e., for people whose very existence is highly fraught – new insights or feelings usually emerge very

---

[888] Freud, *Wolf-Man*, SE **17**:54. Italics removed from entire passage.
[889] Sass, "Schizophrenia, Self-Experience," pp. 160-1. Cf. *Paradoxes of Delusion*, ch. 3, where Sass characterizes the schizophrenic atmosphere as a combination of "phantom concreteness" and "mute particularity."
[890] Freud, "The Unconscious," SE **14**:204, emphasis added. Cf. his famous comparison of abstract philosophy to schizophrenia, on the same page.
[891] Quoted in Parnas and Sass, "Self, Solipsism," p. 116.
[892] Freud, "The Unconscious," SE **14**:198, trans. mod. (see GW 10:296-7).

concretely because they are very tenuous, and the concrete is more easily held on to.[893] This very concretization would indicate the way that delusions and hallucinations can be understood as attempts to restore a connection to the shared world, on condition that the world will not simply destroy one. "By casting the danger to a person's sense of being in highly concrete, particular images, the delusion expresses an effort to resurrect oneself and be protected from the possibility of obliteration."[894]

Atwood speculates, for example, that one patient who would not speak except to say that there were four children in her bedroom (when in the shared world she had none) "concretized the fragmentary state of her soul into the image of actually living children [because] she could not, at her center, sustain any sense that she was an actually existing, alive, real person."[895] When asked by her psychiatrist whether these children were real, however, she became confused and would not respond. Atwood interprets this to be because she knew that they were not real in any sense that her psychiatrist would understand, and yet she deeply needed them to be real – in an immediate way, they were her very self. If Atwood is right, then the consequences of electroconvulsive therapy on this patient are quite troubling: she remained silent, except to say that there were no longer any children in her bedroom.[896]

So it is hard to say whether schizophrenia involves a tendency to abstract or to concretize. Indeed, it seems as if both take place. We have already seen that the psychoanalytic account

---

[893] Atwood, *The Abyss*, p. 30.
[894] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[895] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[896] *Ibid.*, p. 38. We might add a further example from the same paper that presented the man who lives entirely by maxims: A different gentleman, hospitalized for a year with paranoid delusions, then treated with medication for nearly ten years because of hallucinatory voices, has since then been free of medication and mostly free of voices. He speaks almost entirely in clichés and proverbs. At a certain point, deciding that he was 'lacking a seat in life,' "he started building an armchair on which he engraved proverbs so as to 'have his place, like the others, in everyday life.' […] In rare times of crisis, he threatens to destroy his 'proverb armchair' on which he sits every day. Sometimes he does partially destroy it in order to better rebuild it. […] This armchair locates him in life literally because he carves on it the proverbs on which he must explicitly rely in order to carry out commonplace activities" (Schwartz et. al., "Rebuilding Reality," p. 94).

involves recognizing, as the underlying structure of psychosis (the psychical predisposing cause), a refusal of mediation. The psychotic has language in a way, but lacks the organizing principle for it; she does not *inhabit* language or dwell in the world *through* it, even if she can play the game with some facility. It is not a matter of deficient language learning but a disruption of the basic relation to discourse (*logos* or *Rede* for Heidegger). In such situations, language is not linked up to affect appropriately, and so does not adequately structure the world – language and things primarily oppress me or are utterly indifferent for me. But when the world is not structured by language, there is no mediating distance between what is presented and what *is*. I am thrown back on immediate identifications with (i.e., investments of) images. If we think about the situation from that direction and realize that, for Freud, language as a background phenomenon is preeminently preconscious,[897] we would expect that Freud's account of schizophrenia would involve a retreat from words to (unconscious) memory images – i.e., to things. Indeed, we already saw that in psychosis generally, the unconscious is in a way on the surface, directly legible.

But then schizophrenia would be a matter of treating abstract things (words and their meanings) concretely (as perceptual things), not the other way around (as Freud has claimed). So, from the standpoint of theoretical consistency, it is not surprising when Freud claims a) that in schizophrenia communication between the unconscious and the preconscious is severed,[898] and b) that schizophrenia consists in a withdrawal of investment from the unconscious (i.e., from things as remembered, as minimally related to the self).[899] This allows for a sort of differential diagnosis oriented to the relations between the preconscious and the unconscious: in dreaming, the split between the two is relaxed, so that unconscious wishes take sensory form but involve little motor response; in schizophrenia, the split is completed, so that the unconscious wishes are conscious

---

[897] Cf. Freud, "Unconscious," SE **14**:203.
[898] The "free communication between (Pcs.) word-cathexes and (Ucs.) thing-cathexes […] is cut off." Freud, "Supplement," SE **14**:229.
[899] "Supplement," SE **14**:235.

without the mediation of words (thus in hallucination, but not necessarily in self-movement); in hysteria, the split is maintained but with one-way communication, as unconscious wishes get expressed in bodily movement. Thus, Freud claims that Tausk's patient, if hysterical, would have "in fact convulsively twisted her eyes […] instead of feeling the impulse to do so or the sensation of doing so,"[900] but also would have entirely lacked access to the unconscious meaning of her movements.

On one hand, then, it seems as if psychosis involves abstraction on a grand scale; on the other hand, it seems that it takes everything as immediately concrete. This suggests that such a distinction is inadequate to the phenomenon under discussion. But it was precisely that distinction on which the phenomenological objection was based. Let us instead recognize that we can make some headway by thinking about the examples just cited as evidence of a *refusal of metaphor* in psychosis – a failure to accept the substitution of words for things.

Earlier, I claimed that Freud's most important insight into psychosis was to take the 'positive symptoms' as restitutive efforts. Precisely in order to try to deal with the theoretical problem currently at issue, he adds to the theory that *language is the first such re-investment*.[901] Since the normal use of language most crudely involves using words to try to get at things, when one has fled from worldly things and now wants them back, it is reasonable to try to get to them by investing in words. Unfortunately, this is very difficult, since we saw (section I.G.1) that it was upon language and its organization that the first blow fell, in the failure of primal repression. The tendency, then, will be to realize one's desparate (but conflicted) desire to belong to things

---

[900] Freud, "Unconscious," SE **14**:198-99, trans. mod. (see GW 10:297).

[901] See Freud's own characterization of the problem ("Unconscious," SE **14**:203, trans. mod.): "If, in schizophrenia, this flight [i.e., regression] consists in withdrawal of drive investment from the points which represent the unconscious presentation of the object, it may seem strange that the part of the presentation of this object which belongs to the system Pcs. – namely, the word-presentations corresponding to it – should, on the contrary, receive a more intense investment. We might rather expect that the word-presentation, being the preconscious part, would have to sustain the first impact of repression and that it would be totally closed for investment after repression had proceeded as far as the unconscious thing-presentations. This, it is true, is difficult to understand."

by prematurely investing those words *as* things.[902] This results in a situation for the schizophrenic, at least, in which all she has is language, but its internal relations remain radically disorganized and oppressive.

We should not forget that words have their own materiality – that they are also perceptible things. This materiality is normally quite transparent for native speakers of a natural language.[903] Sass quotes Artaud again, when the latter laments his *lack* of "that fusion … of the expression with the thought, that instantaneous forgetting which is given to all men and allows them convenience of expression."[904] Schizophrenia involves getting hung up on the word as material, sometimes failing to transcend it toward its meaning, sometimes taking all its meanings at once, and sometimes taking its meaning(s) materially, in relation to the body. If it is at all possible to generalize here, maybe we can say that the schizophrenic confuses things and words (including word-things and meaningful words).

Why are words and things confused in this way, which de Waelhens calls a "confusion of signifier and signified"?[905] The split between conscious and unconscious, founded simultaneously with the difference between the linguistic world and the perceptual world, has either not taken place with the requisite strength in someone who is psychotic, or it has been subsequently surrendered. Instead of serving to organize the relation between past experience (memory), present perception, and future possibilities,[906] language's own structure has splintered. This means that different strategies for successful language use, rather than being coherently

---

[902] To the extent that the schizophrenic succeeds at reaching memory-traces of things (although not yet full intentional relations to real things), the desperate and disorganized re-investment of these memories produces hallucinations, which are often verbal (hearing voices, for example).

[903] Freud: "But word-presentations, for their part too, are derived from sense-perceptions" ("Unconscious," SE **14**:202). Cf. the proposal of verbal residues as a subcategory of mnemic residues in *The Ego and the Id*, SE **19**:20-1.

[904] Sass, "Schizophrenia, Self," p. 166. Quoted from volume 1 of Artaud's *Oeuvres Completes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 210 (Sass's translation and elision).

[905] De Waelhens and Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, p. 231.

[906] I take this to be a faithful extrapolation from Freud's distinction between unconscious thing-presentations and conscious presentations that include both word and thing. See "Unconscious," SE **14**:201-3.

employed, will be tried at different (often inappropriate) times. Sometimes, understanding what is said requires taking it literally, sometimes it requires attending primarily to a tonal inflection, sometimes it involves holding multiple meanings in tension at once. Normally, picking the right strategy does not really involve sorting and choosing – it is part of being already oriented to the meaning of the situation. It does not seem that people suffering from psychosis explicitly sort and choose strategies, either, but their strategies conflict, get inappropriately isolated, and fail to fit the shared context. This failure to be attuned to the shared situation, and its concomitant clutching at straws, is one result of the failure of common sense.

What happens when the schizophrenic fails to recover things via words? With regard to linguistic thought and speech, words float free of their bindings to reality.[907] They are emptied of personal meaning (connection to one's past and future) and no longer experience resistance, either from their worldly referents or from repressed unconscious drive resonances.[908] That means that free association can proceed unhindered; "words are subjected to the same [primary] process as that which makes the dream-images out of latent dream-thoughts […]. They undergo condensation and by means of displacement transfer their investments to one another in their entirety."[909] As Moyaert puts it, "language here does not circle [productively] around a symbolically articulated emptiness but looks for protection against a real emptiness."[910]

As an example of this sort of free association, Thomas Freeman reports that one patient, in an interview setting in which the doctor was taking notes, suddenly broke her silence to say that she was thinking about the drug Largactil. Asked why, she explained that the word had three parts: *Larg* (presumably because of its sound) meant the three Rs – reading, writing, and

---

[907] "Words glide over everything and hang in empty space. [They] are no longer supported by a meaning-intention that in turn rests on the libido that aims to realize itself in [investing] objects" (Moyaert, "Body," p. 56).
[908] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[909] "Unconscious," SE **14**:199.
[910] Moyaert, "Body," p. 57.

'rithmetic – and hence verbalized her concern about what she said being recorded (and perhaps added up in a calculating manner?); *Act* meant that the doctors, nurses, and patients were all playacting certain parts; *Til* meant the till (the money box) in the hospital cafeteria. Further, she was looking at a bottle of Largactil tablets on the desk.[911] That single word, the name of the drug, condensed all of these anxieties into one verbal expression, the meaning of which could be made determinate but only by quite a bit of coaxing.

This free floating of words also explains why there is *too much meaning* in psychosis. Everything claims me, is addressed to me. My options are: struggling to filter according to invented rules, forcing everything to fit into one fairly rigid delusional scheme, or just giving up, ceasing to care, so far as this turns out to be possible. As with the strategies for using language correctly, these are hardly mutually exclusive. Here is an articulation of the experience of two different strategies from someone on the edge of psychosis ('on the edge' inasmuch as she was not hallucinating):

> I was having a problem with patterns. Oriental rugs, tile floors, printed curtains, things like that. […] When I looked at these things, I saw other things within them. That sounds as though I was hallucinating, and I wasn't. I knew I was looking at a floor or a curtain. But all patterns seemed to contain potential representations, which in a dizzying array would flicker briefly to life. […] Reality was getting too dense. / Something also was happening to my perceptions of people. When I looked at someone's face, I often did not maintain an unbroken connection to the concept of a face. Once you start parsing a face, it's a peculiar item: squishy, pointy, with lots of air vents and wet spots. This was the reverse of my problem with patterns. Instead of seeing too much meaning, I didn't see any meaning.[912]

It is not surprising that this person (Kaysen) unconsciously adopted the strategy of abandoning significance especially for faces, which can be overwhelming due to the complexity of their meanings and the stakes of catching those meanings. In fact, the latter situation is pretty nearly the way that Chadwick describes *his* experience of paranoid schizophrenia. In addition to

---

[911] Thomas Freeman, "Narcissism and Defensive Processes in Schizophrenic States," in *Essential Papers*, pp. 78-97. Example from p. 79. Freeman does not tell us the significance of the third term; perhaps the patient did not report it. Likely it had something to do with economic relations, but it could also have been something completely different.

[912] Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*, p. 40-1.

increased perceptual sensitivity and a narrow and darting attentional beam, he reports, there is meaning everywhere, and the stakes are high for noticing it and making sense of it: "to save one's very life, and in my case my soul." "One is surrounded by signs, nothing is trivial or mundane, words in particular have an intense significance, one must miss nothing – it could be a clue to one's destiny."[913]

Stanghellini provides the rather different case of a 30-year-old paranoid schizophrenic man, for whom "almost every time he perceived an object, the perception evoked in him one concept or word, and that word [set off] an overwhelming trend of word associations. It was like a 'flood of words' that made him lose his grasp on the actual situation."[914] Here, instead of the word's various meanings and associations remaining in the background, giving context to the one or two meanings that are thereby foregrounded as situationally relevant, *all* the meanings are in play.

Of course, language never floats free completely. There will always remain some vestigial connections, stereotyped phrases drawn from real social interactions. It remains "possible to handle[,] with apparent correctness, 'constructions' which have survived the catastrophe but whose use no longer corresponds to anything for the person concerned" or else means something other than it would in the shared world.[915] The combination of these recalled phrases with the high stakes of finding meaning and the inability to screen for relevance yields one final inconsistency observable in psychotic speech, one which has been highlighted by Lacan:

---

[913] Chadwick, "Psychotic Consciousness," pp. 59 and 57, respectively.

[914] Giovanni Stanghellini, "At Issue: Vulnerability to Schizophrenia and Lack of Common Sense," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* **26**.4 (2000): 775-787. Quotation from p. 775. Cf. Kaysen's example of madness as velocity, in which the thought "I'm tired of sitting here in front of the nursing station" gives rise to an uncontrollable proliferation of thoughts by association to each part of the sentence, in a failing attempt to decide whether or not to stand up (*Girl, Interrupted*, pp. 76-7).

[915] De Waelhens and Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, p. 233. The example given (on the same page) is of a woman whose remarks about the weather, though usually appropriate to the shared situation, were understood by her to carry disproportionate significance. 'It is hot today' meant 'the sun's heat is too strong for me to approach you and shake your hand.' 'The sky is grey this morning' meant 'the sun will never shine as in other times and the end of the world draws near.'

intuition and formula both function for the psychotic to give meaning a stopping-place. On the one hand, there is the intuited word (often a neologism) that reaches the soul of the situation, unlocks its overflowing meaning, opens a new and privileged perspective. Meaning here takes flight into the ineffable, withdrawing toward the core of the delusion. On the other hand, the formulaic refrain, reiterated with stereotyped insistence, tries to hold onto some fragment of common speech so as to reconnect with the world.[916]

H) Conclusions: On Psychosis as Failure of Primitive Trust

Let me sum up. We have tried to think through psychosis in some detail so as to articulate how radical a break with the world can be, and to indicate that in some way we are all vulnerable to it. (We will take up that second task again, more rigorously, in chapter 6). We have done so with an eye toward questioning Heidegger's account of my being always already invested in a world, with others, in virtue of which things matter to me more or less coherently, according to shared patterns of import. This cleared space in which things can present themselves to us, and we can respond to them well or poorly, is how he understands originary truth. I have shown this level of truth to be the same as primitive or basic trust. But we have seen that psychosis involves a phenomenologically endless fall away from the world as such, one that is experienced as global mistrust, in which things either matter intensely or show up coherently, but not both.

Certainly this does not mean that Heidegger's interpretation is simply wrong, as if we all had to first find our way into the world beginning from something like psychosis. We made clear that psychosis, although centrally involving regression, is not simply a return to an infantile state (section I.G).[917] But Heidegger's beautiful account of our essential situatedness within a minimally coherent world interprets that situatedness as ineluctably given for the human being, at least short of physical death. On that account, the character of our investment in the world, I have

---

[916] See Lacan, *Seminar 3*, pp. 33, 255, and 260.
[917] I will investigate this question with more care in chapter 6, part II.

argued (chapter 2, part II, and chapter 3, part II), is one of assumption-trust, which has foreseen and incorporated into its assumptions what would otherwise be a terrible betrayal – namely, that originary being in the truth (as unconcealment) is also, always already, being in the untruth (as concealment).

Our investigation of psychosis therefore supports my claim that Heidegger's position is too self-assured. For psychosis seems to be primarily a matter of radically betrayed trust in the shared world as it is structured by language. This means that the essential problem in psychosis is an inability to responsively receive the question or the demand that comes from the world at a critical moment. In brief reactive psychoses, the inability seems to be sheerly a matter of unbearable trauma (the world itself as overwhelming), but in more long-term cases, there has been a predisposing foreclosure of the world's structure, a hesitancy toward primitive trust that has lasting effects.

We saw initially (section I.D) that the phenomenon of psychosis involves a failure of common sense, which in paranoia and schizophrenia takes the form of a withdrawal from inhabiting the shared world. This was understood as a temporal regression to previous organizations of love and interest, either focused wholly on the unified body-image (the ego) in paranoia, or fragmented into desperate investments of words taken as things that directly influence and invade the body in schizophrenia. Affect is unable to be contained or adequately processed, and this comes to the fore in schizoaffective and bipolar psychoses. In these situations, unbounded affect from which one cannot take distance throws the world into chaos, and the bipolar sufferer especially clings to common sense as to an anchor in rough seas – too tightly, it turns out, since it tends to produce an oscillation between overidentification with a social role and uncontrollable lack of all determinacy.

We saw, further (section I.G), that this regression can best be understood as a flight from a current crisis that puts excessive pressure on the solution to an old conflict. That solution had

been a repudiation of something inadmissible, an inability to trust fully (and primitively) in the structure of the shared world; the present crisis then demands more than such shaky trust can bear, and there is a break, a splintering of language's ordering function. Such a repudiation is only one kind of solution to a universal human difficulty. The fragility of one's personal solution, however, is by no means always apparent prior to the initiation of the break (i.e., prior to the prodromal phase of the illness), which means that the level of being-overwhelmed that is involved in psychosis could befall any of us.

Crucially, we saw (section I.E) that the most evident symptoms, those that earn a person the psychiatric label 'psychotic,' are actually more or less inadequate attempts to return to the shared world. As Freud says vividly, "the delusion is found applied like a patch over the place where originally a rent had appeared in the ego's relation to the external world."[918] It was by extending this insight, again following Freud, that we were able to partially illuminate some of the most confusing inconsistencies of psychotic speech.

If we had to put it into an overly simple formula, we could say that psychosis typically involves a childhood solution to conflict that leaves one vulnerable (a predisposition), an overwhelming pressure or demand in the midst of one's current life (a betrayal), a defensive regression to the last reliable *mode* of world-relation, albeit with non-infantile content (the withdrawal from common sense), and desperate attempts to rebuild a rigidly coherent world out of that fragmentary content (psychotic symptom-formation).

II. Trust and the Psychoanalytic Inference to the Unconscious

Freudian psychoanalysis has aided us thus far in working out a structural account of psychosis without losing sight of the importance of the sufferer's peculiar life-history, as well as the specifics of his speech. But this has already involved us in a problem about how to interpet

---

[918] Freud, "Loss of Reality," SE **19**:151.

that speech, whether it takes place in the midst of the break or at some level of recovery. Can we trust it? Is there anything sufficiently meaningful there to trust? We can respond more adequately to this kind of question if we attend to one further consequence of Freud's insight. We initially discovered an intrapsychic conflict at the root of psychosis (and thereby realized that the most visible psychotic symptoms are in fact restitutive attempts) by attending to such phenomena as *symptoms* in the psychoanalytic sense, i.e., as compromises in that psychic conflict (section I.E). If we once more attend to them as such symptoms, we can recognize in them another central feature: the Freudian neurotic symptom, as the return of the repressed, is a way of speaking – hence, it is addressed to someone, even if only to whoever has ears to hear. Perhaps delusions, hallucinations, and psychotically disorganized speech, too, are addressed to someone, even if only in a roundabout way.[919]

Such a claim faces risks on all sides. I have already discussed some of the risks of understanding too quickly (section I.A); here we may add to Eilan's concerns those of Lacan. He echoes Freud's repeated worries about getting stuck in what seems understandable about the dream – failing to work back to the latent dream-thoughts, then failing to attend primarily to the dream*work*, the mode of distortion – by calling on us not to take the bait offered by the peculiar rationality of the delusional system itself. We are back to Horatio's characterization of Ophelia's speech (see the introduction to part I, above), for Lacan asks the analyst to focus her interest, not so much on what the analysand wants her to understand, but on why he wants her to understand

---

[919] We may derive this same consequence from Lacan's account: the neurotic symptom is a reformulation or an insistence of the question (who or what am I?), and "[t]here is no question for a subject without another to whom he has addressed it." For the psychotic, too, there is a question (and thus another to whom it is addressed, as well as a reformulation of it in the symptom), only this time the question is not asked by the subject but comes over the subject, as it were, from the place of the foreclosed signifier. See Lacan, *Seminar 3*, pp. 170 and 202.

precisely this, and why he does not say it directly. "What […] has to be understood is why there is something there [in the person's speech or action] given to be understood."[920]

But there are dangers from other directions, as well. We saw that in schizophrenia the boundary of the skin is too fragile to ward off transitivism and the penetration of words when they are encountered as things. This includes the analyst's interpretations, which may be misunderstood as physical attacks or threats. Atwood speaks of being "drawn into [the] delusion": his confusion about what the patient was saying was evident in his face, and she experienced this as an attack of death rays flowing out of his eyes, killing her.[921] One of Laing's patients accused him of having her brains in his head: he unpacked this to mean that at a moment when she was thinking something, he had expressed something closely related, which she had interpreted as stealing her thoughts, which was (psychotically encountered) the same as taking her brains.[922]

On the opposite side, there is the danger of simply being tricked by a mistrustful patient. "The appearance of responding normally in social interaction, [a schizophrenic woman] writes, is no indication of actual emotional contact with others: 'It is just an expression of the fact that I, purely dialectically, realize how those I am talking with expect that I should react.'"[923] It can be, in other words, a way of playing the game without appropriate investment. Hayward's patient, Joan, claims, "We schizophrenics say and do a lot of stuff that is unimportant, and then we mix important things in with all this to see if the doctor cares enough to see them and feel them."[924] Laing thinks that this is a defensive mode of protection against both destruction by hatred and engulfment by love: "This creates the ironical situation that the schizophrenic is often playing at being psychotic, or pretending to be so. […] A good deal of schizophrenia is simply nonsense,

---

[920] Lacan, *Seminar 3*, pp. 48-9.
[921] Atwood, *The Abyss*, p. 15.
[922] Laing, *Divided Self*, p. 216.
[923] Sass, "Consciousness Machine," p. 213.
[924] As quoted by Laing, *Divided Self*, p. 176.

red-herring speech."[925] But I think that here we should raise some doubts, a) because it is not clear that someone in the grip of schizophrenia can be in the kind of control Laing suggests – we have seen how the unconscious is right out in the open for such persons – and b) because for all the difficulty the doctor has in differentiating the important from the unimportant, it is quite unlikely that the patient can accurately discern between them. If such a division is to be made, it usually has to emerge over the course of the work, though of course there are always surprises.

My investigation so far has emphasized the use first-person accounts as illustrations on the assumption, not that the sufferer has the whole story or full self-understanding, but that if we are to understand anything, we must attend to the speech of the person involved – no matter how transformed it may be, and even if we are looking for unconscious motivations as we do so. Bovink, for example, after being helped to discover traumatic abuse at the root of her own psychotic suffering, writes (in 2006):

> The general idea still is that talking about psychosis increases the risk of a next one and that is why you shouldn't talk about it. […] A psychiatric history with psychosis is considered a contraindication for any kind of serious communication. […] Nobody ever asked me: what was it that drove you mad? I was observed, diagnosed, and treated as a disturbed person, but nobody ever looked at the association with my life history.[926]

Laing summarizes the situation rather well when he points to two ways of going wrong in understanding a person in an annihilation state. On one side, we are tempted to assume that her speech and actions are *not* responses to the situation, which would be to give up from the outset on tracking down the (complex) way in which they *are* responses, even if primarily responses to a different situation; on the other side, we are inclined to presume that "he exists, in the world, like the other, as a permanent object in time and place, with others like himself"[927] – which would

---

[925] *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7.
[926] Bovink, "From Being a Disorder," p. 18. The worry about discussing psychotic episodes, particularly what precipitated them, is perhaps overemphasized but far from silly. If something was overwhelming once, it may be again, and even patients who have so far only been neurotic sometimes become psychotic in analysis as the material is brought up afresh. Cf. Rosenfeld, "On the Treatment," p. 159.
[927] Laing, *Divided Self*, p. 34.

also be a crucial misunderstanding, since we have seen that psychosis involves the radical instability of (and thoroughgoing doubts about) one's being-in-the-world.

Between these dangers and the ethical call to find a way of hearing and helping the person, how one receives psychotic speech bears an important likeness to the risky situation in which Freud decided (with infamous results) to trust his neurotic patients. What is appropriate receptivity here? Do we look for meaning? Do we medicate? Or do we apply some combination? Do we trust the person's descriptions of the phenomena? Do we focus on disentangling what is real from what is fantasized?

Atwood compares hallucinations and delusions to dreams, recognizing that within the context of an analysis, dreams are a major part of the speech of the unconscious. This speech is addressed to the analyst, often quite particularly, as a way of being brought to language. Thus, in the very case in which he was drawn into a schizophrenic delusion as a source of death rays, the patient presented Atwood with a dream whose analysis pointed the way to understanding the delusion. Surprisingly, when he expressed very concretely what he took to be the meaning of her words that he was killing her, interpreted within the context of the dream and the delusion, the delusion began to recede, just as dreams on a given theme cease once they have been adequately interpreted.[928] He concludes, from this and other examples, that both dreams and delusions "depict the subjective life of the dreamer"[929] in a way that is seeking to be interpreted.

Another patient reported to Atwood terrifying hallucinations of being absorbed into the bloodstreams of various members of her family, trying not to drown, but eventually dissolving into their blood. He interprets these by asking whether her family is a group of bloodsucking vampires, and with this recognition, her hallucinations came to an end. "I don't know if hallucinations in general can be handled so readily," he concludes, "but I do know that they often

---

[928] Atwood, *The Abyss*, pp. 15-17 and 101.
[929] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

contain symbolic metaphors, sometimes expressing the very heart of the matter of what has gone awry in a person's life."[930]

Atwood's conclusion bears on how we understand psychotic symptoms as restitutive. "What looks like a breakdown into psychosis and delusion thus may represent an attempted breakthrough, but the inchoate 'I' does require an understanding and responsive 'Thou' in order to have a chance to consolidate itself."[931] Such symptoms, then, are not only restitutive but communicative, invitations to interpret symbolically and thus to help the person reintegrate into the symbolically structured world. They are disguised and confusing, since the defensive rejection of shared structure remains in play, but they *can* draw the listener into the person's conflict. This fits, broadly, with Freud's conviction "that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; [self-]betrayal oozes out of him at every pore."[932]

Let us try to see how it might make sense in the context of treating psychosis, where the unconscious is not very hidden. Recognizing the unconscious is thus less a matter of looking for self-betrayal and more a matter of direct interpretation. If symptoms are attempts at communication, spoken to someone, what kind of receptivity is required? Hearing the person in such situations requires attending, via free-floating attention, to what Atwood calls 'subjective truth' and Freud calls 'psychical reality.'[933] This is an area suspended between fantasy (understood as imaginative) and reality (understood as objective), an area in which what is experienced has the force of reality, even if it is not part of the shared world. (I would add, with

---

[930] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[931] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[932] Freud, "A Case of Hysteria [Dora]," SE **7**:77-8. Cf. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, SE **6**:221, where Freud admits that he can no longer succeed at lying, since he always betrays himself parapraxically.
[933] Atwood, *The Abyss*, pp. 47 and 52. Atwood characterizes this free-floating attention as letting what is said wash over one like a waterfall (pp. 47 and 49). Freud's term for it is *gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*, attention that sweeps evenly across what is said, rather than leaping automatically to whatever meaning is anticipated ("Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis," SE **12**:111, 115-18).

Freud and for reasons explored later [chapter 7, part III], that in neurotics psychical reality includes unconscious fantasy.)

Atwood claims that we miss this subjective truth because "we are hypnotized by what we think of as the externally real, and once the fascination sets in, we cannot hear what is said to us without judging its degree of concordance with that external reality."[934] This would lead toward writing off psychosis as failed reality-testing, rather than trying to make sense of what experience of self is at stake in the person's delusion. "It is possible, though, to set such thoughts aside and listen to what is being said, in and for itself."

We might understand such a task in the following way: in everyday life (Husserl's natural attitude, Heidegger's everydayness), we normally hear people correctly when we take what they say as making a claim on our more or less literal (let us say *direct*) belief, i.e., on our activities in a lived-through way. If we tried the sort of deep listening Atwood is outlining, we would not be helpful so much as annoying. This is the basis for what he is calling our 'hypnosis' by the externally real, though of course it is strengthened by the cultural valorization of the scientific attitude, objectivity, and so forth.

But we should note that Atwood's attention to 'what is said, in and for itself' already assumes something like Freud's 'reality-testing' on the part of the therapist; it is just that this gets taken up into and performed by the context of the encounter. When someone enters the analyst's office or is met as a patient in a hospital, the *situation* calls on the analyst to make the kind of step back that Atwood describes. Here is someone whose claims about needing to hide because the dogs are after her should be taken as 'subjective truth,' i.e., as symptoms or messages to be interpreted obliquely, rather than as direct claims that should be acted on by hiding or defending from dogs. In other words, one recognizes that taking the person seriously means "hiding" her from the "dogs," granting her some emotional freedom and safety by discovering what 'dogs'

---

[934] This quotation and the next from Atwood, *The Abyss*, pp. 49-50.

means *for her*, rather than interpreting her words in line with more publicly available meanings. The difference is less clear, for example, if the person has just dashed around a corner and bumped into me – I will need first to investigate whether there are physical dogs about to come around the bend and endanger both of us.

The crucial move Atwood makes, however, following Freud, is not to get stuck at this level of everyday response or reality-testing, not to be primarily focused on whether the patient's words correspond to what is publicly available, but instead to try to enter interpretively into the private, disorganized world disclosed by the person's speech. The initial, superseded moment of reality-testing remains in force, since the goal is not simply to join the person's world more or less uncritically (as it could be in reading a novel or watching a play, for example). The goal is, instead, to *interpret* that world, articulating a line of sight that is not (or is only partially) available to the patient.

But what does it mean for this symbolic meaning to be hidden from the patient? In psychosis, as we have seen (section I.G.1), it means that the very possibility of effective symbolization is foreclosed. I build and build but find no peace, no recognition from a stable world. That hiddenness has a parallel in neurosis, where it means that particular symbolizations are repressed – at some level, I do not *want* to know what it means.

This not wanting to know displays the stakes of Freud's inference to unconscious thinking, and specifically to conflictual unconscious thinking (the 'dynamic' unconscious). At least some of the time, he has to be able to take it as true, i.e., to trust the neurotic's speech, when she claims not to know (or not to have known). In the *Introductory Lectures*, Freud gives an example of a woman who found herself compelled, many times a day, to run into an adjoining room, stand a certain way, summon her maid, and then send her off again on some meaningless errand. At first, the patient could not say what this meant, even though it turned out to be derived from a memory involving the shame of her husband. This memory was presumably available to

her the whole time, but she could not recognize the connection between them, which had been repressed. In Freud's words: "However often the patient repeated her obsessional action, she knew nothing of its being derived from the experience she had had. The connection between the two was hidden from her." He then goes on to give the presupposition that allows him to infer this hiddenness or repression: "she could only *quite truthfully reply* that she did not know what it was that was making her carry out her action."[935] It is Freud's taking her at her word – at least at one level – that licenses his inference to some kind of interesting, because not simply conscious, conflict.

Already in *Studies on Hysteria*, it becomes very clear that the oblique appearance of the unconscious in the analytic setting – at any rate, the necessity of postulating it in order to explain or even to describe the phenomena of that setting[936] – is predicated on a certain trustworthiness of the analysand, and thus on the analyst's trust that would disclose the patient as trustworthy. Freud admits that his method is unworkable (*unanwendbar*) without the patient's full cooperation and willing attention – again, at the conscious level.[937] We should not forget that such an attitude on Freud's part was rather unusual at the time (indeed, it remains unusual), since hysteria was taken to be either pretense or hereditary degeneracy, rather than psychologically justifiable suffering. For this reason, Freud does quite a bit of work in his early case studies to emphasize the earnestness and good character of his patients, along with the lack of any other evidence for degeneracy.[938] Indeed, he consistently tries to engage the reader's human sympathy, insisting

---

[935] Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:277, emphasis added.
[936] This is actually James Strachey's claim, not Freud's, but it bears repeating. Even an adequate *description* of the phenomena requires the postulate of unconscious thinking, on Freud's account. See SE **14**:162.
[937] Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, SE **2**:153.
[938] Cf. the 'Preliminary Remarks' to the Wolf-Man case history, where Freud lauds the analysand for "patience, submissiveness [*Gefügigkeit*], insight, and confidence [or trust: *Zutrauen*]" (*Wolf-Man*, SE **17**:10, trans. mod.).

upon hysterical attacks as a kind of Jekyll-and-Hyde phenomenon and attempting to make hysteria seem not only intelligible but almost reasonable as a solution to unbearable conflict.

We should note that Freud makes an interesting choice here: rather than assuming a kind of Sartrean bad faith on the patient's part (thus besmirching her character), he postulates a different level of rationality at work within her. This allows it to be true that even when she says that she remembers nothing (or thinks of nothing), she both really is trying to cooperate and yet really does or can remember *something*. If all of his patients were in fact of poor character (shamming, say), then his inference to the dynamic unconscious would be indefensible. The conflict would remain on the conscious level, simply played out between the doctor who wants something and the patient who refuses to cooperate.

If, however, at least some of the time the patient is genuinely trying to work with the analyst, but this effort is punctuated by unintentional failures to cooperate, then Freud can attend to these moments of resistance as evidence of internal conflict – places at which the patient is both willing and unwilling to cooperate. She both wants to know and does not want to know, at two different levels. And if she is not (simply) lying when she claims not to recognize her resistance *as* a conflict, then at least one party to the conflict must be both known (meaning: registered) and unknown (meaning: repressed) to her.

Oddly, listening for resistances (inappropriateness of speech, action, or affect) requires, as Freud puts it, that the analyst "must be *mistrustful* and remain on his guard against [the resistance]."[939] In one way, then, the analyst must let himself feel "pained astonishment" when the patient breaks the fundamental rule of analysis (to say whatever comes into his head without concern for relevance or social appropriateness) and in some way censures his own speech. In my terms, this would be to *rely on* the patient's good will and be disappointed (chapter 1, part I). More than once, Freud refers to such "betrayal" as the withdrawal from a pact or breaking of a

---

[939] *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:287, emphasis added, trans. mod.

promise.[940] But in another way, of course, this is just what the analyst is waiting for – Freud *assumes* (in the sense we have given to assumption-trust [chapter 1, part II]) that the unconscious will show itself by interfering with the flow of speech.[941] He is then only disoriented (i.e., betrayed by the system) if it turns out to be impossible to locate the resistance and yet the patient remains ill. This disorientation is close to what happens to Freud in his encounter with psychosis: speech experiences no unconscious resistance, delusions are clearly legible, and yet those delusions will not go away.[942]

As I am trying to demonstrate, however, Freud can only reach the level of assumption-trust in the efficacy of the psychoanalytic system[943] on the basis of trusting in a personal way at least some of his patients. He must minimally trust their character if he is to discover something else – something subterranean – at work in them; this is then the precondition for coming to trust (in the sense of assume) the intelligibility of many of their symptoms. It is what convinces him that even highly resistant patients have a hidden desire to heal in conflict with their desire to remain ill. For his broad trust of the person is what allows the analytic relationship to survive the disappointments of the resistance long enough to work out a system that incorporates these

---

[940] *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:288 and "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," SE **23**:239, where Freud posits a wholly fictional 'normal ego' that would be "unshakably loyal to the work of analysis," i.e., fully given over to the structure of the analytic engagement, without interference from the unconscious.

[941] SE **16**:291. This shift from relying to assuming may also be seen in Freud's account of dream interpretation earlier in the same work, where he introduces the concept of resistance by discussing the dreamer's failure to associate freely to the interpreter despite having agreed to the fundamental rule. "Instead of being annoyed by the dreamer's disobedience [i.e., remaining on the level of disappointment], we may take advantage of these experiences by learning something new from them – something which is all the more important the less we are expecting it" (*Introductory Lectures*, SE **15**:141). In other words, he acts here like we earlier saw Heidegger act (chapter 2, section II.C), stepping back from "betrayal" to reorient his investment in a way that now accounts for that very "betrayal."

[942] See SE **16**:439, where he admits, "We are faced here by a fact which we do not understand and which therefore leads us to doubt whether we have really understood all the determinants of our possible success with the other neuroses." Cf. SE **16**:447.

[943] This assumptive trust moves from foreground hypothesis to background assumption during the analysis of Elisabeth von R., just at the point where Freud is discovering resistance. Freud "resolved, therefore, to adopt the hypothesis [*Annahme*] that the procedure never failed [*versage*]. […] I proceeded as though I were completely convinced of the reliability [*Verlässlichkeit*] of my technique. I no longer accepted her declaration that nothing had occurred to her, but assured her that something *must* have occurred to her. […] By thus insisting, […] I derived from this analysis a literally unqualified confidence [*Zutrauen*] in my technique" (*Studies*, SE **2**:153-4, trans. mod.).

disappointments – incorporates them to such an extent that he experiences the very *lack* of such disappointments (the lack of resistance) as a kind of deeper resistance. Furthermore, it is Freud's trust in his patients as persons that opens a space in which he can reorganize the system when it fails: when, for example, Emmy von N. makes him the support of her repetition-compulsion, or when Dora flees treatment – likely for her own safety – before it can be concluded. Both of these "betrayals" are system-level failures (disorientations), since psychoanalytic technique did not yet take into account the transference, and yet Freud never simply concludes that the problem lay at the level of conscious conflict. He maintains, in both cases, that his patients at some level were trying to cooperate, but were overcome by their resistances and his own lack of experience.

A) Trust from the Analyst

A similarly convoluted layering appears in the most significant betrayal of Freud's early work: his complicated discovery of infant sexuality.[944] Initially, it is his patients' faithfulness to the rule of free association that leads the therapy back into childhood. He demands that they tell him whatever comes to mind, and they start remembering quite astonishing scenes of sexual abuse from early life. It is on this basis – along with his own memories, arising in self-analysis – that he comes to *assume* that childhood experiences are relevant to present illness. But eventually he discovers that at least some (by no means all!) of his patients who have "remembered" stories of childhood parental abuse were not abused in a way that would show up in the shared world – were not "really" abused. This surely seems like a betrayal of his trust in his patients and in his method. Has he been taken in by hysterical tricks? Are his patients not of such strong character as he had thought?

---

[944] See Freud, "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement," SE **14**.

We might expect this betrayal to produce a profound mistrust. And, indeed, Freud says that because of this discovery he came near to giving up psychoanalysis.[945] It was a discovery "suited [*geeignet*] more than any other to discredit either analysis [i.e., the system], which has led to this result, or the patients, on whose statements the analysis and our whole understanding of the neuroses are founded."[946] Freud thus found himself forced to ask whether he trusted more the people he analyzed or the system of analysis as it was. He finds himself trusting his patients nonetheless, and reconfiguring the system. This trust in them is not necessarily for good reasons. It seems to be in part because he is already so invested in them (and in the meaningfulness that they are revealing to belong to the world of the neuroses), and in part because he trusts his own father too much to suspect him of literal abuse, notwithstanding the Oedipal difficulties the self-analysis is revealing. (If this were a matter of mere reliance, it would be an ill-advised decision.) Freud concludes, then, that the traumatic events must have happened; if not in reality, then in fantasy. His trust of his patients thus exacts a certain price from his ideal of objective science, since it requires abandoning the presupposition that fantasy is significantly less important than shared reality.[947]

Freud makes this step, remaining faithful to his patients, to his method, and to his father, despite what seems like the evidence. Oddly enough, however, his determination to believe his

---

[945] Freud describes it as "complete bewilderment," in which he had "lost the firm ground of reality" (SE **14**:17, trans. mod.). Cf. Freud's famous letter to Wilhelm Fliess of September 21, 1897, in which he claims no longer to believe (*glauben*) in his theory of the neuroses ("my neurotica"). Freud's disorientation here was approached in personal importance only by his later experience of Fliess's professional carelessness in operating on one of Freud's patients, who eventually died from the complications. Note that in the September 21 letter, it is in part his personal trust in Fliess that allowed him to speak: "I want to entrust [*anvertrauen*] to you the great secret…" (Freud, *Complete Letters to Fliess*, p. 264, trans. mod./*Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse*, hrsgs. M. Bonaparte, A. Freud, E. Kris [London: Imago, 1950], p. 229).

[946] *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:367, trans. mod. Freud follows this up by saying "we are tempted to be offended [*beleidigt*]" by the patient's inventions; this 'tempted to be offended' is a nice characterization of what must have been quite fluctuating reactions on Freud's part.

[947] We might think that it was Freud's background assumptions about science (not any personal trust) that kept him afloat in the midst of the disorientation of his foreground psychoanalytic theories (see chapter I, section II.A). But the conviction, which he undeniably maintained, that there must be *some* explanation for his patients' behavior is in no way sufficiently specific to make sense of his decision to revise one of those background scientific assumptions, rather than simply deciding that his patients were willfully lying.

patients leads to the discovery that their traumatic fantasies *are* lies (in the sense of embellishments) in order to hide something – just not lies created by his patients in the present. Instead, the embellishments were made *as small children* in order to hide their sexual activity from disapproving parents, thus opening up a space for their own desire. Instead of simply confirming and restoring his trust, then, the decision to further invest himself by changing his presuppositions turns out to lead into mistrust after all, as might be expected with betrayal. He really was lied to. And yet the mistrust is not at all due to what he had initially thought was the betrayal: namely, that his patients were currently, consciously lying to him. Freud's mistrust – keeping an ear out for childhood deception – is, rather, founded on the initial movement of trust itself, the movement of trusting his adult patients.

There are two consequences of this strange series of discoveries. First, childhood sexual interest and fear of castration (i.e., fear of the fragmenting punishment by adults for daring to have one's own desire) appear as the real grounds of the fantasized trauma, but they do so only after Freud has given up on the necessity of actually *finding* such grounds. In other words, just when he no longer needs for there to be a strict correlation between trauma and reality in order to trust that his patients are telling the truth in the present, he finds one: they genuinely do have the "memories" they are reporting, and those "memories" really are connected to something that happened in childhood, even if only as screens for it. Second, what he finds shows that in order for him to understand his patients as honest in the present, they must have been lying in the past. That is, relying on their word now is founded on trusting them as persons, since it requires thinking both that they lied in the past and that they had an understandable reason for it (the conflict of fear and desire) – thus that they are trustworthy or understandable in general despite lying in the specific instance. Here is a kind of 'kettle logic' that seems only to lead deeper into

the mess,[948] yet such trust allows for a real cure in the present by freeing the patient from the necessity of the past deception.[949] (Approaching his patients with personal mistrust, a kind of generalized suspicion, would simply have provoked a retrenchment of the deception.) It turns out that it really is sustainable to cultivate an independent life of desire, and it costs less than the destruction of self feared in real castration, even if it does cost something (namely, *symbolic* castration, submission to the laws of the shared world, including those of language).

From a theoretical, distanced point of view, we can of course make sense of Freud's complex trusting investments as differences of scope (he trusts x insofar as y, but not with regard to z). Historically, we can recognize that his fundamentally trusting relation to his patients as persons, once it had justified his inference to the dynamic unconscious, could often fade behind his assumption-trust of the theory, even if it remained as ground when the theory ran into difficulties. Practically, we can be fair enough (and faithful enough to psychoanalytic insights) to grant him ambivalence within the general scope of his personal trust – he loved his patients in some ways and at some times and hated them in others; he was immune neither to paternalizing condescension nor to what he himself calls "impatient contempt."[950]

These are not minor concerns. Yet they should not obscure the thesis I am defending here: the basic psychoanalytic insight into the existence and nature of unconscious thinking is justified by a particular kind of investment – namely, a personal trust that is really quite stubborn

---

[948] Cf. *Interpretation of Dreams*, SE **4**:119-20. If the claim in need of defense is, *Psychoanalysis is right to infer the dynamic unconscious because (at least some) patients are trustworthy in their present free associations*, then the 'kettle' defense would go something like this: Freud's claim does not require that there be a real correlate to his patients' freely associated 'memories' about trauma, since fantasy is subjectively close to reality in importance. And because there *is* a real correlate. And anyway, although the real correlate establishes that the fantasy was a lie at the time, it also shows that the child had trustworthy motivations for that lie.

[949] The multiple levels of self-investment at work here (trusting the person, assuming the tenets of psychoanalysis, and relying on the person's particular claims), including the humbling revelations of his own self-analysis, allow us to understand how Freud could proceed with his analyses despite frequent disappointments and the growing conviction that "in the end one is laying bare the patient's evil inclinations, his will to remain ill" (Freud, "Letter of October 3, 1897," in *Complete Letters to Fliess*, p. 269).

[950] Freud, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," SE **23**:216.

– on the part of the analyst. It is the same investment that grounds persistent efforts to make sense out of psychotic speech, to attend to the particularity of a delusion in the context of a life history, rather than merely relying on drugs to subdue people's desperate (and bizarre) efforts to restore the world.[951] It is the investment that bears with negative transference in all its destructive glory, recognizing that the annihilation of the world may take years of patient work to recover from, and even then is neither guaranteed nor measurable.

But nor should we let our philosophical interests obscure the fact that the same trusting investment, the commitment to spend years seeking meaning in a person's life that seems like nonsense, requires no small investment from the analysand – which is not always available. For the patient, too, must trust, and this is also in a complex and unusual way.

B) Trust from the Analysand

Freud himself tries to minimize this requirement in his discussions of technique. He claims that the analysand's "initial trust or distrust [of psychoanalysis] is almost negligible compared with the internal resistances which hold the neurosis firmly in place," and he even says that it is better if someone enters analysis with a "benevolent skepticism."[952] His concern is that the analysand's initial approach is both blind to and useful to the resistance – whether an initial "happy trustfulness" that is soon forgotten or shattered by the difficulties of analysis, or an initial skepticism that, like other symptoms, preserves the current state, either may be a mode of resistance.[953] Freud advises the analyst to tell the skeptic that "the analysis requires no trust [*Vertrauen*], that […] his distrust […] will not be an interference, provided he conscientiously

---

[951] I say 'merely,' for there are many analysts who use drugs to enable therapy, and it is not clear that all attempts to recover the world should be supported or even only interpreted – some are deeply destructive and need to be interrupted as well as interpreted.
[952] Quotations from, respectively, "On Beginning the Treatment," SE **12**:126, and *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:244.
[953] SE **12**:126 and SE **16**:440.

carries out what the rule of the treatment requires of him."[954] That is to say, *at first* the analysand need not trust the analyst, so long as the former is nevertheless willing to act in a trustworthy manner by trying to hold to the rule of analysis and ceding authority to the analyst who embodies that rule. The analysand's proving himself consistently untrustworthy at a conscious level, on the other hand, renders analysis nearly impossible, not because the analyst cannot interpret such behavior, but because the analysand is inadequately invested in the process to care about the interpretations.

Nevertheless, Freud does recognize that the trust of the analysand is eventually necessary. Thus, he advises the analyst to warn the patient early on of the coming difficulties so that she does not feel tricked later, presumably because her trust matters somewhat to the work (lest the resistance grow too great).[955] Elsewhere, he laments the impracticality of making common cause with patients' relatives to stop them interfering in the process. It is impractical, he says, "because of the risk of losing the trust [*Vertrauen*] of the patient, who – quite correctly, moreover – expects the person in whom he has put his trust [*Vertrauensmann*] to take his side."[956]

In a more general but also a more thoroughgoing way, Freud recognizes that speech has a "magical [healing] power" only within the context of a certain relationship, in which the patient's desire to know is connected with a desire to belong. Thus he points out in the very first of his Introductory Lectures that the material with which analysis works is the most intimate, and that people will admit to someone else to whom they are emotionally attached what they will not even admit to themselves.[957]

---

[954] SE **12**:126, trans. mod. Cf. p. 138: "[The difficulty] is not so serious if all he has to tell us is how mistrustful he is of analysis or the horrifying things he has heard about it."
[955] SE **12**:129.
[956] SE **16**:459. Cf. the Wolf-Man case history, where Freud "cannot advise too strongly against" filling in memory gaps by questioning the patient's family because "one has disturbed the trust [*Vertrauen*] in the analysis and set up over it a court of appeal" (*Wolf-Man*, SE **17**:14n2, trans. mod.).
[957] Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, SE **15**:17-18. We should note that in analysis this attachment, too, is part of the 'psychical reality' discussed just above. Freud advises analysts that transference-love should be

I would add, finally, that the analysand's relation to the analyst requires a very strange trust. In being given over to the analyst, what I need is for her to frustrate me for the right reasons, although it is unlikely that I recognize this as the content of the growing trust relation. This may begin as simple reliance: if my analyst listens to me as a friend would, understanding what I say, commiserating, and proposing lines of action, I need a different analyst. So, I am relying on her primarily to listen for what I cannot hear in my own speech, rather than to listen for the everyday meaning of what I am telling her. This eventually requires assumptive trust (in analysis as a process) as well as personal trust of the analyst, albeit not in the way I would trust a close friend. I should not long submit to the frustrations of being misunderstood unless I can assume it to be a productive misunderstanding. And even if I as analysand assume that analysis works when done well, I must eventually trust this particular analyst *as a person*, one who seeks my good competently (within the bounds of the relationship) even when it seems like what she is doing or saying is not what is best for me. In order to remain given over to her judgment of the best course against my own wishes, I will have to find myself invested in her in a way that discloses her as personally trustworthy (chapter 1, part III).

C) The Dangers of Psychoanalysis

This trust on my part (as analysand) is required precisely because relationships that are structurally founded on trust are open to abuse, even when the abused party remains to some degree mistrustful. This is of course the perennial and, according to Freud, inherently ineliminable danger of psychoanalysis, much as sophistry is the permanent shadow of

---

neither repulsed nor responded to: the analyst "must keep firm hold of [it], but treat it as something unreal, as a situation which has to be gone through in the treatment and traced back to its unconscious origins" (Freud, "Observations on Transference Love," SE **12**:166).

philosophy.[958] Over and over again, Freud tries to deal with the specter of reducing psychoanalysis to suggestion therapy, and while it seems to me that he advances good arguments against equating analysis with the particular forms of real hypnotic suggestion, he cannot make vanish the concerns about analysands being taken advantage of, simply because analysis can always be reduced to abusive suggestion therapy *by its practitioners*. He puts the danger in the following terms, which go right to the heart of the talking cure: the analysand might "not be allowed a chance to speak."[959]

Freud is at some pains to show that psychoanalysis does not *intrinsically* prevent the analysand from speaking. The most obvious concern is that the analyst's interpretations work on a principle similar to 'heads I win, tails you lose.'[960] For example, Freud gives a series of translations for the analyst that seem to override as 'resistance' whatever the patient says.

> *I do not mean x* = I do mean it
> *It was not y* = it was
> *I would never have thought that* = not the conscious 'I' but the unconscious involves precisely that thought
> *No* = the interpretation is incomplete
> *Yes* = ambiguous, depending on other confirmations[961]

And if the patient produces an association or slip of the tongue that seems to add to the interpretation, this means 'you are right,' even if it comes in the course of an explicit denial.

Now this seems rather perverse. The only two responses that should be translated as 'no' or 'that interpretation is wrong', according to Freud, are indifference and a lack of productivity in the further course of the work. How then can the patient have her chance to contradict the

---

[958] "This is the objection that is most often raised against psychoanalysis, and it must be admitted that, though it is groundless [*unzutreffend* – it does not hit the mark], it cannot be rejected as unreasonable [or incomprehensible: *unverständig*]" (SE **16**:452).

[959] Freud, "Constructions in Analysis," SE **23**:262, trans. mod. Strachey translates *nicht zu Wort kommen lassen* as "not allowing his patients to have their say"; a literal rendition would be 'not allowing them to come to word,' which would remind us that the whole of the analytic task involves letting or helping to be brought into words that which has been shut off from speech (i.e., the unconscious).

[960] Freud takes on this concern directly in "Constructions in Analysis," SE **23**:257.

[961] Compiled from "Negation," SE **19**:235, and "Constructions in Analysis," SE **23**:261-64.

interpretation? Is the analyst not simply free to fantasize aloud about the analysand with no resistance from reality?[962]

Freud gives several answers, most of which presuppose a certain temporal duration to the analysis, since interpretations or reconstructions are to be taken as hypotheses awaiting confirmation from further material. But his most interesting reply for our purposes is given only obliquely. He points to a feature of obsessional neurosis – namely, that as an attempt to be always in control, it tries to control the interpretation, as well – that brings about a kind of vicious regress.[963] This regress takes the following form: *something has just occurred to me, and it seems like it means x. But then that is probably resistance, so it must not. But what if my assignment of resistance is* itself *resistance…?* The obsessional has no way to cut this except arbitrarily, and arbitrariness will only produce further self-doubt. Freud does not say this explicitly, but if the action or slip I am analyzing in myself really is motivated by something that I would rather not know about, then there is no way I can cut this regress on my own. I *need* another person (in this case, the analyst), who is not directly subject to my desires, to introduce the cut for me. If I am left to my own attempts, then at least at this level, there is no reason why my ignorance, self-imposed through repression, should not be invincible. It has been impenetrable for this long, and even though it betrays itself in symptoms, for me those symptoms are *already* compromises, made precisely to preserve my ignorance. If this reasoning is right, then a relation in which the analyst purposefully misunderstands my speech is as necessary to my health as Socrates claimed to be to the health of the Athenian citizens.[964] Although analysis is inherently frustrating, as the

---

[962] In the context of reconstructions of very early events, Freud frames the objection this way: "What was argued at first was that [very early scenes] were not realities but phantasies. But what is argued now is evidently that they are phantasies not of the patient but of the analyst himself, who forces them upon the person under analysis on account of some complexes of his own" (*Wolf-Man*, SE **17**:52).
[963] See "Negation," SE **19**:235.
[964] Plato, *Apology*, 29d-31a.

translations Freud proposes suggest, and although it is potentially abusive, it is not *intrinsically* abusive any more than philosophy is *intrinsically* sophistry.

The reason why the danger of abusive suggestion can never be simply excised from psychoanalysis, however, is that the power of analysis lies in exploitation of the emotional attachment called transference, and this, along with as the desire to belong, is at the root of suggestion. Indeed, Freud tells us that suggestibility essentially is the capacity for transference, only understood in the limited context of hypnosis.[965] At least from a theoretical viewpoint, the necessity of this transference may be understood quite directly in the case of psychosis: the patient's desire to belong to the shared world has to find in the analyst a basically trustworthy representative of that world, and this must eventually overcome her desire to avoid the shared world. (Practically, of course, the problem of transference in psychosis is far more bedeviling.)

> Freud recalls that during his time with Bernheim (the famous hypnotist), he already felt

> a muffled hostility to this tyranny of suggestion. When a patient who showed himself unamenable was met with the shout: 'What are you doing? You are counter-suggesting yourself,' I said to myself that this was an evident injustice and an act of violence. For the man certainly had a right to counter-suggestions if people were trying to subdue him with suggestions.[966]

We could say that this violence haunted Freud for the rest of his life, even at the time when his own therapeutic work was explicitly a matter of hypnotic suggestion. Already in the report of his first hypnotism case, Emmy von N., he tries to soothe his conscience by explaining hypnosis as simply a way to help her trust him enough to speak freely.

> I did not make more impression on her in that state than I might have expected to do [with someone unhypnotized] who listened to me with complete trust [*die mir mit grossem Vertrauen gelauscht*]. The only difference was that Frau von N. was unable, in what passed as her normal state, to meet me with any such favourable attitude.[967]

---

[965] SE **16**:451. Cf. chapter 4 of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, SE **18**:88-92.
[966] SE **18**:89, trans. mod.
[967] Freud, *Studies*, SE **2**:99, trans. mod.

Emmy had reason to be mistrustful of doctors, and as such, according to Freud, was unable without hypnosis to share the necessary attitude of another woman who sought him out, namely, the attitude that "one may tell a doctor everything."[968]

I conclude, then, that the analysand must come to personally trust the analyst and to assume the efficacy of the analytic process, while the analyst, for her part, can only come to believe in unconscious thinking by trusting at least some patients personally, which will then allow *her* to assume the efficacy of the process. Freud claims that his technique requires from the analyst "personal concern for the patients," and from the patients "above all their confidence [*Zutrauen*]," i.e., that they "put themselves in his hands and give their trust to him."[969] It is crucial for the functioning of the analytic process, he says, that the analyst trusts (and insists) that the patient can remember something, even when the patient thinks he cannot. In this way, the analyst provides counterpressure against the resistance. (Indeed, it was in this way that Freud *discovered* the resistance, by observing the costs of his own investment: namely, how unusually tired he was after talking with his neurotic patients.[970])

If my account is correct, then (appearances notwithstanding) it is only through a joint personal investment that the unconscious part of the truth of human beings can be integrated with the self – or, in the case of psychosis, that the self as fragmented by the unconscious can be integrated into the shared world. Lacan is right to say of Freud that he "was taken up in the quest for a truth which engaged him totally, including there his own self, and hence also his presence with respect to the patient."[971]

---

[968] SE **2**:127, trans. mod.
[969] SE **2**:265-6, trans. mod. (German: *sich dem Arzte zu überliefern und ihm ein Vertrauen einzuräumen*).
[970] SE **2**:111-12.
[971] Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*, ed. J.-A. Miller, tr. J. Forrester (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991), p. 21. Hereafter, *Seminar 1*.

III. Conclusion

Let me briefly characterize what has been my strategy in this chapter. I have sought to understand psychosis as a radical plunge *out* of the structured, shared world, a betrayal of primitive trust such as Heidegger's thinking is unable to account for. In doing so, I began from philosophy and the insights of phenomenological psychiatry; much of the latter is indebted to Heidegger for its philosophical basis. When that led me to points of contact with Freudian psychoanalysis, I took up the latter as my guiding thread, since it is able to give a structural account of matters that Heidegger and the phenomenologists cannot address. I also paid close attention to the difficulties of understanding psychosis at all, including the basic problem of how to trust what is said by people who are disconnected from shared reality. This latter question opened the way for an attempt to link up Freud's theoretical constructions – constructions to which Heidegger strongly objects, especially the dynamic, structured unconscious – with Freud's therapeutic practice, which Heidegger finds much more congenial. Investments in the shared world, especially an involvement of personal trust and a patient letting-appear of oblique phenomena, turned out to be the ground for seemingly objective, distanced assumptions about the human subject.

What is still needed is a closer look at Freud's theorizing, his metapsychology, from a phenomenological perspective. Is it not, as one often hears, primarily oriented toward a closed-off, Cartesian consciousness, plagued by inner drive-conflicts that occasionally spill out into the world? Robert Stolorow has articulated this concern well: "the Freudian psyche is fundamentally a Cartesian mind in that it is a container of contents (instinctual energies, wishes, etc.), a thinking *thing* that, precisely because it is a thing, is ontologically [...] separated from its world."[972] If this is the only way of understanding Freud's theory, it is hard to see how his thinking could have much to offer Heidegger. Furthermore, although we have pieced together an account of psychosis

---

[972] Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma*, p. 24.

guided by some of Freud's insights, this is at least somewhat counter-intuitive from a Freudian perspective. How can specifically *Freudian* psychoanalysis orient itself to psychosis, when Freud himself was mostly convinced his practice could do nothing very helpful for psychotics? Finally, we still need to get clear about the entry into originary truth that takes place for each person. If Freud is right to take thinking to be a costly achievement, where and why can it go wrong? What kinds of conflicts motivate the child's primary foreclosure or acceptance of the shared world? These are the concerns of the next chapter.

Chapter Six
"Getting and Spending, We Lay Waste Our Powers"
wherein the Drives are found to be World-Oriented despite their Hiddenness,
Psychic Development looks increasingly Fraught,
and Poor Investment Decisions leave One Vulnerable to Collapse[973]

> [W]hat becomes of a subject […] when not only that sense of identity but also
> more fundamentally that sense of existing, in a relationship, in relation to others,
> firmly grounded on land, which upholds all people, is simply not sustainable?
> What becomes of anxiety if it reaches the borders of non-existence, if the
> annihilation process deforms perception of one's body, [of] oneself, of others?
> What then of […] the transference […, if it] perpetually takes place beneath
> the [threat] of the inescapable, of powerlessness, annihilation,
> of that which never happened, or happened too often,
> of uncontrollable anxiety or persecutory emptiness?[974]

Introduction

The previous chapter showed that a Freudian understanding of psychosis affords us quite a bit of help in making structural sense of that phenomenon's various puzzles, including some matters that elude phenomenological psychiatry, while still leaving us a way to attend to the singularity of the person who is suffering under the pressure of annihilation. It also sketched a defense of the inference to unconscious thinking on the ground of the experience of personal trusting within the framework of the analytic relationship. In other words, it went some way toward bringing together Freud's metapsychology and his reflections on psychoanalytic technique, and it did so in the context of the lived problems of psychosis, i.e., the tremendous difficulties as they show up for both the sufferer and the one seeking to understand and help. This served to highlight the central importance of trust, both primitive and personal, in the individual's integration (or reintegration) into the world.

From these considerations, we were able to catch sight of the real possibility of a genuinely unpredictable break with originary truth, one that cannot adequately be interpreted as a

---

[973] The title of this chapter is a line from William Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much With Us," in *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Cornell University Press, 1983).

[974] Lina Balestriere, "The Work of the Psychoanalyst in the Field of Psychosis," tr. A.-M. Di Biasio, *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* **88** (2007): 407-421.

mere privation of being-there. We saw that this break with the world is a failure of primitive trust, usually beginning already in one's first years of life. But that calls for a more detailed account of our entrance into the shared world in those formative years – or rather, as we shall see (part II), an account of the owning (affirmation) of or rejection of the shared world to which the infant finds itself already exposed.

In the course of our further investigation, we will see what it means for this affirmation or rejection to take place as the resolution of a central conflict: the question of whether or not to submit to language as the law of the shared world's structure. We will find, however, as I have already indicated (chapter 2, section I.A), that this is not a choice one can ever make rationally or deliberately; rather, it is "made" on the basis of a disposition of trust or distrust, an emotional insight about oneself as primitively given over to (or utterly overwhelmed by) the world, where that world is figured in one's primary caretakers. In other words, *if* it takes place, the event of adopting the world as one's own, coming to belong to it fully, involves a necessary circulation between personal trust and primitive trust. My thesis is that this circulation only makes sense if these two kinds of trust share the same phenomenological structure, as I claimed at the outset of this study (chapter 1, part III).

But if we are to bring together in one interpretation some of Freud's various theories about the development of psychic structure – the development in which this moment of fundamental affirmation or rejection plays a central role – we will have to examine Freud's metapsychology at some length. This unifying interpretation is necessary for at least two reasons.

One reason is that we need to see whether Freud's metapsychology, particularly the view of the human person upon which his thinking about psychosis is founded, can withstand closer scrutiny from a phenomenological point of view. Hence, in what follows, I will read Freud in a philosophical way that I take to be faithful to his thinking, without getting entangled in certain vexed questions concerning his understanding of psychoanalysis as a science, or concerning the

possibility that his conception of science is outdated.[975] More specifically, I want to show that the Freudian subject is not necessarily closed in on itself in the Cartesian way that Heidegger finds so deeply troubling. Instead, Freud is consistently sensitive to the way the world precisely *interrupts* our attempts to close ourselves off to it – and these attempts are defensive in nature. Even narcissism, which is a developmental stage consisting precisely of investment in one's self-image, is a development that can never be complete according to Freud.[976]

The other reason for the following investigation is that Freud's own thinking needs reinterpretation if it is really to come to grips with psychosis. We have said that the real possibility of a psychotic break should cause great difficulty for Heidegger's account (chapter 4), and we have articulated a theory of what is involved in such a break by following guideposts offered by Freud (chapter 5, part I). But let us be clear: psychosis also creates serious problems for straightforward Freudian theory, a fact which Freud himself openly acknowledged.[977] Those Freudians who have tried especially to make sense of psychosis at the level of theory (among them Melanie Klein, Jacques Lacan, Wilfrid Bion, and more recently Piera Aulagnier) have done so through an interrogation of human psychogenesis, and while we will not simply trace their accounts, we will follow the same approach. This will help us to clarify the (meaningful) predisposing origins of psychosis that were introduced in the previous chapter.

That clarification will, in turn, help us to better understand what is involved in our originary being-in-the-truth and why it might be, even constitutively, more fragile than Heidegger

---

[975] These are the questions with which much philosophy of psychoanalysis concerns itself. See, e.g., Jacques Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious*, tr. C. Cosman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Brakel, *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and the A-rational Mind*, op. cit.; Lavinia Gomez, *The Freud Wars: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[976] As we saw (chapter 5, section I.D.2), it is also the achievement to which one returns in paranoia.

[977] These problems confront central aspects of Freudian theory and practice. Psychotic speech seems to experience little or no resistance from a concealed unconscious; it is rather as if the unconscious were right on the surface. Yet interpretation of this easily available material produces either no effect or a disproportionally drastic effect, in a way that is hard to anticipate. Freud thought that a transference relation with psychotics was impossible; he was wrong about that, but even when it is possible, it tends to be negative and violently destructive, and it is difficult to say when interpreting it will be helpful or harmful.

thinks. We need to see in what way the vulnerability to a radical break has its origins in universal conflicts that are necessarily involved in the constitution of the human being. In other words, we will have to explain why the terrifying experience of a few outliers is a danger for all of us, such as to license conclusions about the nature of the human relation to being as such. If I can in this way show that our fundamental integration into the shared world is one point at which psychoanalytic theory has direct ontological implications, then it will be *philosophically* fruitful to attend to Freud's account of the genesis of thinking in the human being as a precarious achievement, one that may cost more than a person can afford.

I. Psychic Achievement as Response

I begin, then, with what is called the 'economic' question of psychic achievement in Freud's metapsychology, prior to the elaboration of his triadic topography in *The Ego and the Id* (1923).[978] By interrogating Freud's theorizing at some length, I will emphasize psychic achievement (including both particular disclosures and psychic development) as a *response* to the world. My thesis is that such achievement is always a motivated result, by which I mean a purposeful (even if not necessarily conscious) investment (*Besetzung*) on the part of the self. Such investments can themselves only occur on the basis of being already invested in and by the world in which the individual finds herself. I have already briefly discussed such achievement in terms of its *costs*: to be permanently exposed to a potentially overwhelming set of solicitations, to suffer both the absence of the loved object and the inadequacy of the unified self (chapter 5, section I.G.1). The course of the present chapter will in the end return us to that version of the economic question in more detail. But first: investment.

---

[978] I will focus on the "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895; first published posthumously in 1950), the early essay "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning" (1911), and "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915).

A) Being-Invested as Being-Driven

Let me start with an example that will isolate the phenomenal difference between a reaction and a response, since this distinction will shortly become important for making sense of two different basic modes of relation to the world. In the movie version of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*, the character Aragorn, after having run for several days in an effort to rescue his kidnapped friends, comes across evidence of their death. He kicks a steel helmet lying on the ground and yells in frustration. The viewer understands this as a meaningful response to the whole situation. In one of the commentaries on the film, however, we are told that Viggo Mortensen, the actor playing Aragorn, in fact broke his toe when he kicked the helmet during filming. The responsive yell of frustration, then, is at another level (or on another scene) simply a reaction of pain, a physiological attempt to remove or cover up unpleasant feeling. It would take purposeful effort to smother it, whereas no *purposeful* effort goes into producing it.

I take reaction to be the broader category here. Reaction is simply an action that is *occasioned by* the given situation or event; it may be meaningful or absurd, sufficient or incomplete (and each admits of degrees). Mere reaction is passivity (e.g., pain) followed by activity (yelling); it is reflexive, mostly unconscious or preconscious, thus not consciously directed and often not even voluntary. It is not necessarily meaningless, but it is not taken up *as* meaningful. *Response* is a specific subset of reaction not reducible to mere reaction. It requires taking-up and furthering the situation *as* meaningful, and it is unable to be situated as a dialectic of activity and passivity. It must itself be meaningful, although it may be mistaken, and it may be sufficient or incomplete. Its meaningfulness rests in an (at least) implicit appeal to norms of interaction, even if the response goes contrary to the relevant norms. This means, we should already note, that response involves some level of submission to organized and limited relations of meaning.

391

There are further striations within the category of response: some responses involve conscious, goal-oriented deliberation, but some may be processed at the unconscious level. Although 'response' has a verbal connotation in English, it seems to make sense to speak of many other (non-verbalizing) animals being capable of response as I have characterized it here, and it is likely that the importance of the connotation lies in communication, which emphasizes meaningfulness.

Neurotic behavior, for example, is in some way a reaction to the current situation. Even though it is meaningless in the present context – it makes no appeal to the situationally appropriate norms – this context has somehow occasioned it, and so it presents itself as *mere reaction*. Nevertheless, Freud interprets it as a *response* to another situation (either remembered or fantasized), one whose norms it does take into account. But since it is a response to a situation too fraught with conflict, it is governed from a level of the psyche other than that of consciousness.

As a mostly non-neurotic example, think of a car accident. There may be intertwined iterations of reaction and response: the initial affective reaction may involve a release of adrenaline (wanting to fight or flee), anger, shock, the impulse to scream or cry, and so forth; but there is an interruption. One has to call the police, trade insurance information, or something similar – i.e., one is called to *respond* meaningfully – and so a fuller affective reaction may be deferred. Later, when the situation is safer, a more sufficient processing of affect can come about (actually screaming or crying, fighting or fleeing). This delayed reaction may be technically a response (emotionally processing and sorting out how to understand the meaning of the event), or it may take place on the merely reactive level (blowing up at a family member on slight provocation). Either way, there remains a need to get something off of one's chest. This means that one cannot simply absorb the violence of the encounter – including the violence of one's own reaction to it – but must channel it somehow (what Freud calls *sublimation*). It may also be that

such channeling happens only *much* later, provoked by the ways in which the traumatic event has given rise to symptoms that disrupt one's life. In that case, Freud thinks of the affective reaction as partially taking place in those symptoms themselves, and he calls the channeling a *working-through* of the patterns that one's life is now neurotically displaying. He understands this latter version as the very task of psychoanalytic therapy.

But what is being channeled here? What is it that needs to be discharged? It is what Freud thinks of as psychic energy: this is a quantity of affect, but it arises from a set of conflicts within myself and a set of conflicts directly with the world. The simplest version of the latter might be the wish to arrive at my destination, in conflict with my car's no longer being operable. Examples of internal conflicts might include anger at the other driver, warring against frustration with myself, my wish to scream or cry, struggling with my wish to respond like an adult, or my wish to hide the humiliation that nonetheless bubbles up in me, reminding me of the relation between this situation and previous significant situations in which I have been helpless.

'Drive' (*der Trieb*) is the concept that Freud employs to make sense of this affect that calls (imperatively) for expression, or for what we have been calling *investment*. My affective relation to the world in each case lays claim to some response. The internal conflicts suggested in the car accident example are thus (fairly superficial) manifestations of drive-conflicts. But if drives are the Freudian way of thinking our investment in and by the world, on the basis of which our response is claimed in particular ways, then we might suggest that being-driven is another name for what Heidegger has called affectivity (*Befindlichkeit*) and interpreted as an existential structure of being-there.

In his 1911 examination of Judge Schreber's psychosis (already discussed in chapter 5, sections I.D-I.G), Freud laments his own lack of a grounded theory of the drives in their

interactions.[979] Why? One reason might be that this would enable him to make more sense of the infantile drive-conflict that can initially weaken our belonging to the world – that is, severely weaken our stance within originary truth by preventing or weakening primitive trust. A second reason, one that he announces explicitly, is that a theory of how the sexual drives relate to the self-preservative (or ego) drives would allow him to clarify the extent of the regression in psychosis. Which kinds of drives can influence which? Are *all* investments in the world withdrawn in psychotic regression, or only certain kinds?

But the question of the extent of the regression is a question of how radical the break with the world is for the psychotic, and this is precisely what is at issue in our general investigation. If we are to understand psychosis in a more rigorously Freudian manner, then, we need to examine the drive-theory that he *did* subsequently work out.

For Freud, all internal psychic energy comes from the drives.[980] This means, as we shall see, that all instances of disclosure, as well as all psychic development, arise somehow *through* the drives. (This is a way of saying that my very belonging to the world in part takes place in being-driven.) What then is a drive?

Freud makes his most interesting attempt at answering the question four years after the Schreber reading, in his 1915 paper "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (more literally: "Drives and Drive-Fates"). The paper situates the drives within a modern version of Aristotle's four causes ('modern' because it lacks an intrinsic *telos*), then articulates on that basis the various possible 'fates' or alterations of those drives. Of particular interest in the present context is the characterization that Freud gives of what he calls an "indispensable" yet "conventional" "basic

---

[979] Freud, "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia [Schreber]," SE **12**:74.
[980] Cf. among other places, Freud, "The Question of Lay Analysis," ch. 3, SE **20**.

concept" (*Grundbegriff*) of psychoanalysis: the drive itself, or (as Strachey has translated it) the instinct.[981]

After some remarks about the theory-ladenness of observation and the necessary initial indeterminacy of an investigator's basic concepts, Freud approaches the concept 'drive' via four terms that are "used in connection [*Zusammenhang*]"[982] with it. (He does not say more about their relation to it at this stage.) These terms are well-known: 'pressure' (*Drang*), 'aim' (*Ziel*), 'object' (*Objekt*), and 'source' (*Quelle*).[983] I shall focus here on 'pressure,' since this is what Freud designates as essential to a drive. "Every drive," he says, "is a piece of activity."[984] In other words, a drive is what it does, and what it does is to exert pressure, to lay claim to work from the mind "in consequence of [the mind's] connection [*Zusammenhang*] with the body." Thus, he defines drive as a psychical representative of an organic stimulus: it is, we could say, the very expression of psychosomatic unity.[985] The 'pressure' or essence of the drive is then simply a measure of the intensity of the body's claim. Just how urgent is this need for, say, water? And how much water will be required to satisfy it? It is this character of drive as a claim that I would like to interrogate.

But we shall have to proceed with caution, since one of Heidegger's principle criticisms of Freud is that the latter's emphasis on such internal conflicts presupposes a subject that is closed off from the world. This would be a version of the Cartesian subject, transformed from a thinking

---

[981] Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," SE **14**:117-118. Freud also thinks we also have instincts more strictly speaking, for which he uses the Latinate term *der Instinkt*.

[982] SE **14**:122.

[983] One might interpret these four as transformations of the four Aristotelian causes, according to this schema: *eidos*, the Aristotelian essence or formal cause, becomes *Drang*, the psychic pressure or claim to work, which is the essence, activity, or 'shape' of the drive; *telos*, the goal or final cause (intrinsic in natural things, according to Aristotle), becomes *Ziel*, the contingent and temporary but nonetheless determinate satisfaction at which the drive aims; *hulē*, the material cause, becomes *Objekt*, the material support of the aim (i.e., the material for its activity) as its object (what either does or receives the action); *hothen hē arkhē kinēseōs*, that from which the principle of motion arises in a thing (i.e., what has come to be called the efficient cause), becomes *Quelle*, the somatic need at the origin of the drive. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics A*.3 and *Δ*.2; the latter repeats and expands *Physics β*.3.

[984] SE **14**:122.

[985] SE **14**:122. This definition was already at work in 1911: see "Schreber," SE **12**:74.

thing (*res cogitans*) into a desiring thing, perhaps, but still a theater of private urges sealed up in a

container. Thus, in a conversation with psychotherapist Medard Boss, Heidegger argues:

> In the customary, psychological representation of the 'I', the relationship to the world is absent. Therefore, the representation of the *ego cogito* [I think] is abstract, whereas the 'I-am-in-the-world' lets the 'I' be conjoined with the world, i.e., as something originarily concrete.[986]

This is a version of Heidegger's broader critique of Cartesian philosophy, in which he

characterizes the human being as essentially care (*Sorge*), always already thrown into the world,

temporally opened up to things and other people as mattering in various ways (see chapter 3,

section II.A). Because we are originarily exposed to things (we are in the truth), we cannot

practically engage in the kind of radical skepticism that Descartes employs; so to maintain that

kind of skepticism in theory is a confusion arising from *abstraction*. In terms of our present

investigation, we can say that for Heidegger getting things right (truth and falsity understood as

correctness) always matters to us prior to any theoretical endeavor in which we might uncover

their meaning or value (unless, perhaps, one is psychotic).

Heidegger is thus worried that Freud has simply taken over a certain set of philosophical

assumptions about the human being as subject.[987] On Heidegger's account, Freud discovered that

he could not give a complete explanation of the psychological causal chain by staying at the level

of the conscious subject, so he posited the unconscious as that subject's hidden underbelly.[988] In

order to account for the content of that unconscious and its causal force on us, Freud then

explained the human being on the basis of equally hidden drives, some of which are unconscious.

Heidegger's brief rejoinder to this move is methodological: "*Drive* is always an attempt at

explanation. Yet what is at issue initially is never an attempt at explanation. Rather, first one must

pay attention to what the phenomenon to be explained generally is and to how it is. With 'drives,'

---

[986] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 220/175, trans. mod.
[987] *Zollikon Seminars* 260/207.
[988] *Zollikon Seminars* 260/207-8, 319/254.

one is always attempting to explain something one did not 'see' in the first place."[989] If Heidegger is right about Freud's account, "what happens if this Cartesian model is scrapped? Does not the unconscious [and the drive theory] go, too? Of course it does – and that is exactly Heidegger's position."[990]

So, in pursuing the essential feature of drive as a claim on the mind for work, I want to respond to Heidegger by showing that Freud's thinking of the human does not imply our being closed off from the world, despite the latter's focus on "internal" or "psychological" conflicts. (I cannot deal here with Freud's later account of the life drive [*Eros*] and the death drive [*Thanatos*], although my comments at the end of the chapter will indicate where such a discussion might begin.[991]) We can articulate this in terms of our general investigation by posing three questions:

1) First, how can the drives, which Freud contrasts explicitly with external, physical stimuli, be thought of nonetheless as inherently open to the shared world (section I.B)? What might Heidegger's originary truth mean for Freud?
2) Second, what is the relation between the sexual and the self-preservative drives, and is this a purely internal difference, or does it, too, depend on the shared world (section I.C)? How is our exposure to things inherently conflictual, in a way that would require primitive trust as a support?
3) Third, in terms of psychogenesis, how can the sexual drives, which obey what Freud always calls 'the primary process,' in fact emerge *after* the self-preservative drives, which obey 'the secondary process' (section I.D)? Is such an account self-consistent?

In contrast to other common readings of Freud,[992] according to which the drives – and the subject generally – would be oriented primarily inward, to internal objects largely unrelated to the

---

[989] *Zollikon Seminars* 217/172, trans. mod. For further discussion of the methodological differences, see my Introduction, part IV, and chapter 7, section II.A.

[990] William J. Richardson, "Heidegger Among the Doctors," in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, ed. J. Sallis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 49-63. Quotation from p. 54; Richardson's helpful summary of Heidegger's critique of Freud spans pp. 53-56.

[991] For discussion of Freud's later drive theory, see Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, tr. Jeffrey Mehlmann (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

[992] Not only Heidegger's. See Stolorow, *World, Affectivity, Trauma*, chapter 3, but also compare the summary of similar views that are common even among strict psychoanalysts, in Dodd W. Cohen, "Freud's Baby: Beyond Autoerotism and Narcissism," *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* **88** (2007): 883-93. He cites Karl Abraham, Marjorie Brierley, Jay Greenberg, and Stephen Mitchell as proponents of the reading that Freud thought the infant was originally closed off to the world. He does note Melanie Klein,

external situation, my argument will be the following: for Freud, *since all psychic energy comes either directly from the external world or from the drives, and since the drives are essentially psychic presentations of organic claims, then all psychic achievement is ultimately an interaction with the shared world.* I will establish this by showing, first, that for Freud a drive is a claim on me for specific action, a claim that is formed in response to the solicitation of the external world; second, that the classification of the drives is thus determinable in light of different kinds of solicitation by the world beyond the self; finally, that although psychic achievements (both psychogenesis and specific intentional fulfillments) are founded on reaction as simple openness to the world, they are nonetheless always already responses to the drives' claims, not mere reactions. This foundational relation is a crucial complication and will necessitate quite a bit of work to articulate.

All of this will prepare the way for an investigation of the universal conflicts involved in the affirmation of our primary openness. That investigation will involve working out a version of the psychogenetic narrative that Freud tells over and over, in a way that will highlight the (perhaps dubious) consistency of his repeated formulations.[993] Since the narrative combines (dynamically) the problem of reality-testing with that of the emergence of the drives, however, I should first set the stage by laying out (statically) the elements involved. I will begin with Freud's account of the two kinds of drive-pressures that call for psychic processing, then turn to the two modes of psychic processing that govern them.

Hannah Segal, and Michael Balint as exceptions to the trend; we could add Jacques Lacan to the second list.

[993]In the "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (1895), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), the *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905), "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning" (1911), "A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams" (1915), and even in the later essay on "Negation" (1925). For a detailed reading of this last text, see below, section II.A.

B) Drives Are Essentially Responses to the World

Let us follow Freud in working out the fine structure of drive, so as to bring into view its origin. Freud consistently differentiates two fundamental kinds of stimuli on the basis of their sources, although both are at work in any full, lived experience. From the viewpoint of the psyche, we encounter (a) stimuli originating within ourselves as living beings, or what we might call *physiological* stimuli – Freud calls these 'internal' and 'organic' – but we also encounter (b) stimuli originating from without, or what we might call *physical* stimuli – Freud names them 'external'. Physiological stimuli in principle cannot be escaped by motor action (screaming or fleeing does us no good), whereas physical stimuli, at least in principle, can be so escaped.[994]

We can think of this as a difference between a *prompt* (a stimulus that arises from outside and is processed using that external energy) and a *drive* (which arises inside and generates its own energy by reaching out for something). A prompt might be the sun's coming out from behind a cloud: we say that it 'causes' me to blink, or to sneeze.[995] On the other hand, both prompt and drive appear in the case of procuring food: a physical stimulus (a small animal) jumps in front of me, and a physiological stimulus (hunger) calls for a 'specific' or 'adequate' action (Freud's terms) that changes the external situation in a determinate way – the animal is rendered into food, which then can be organically assimilated. Performance of the action gets rid of the physical stimulus (the animal) altogether but only temporarily quiets the drive.[996]

---

[994] Freud, "Instincts," SE **14**:119. As we shall see below (section II.A), Freud is trying to explain repression (or neurosis in general) as a kind of flight, treating something intrapsychic as if it were external to the psyche – hence the impression of the split-off portion of consciousness as alien (*Fremd*) in the *Studies on Hysteria*.

[995] The shape of the distinction between prompt and drive (he uses 'impulse' and 'instinct') and the explanation of Freud's sunburst example are from Tomas Geyskens, *Our Original Scenes* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), p. 55. Cf. SE **14**:118, where Freud uses 'stimulus' and 'instinct'.

[996] Notice that some physical stimuli can also arise from one's own body when irritated by the world: itching (most people do not have a drive to scratch), breathing (in the presence of oxygenated air), and other such functions that arise spontaneously but (from the mind's perspective) as if caused by the external world.

Freud's interest is in how we psychically experience these stimuli. We encounter physical stimuli through perception, so the simplest account of our interaction would go something like this: an external stimulus is perceived by the various five senses and psychically imaged – i.e., given to our awareness and remembered in terms of parts and wholes, relations, etc. This psychic image is then connected (in one who understands language) with what Freud calls a word-presentation (*Wortvorstellung*), and that connection is retained in the memory.

By contrast, we encounter physiological stimuli as internal claims – i.e., as the pressure of the drives. These are never presented to our awareness just as such (as dryness of a mucous membrane, for example). They are always presented in terms of an external object of satisfaction or frustration, which Freud calls a thing-presentation (*Dingvorstellung*).[997] This object is remembered from a previous 'experience of satisfaction' (*Befriedigungserlebnis*) in which the pressure of the drive was previously released through some specific action. The experience of satisfaction itself is (in the language-user) retained as a word-presentation plus an association with the thing-presentation.

To be a bit more precise: in the latter case of a physiological stimulus, the thing-presentation is what is stored in the memory, but the drive is presented to our awareness as a concrete claim *to* that object, a wish-impulse (*Wunschregung*) – what we might colloquially call the 'pull' of desire. Thus Freud says that a dream-wish, for example, "gives expression [*Ausdruck gibt*] to the unconscious impulse,"[998] using as its material what it finds in the preconscious, whether that be images, thoughts, or non-repressed wish-impulses (all of these are what he calls in this context 'day-residues').

---

[997] The term 'physical' as contrasted with Freud's 'physiological', as well as the general outlines of the difference between the modes of presentation, are taken from A. Fayek, "Psychic Reality and Mental Representation: Contemporary Misapplications of Freud's Concepts," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* **19** (2002): 475-500, p. 490. Cf. Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology," SE **1**.

[998] Freud, "Supplement," SE **14**:226.

As a representative (*Repräsentant*) of the unconscious drive's claim (*Triebanspruch*), the wish-impulse may express that claim (i.e., call for psychic investment) in at least three ways.[999] First, it may be converted directly to physical movement without first coming to awareness: thus Freud analyzes botched actions in everyday life, hysterical symptoms, and 'acting out' within the transference (doing rather than speaking) as motor expressions of the unconscious, and he suggests that this kind of expression is also part of the explanation for sleep-walking. Secondly, the impulse may be presented to conscious awareness by combination with a word-presentation from our preconscious relation to language, thus becoming a (verbal) wish, fulfilling more directly its destiny as the speech of the unconscious – in the form 'I want a drink,' for example. Or, thirdly, the wish-impulse may (in sleep or psychosis) regress to perceptual hallucination, which then uses words only as things (i.e., as images, independent of semantics), and must be brought to association with word-presentations in the course of analysis. To summarize: a drive can only be experienced as a concrete claim on me for some specific activity in the world, in other words, a wish-impulse (*Wunschregung*), which then can sometimes be joined to a word-presentation to form a verbal wish.[1000]

In keeping with this account of the drives as psychically presented primarily in terms of their aims and objects – in terms, we might say, of the eternal parental question, "You want to do *what*? With *whom*?" – Freud characterizes the situation of the very early infant as one of helplessness (*Hilflosigkeit*), in part because it cannot satisfy its own real, biological needs, but primarily because it cannot possibly even *know* what it needs.[1001] It *has* organic needs, of course, but because for most of those needs it has never yet experienced either satisfaction or frustration

---

[999] Laplanche and Pontalis characterize this 'representative' as a delegate, one who acts as proxy but with a certain flexibility, since he enters a "system of relationships which is liable to change his perspective and cause him to depart from the directives he has been given" (*The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 365 fn.).
[1000] *Ibid.*, pp. 226-7.
[1001] This point is made by Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, tr. David Macey (Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 99. Cf. Freud, *Introductory Lectures* (SE **16**:408).

of them in the world outside of the womb, there is as yet no psychic presentation for many of them; at most, the infant may feel a kind of vague anxiety. Hence the adults on whom it is dependent, in providing for what they know (or imagine!) to be its real needs, also make possible many of its future claims to specific things (i.e., the very experience of wanting some*thing*, whether as mere psychic presentation or also as outward expression). In other words, the specificity of the drives is due to the parents' own actions, since drives just are the psychic presentations of claims to the repetition of a specific external situation.

We are indebted to Lacan for pointing out that this role of the adults is soon enough recognized by the child, who begins to imitate those adults in *articulating* the claims of its drives as what can be called 'demands.' Now not only does the child want something specific (which is always true of the drives) on the basis of its originary immersion in sociality, but this impulse is also inflected socially *for it*. The child wants a specific *person* to provide the thing ('I want *mommy* to give it to me!'), such that the thing is now functioning also as a sign of her love for the child. Lacan is thus right to say that demand is always also a demand for love.[1002]

But I think it is clear in Freud's text that there must be a moment prior to the articulation of the drives as demands, the moment of emergence of those drives as concrete impulses laying claim to the repetition of some experience of satisfaction. Even before the drives are *articulated* socially, they are already given shape by the world in which the child is immersed, even though this has not yet been recognized by the child, who only feels the pressure of the wish-impulses.

Let us leave aside questions of infancy and genesis for the moment and consider that Freud reaches firm ground at least in saying that (even as adults) we *become aware of* the drives

---

[1002] The corralling of drives into the linguistic articulations offered by adults for expressing demand is what Lacan calls 'the defile of the signifier.' Desire proper can emerge out of the inevitable difference between demand and need, since desire for Lacan seeks what the other person wants from me, what I could be in order to provoke an adequate expression of her unconditional love. Demand, in fact, is an attempt to concretize my desire into what I fantasize the other wants me to be. For an especially clear presentation of these distinctions, see Philippe van Haute, *Against Adaptation: Lacan's "Subversion" of the Subject*, trs. P. Crowe and M. Vankerk (New York: Other Press, 2002), chapter 5.

first in terms of their specific objects – i.e., in terms of what may be able to satisfy or frustrate a concrete claim.[1003] Such claims may be somewhat general – 'a drink' is hardly very specific – but they nonetheless indicate something other than simple, disinterested diagnosis of a problem without any proposed solution (e.g., dryness of a mucous membrane). Although it is possible to experience the basis of my own need in this third-person manner ('hmm, my mouth is dry; how interesting; I wonder if eating salt will dry it out more'), such an experience does not manifest any drive-pressure. To experience a need *just is* to experience a claim on me for action, one which is already specified by reference to some previous experience of satisfaction. Notice that even if I experience some less-specific discomfort (my stomach hurts), I try to discover what it is precisely through attending in turn to each of a series of possible satisfactions/frustrations. (Am I hungry? Do I need to stretch? Do I need to remove waste? Do I want painkillers? Did someone injure me?)

Furthermore, although we *do* experience excessively general claims (e.g., the sense that 'something must change'; or 'I want something, but I don't know what'), at least in adults and older children Freud takes this to be a case of free-floating anxiety. Such anxiety is affect that was originally attached to – but through repression has been displaced from – a more concrete claim to work.[1004] In other words, even in this case the drive remains a concrete claim; it has merely been pushed (or perhaps maintained) underground, in(to) the unconscious.

But if a drive is always experienced as such a claim, then Freud's contention that a drive is a psychical representative of internal, organic, constant stimuli already implies that the

---

[1003] Of course, Freud wants more than this: his is decidedly *not* a theory only about how objects come to conscious awareness. Nevertheless, if he is right in terms of what we can observe in everyday experience, this lends a certain plausibility to his accounts of the unconscious workings of the drives.

[1004] Cf. Freud's definition of repression as "transformation of affect" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE **5**:604), in which the secondary process reinterprets certain wishes as productive of pleasure rather than unpleasure, setting free the affect previously bound to them so that it can return in (sometimes very confusing) connection with other ideas. This has the upshot that *if* there were a time in which the infant had psychic experience but no remembered experiences of satisfaction at all, then its psychic life would be marked by a pure flow of affect (what Freud calls *primary process*).

psychical representations of such stimuli are always shaped (in their origin) by specific possibilities of satisfaction and frustration:[1005] the claim is initially a claim *of the shared world* insofar as it affects me. Such shaping by external reality is not necessarily direct, inasmuch as our desires are also modified by fantasy (see chapter 7, part III), but at least indirectly, every drive arises in response to the shared world. Surprisingly, then, although the drive is a claim on me for *internal* or *psychic* work (i.e., a meaningful call seeking a response of specific action), it is itself already a response to the availability of the external world.

C) Sexuality and the Interpretation of Helplessness

There are, of course, different kinds of responses to the world. It is well-known that Freud revised and adjusted his theory of the drives and their relations repeatedly. Let us pass over the complications here in favor of focusing on his persistent conviction that there are two kinds of drives: self-preservative and sexual.[1006] In making this division, I think Freud approaches the Aristotelian distinction between motion (*kinesis*) and activity (*energeia* or *entelekheia*). The former is a general term including both action and making [*praxis and poiēsis*]; its goal is a state (of the self, for example) or a product, something reached as the completion of the motion. Activity, by contrast, is complete at every moment because its goal lies in the activity itself.[1007] I should note, however, that Freud himself does not acknowledge any connection to Aristotle here.

The self-preservative (or vital) drives seek those things that keep the organism alive and flourishing: they have as aims eating, drinking, breathing, exercising, recovering, loving, being-sheltered, being-touched, being-loved, and so on. They are, it seems to me, ways of organizing or

---

[1005] Heidegger would say: in terms of my projects.

[1006] For Freud's account of the theoretical transformations in this portion of his theory, see *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, ch. 6 (SE **18**), and *Civilization and its Discontents*, ch. 6 (SE **21**). In the "Drives" essay, Freud explicitly acknowledges the possibility of several kinds of drives and leaves the question of how many there are open (SE **14**:124). In general, he seems to need at least two distinct kinds so as to make sense of the evident psychic conflict from which he begins his investigation.

[1007] For the distinction, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Ө.6, but compare the distinction between kinds of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.12, 7.14, and 10.4.

prioritizing the many things in the external world that solicit my attention. As such, they orient me to the world in terms of survival, which carries with it a certain kind of pleasure that is, arguably, narcissistic.[1008] But it is not sheer narcissism. In order for me to be an embodied self at all, the imperious call of various mutually exclusive things for my attention must be somehow negotiated. Rather than getting lost in the blooming, buzzing confusion of perceptual stimuli,[1009] I respond to the call of any particular object first in terms of my vital interests, if any of those interests have grown too urgent to be ignored. This is the initial context from which the external situation and the objects it includes receive their meaning (though it is certainly not the only context). For example, I may want to continue writing, but at some point the requirement to sleep becomes too great to be put off any longer, and then the page to which I am attending loses its very coherence as anything other than a frustration of my need to sleep.

Since the needs that are met in the satisfaction of these drives are generally external to the activity of meeting them, the pleasure characteristic of this kind of drive is that of satiety, the release of the (physiological) tension built up by need. Sometimes Freud writes as if this were the only kind of pleasure that exists, a perspective which has drawn appropriate criticism. For one thing, it is evidently wrong in cases where pleasure is at its greatest in tension rather than release. For another, it suggests that either drinking or an intravenous fluid injection would satisfy my thirst equally well, and the same would go for all pleasures: the point is only the release.

Nevertheless, we would want to distinguish between thirst and dehydration, since thirst may not be simply self-preservative – there seems to be a certain pleasure associated with the activity of drinking itself, and not only with having one's need for fluid quenched. This is one

---

[1008] Cp. Hannah Arendt on the pleasure belonging to labor, especially in the essay "Labor, Work, and Action," reprinted in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. Peter Baehr (Penguin, 2000), pp. 167-181.
[1009] This is a danger even if we take such stimuli to be given from the first as structured unities rather than some kind of raw sense-data. There is a good reason why Aristotle says, in another context, that one must have leisure (i.e., one's necessities provided) before philosophic wonder can emerge (*Metaphysics A*.1). Cp. also Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of things as competing for my attention in the essay "Eye and Mind."

reason why people go to excess: not primarily because we fail to notice that we are sated, but because we are enjoying the *activity* and not only the result.

Fortunately, Freud *does* attend to this second kind of pleasure, and in fact it defines a primary interest of his entire theory: for this is the pleasure characteristic of what he calls the sexual drives.[1010] This second kind of pleasure is immanent in the activity. The enjoyment of the activity itself (drinking, e.g., or tasting), regardless of the nourishment thereby attained – and frequently even to the detriment of what we might take to be a person's adaptive needs – is distinctly sexual in Freud's sense.

If we consider this from the perspective of Aristotle's distinction between motion and activity, we can see why it makes sense for Freud to claim that intellectual work, religious devotion, artistic enjoyment, and play in general are inherently sexual ('sublimated').[1011] Such a claim does not mean, for Freud, that we are genitally aroused by such things – although that is never simply out of the question – but rather their pleasure resides in the very doing of them: as Aristotle puts it, the pleasure of seeing, thinking, or feeling is inherent in the activity. "The pleasure brings the activity to completion […] as something that comes over it, like the bloom of well-being in people who are at the peak of their powers."[1012] Hence, we engage in such activities

---

[1010] Some may find it surprising to understand the distinction between the two kinds of drives in this way, since pleasure as 'release of tension' seems so clearly to be modeled on the male orgasm. Tomas Geyskens has shown (*Our Original Scenes*, chapter two) that Freud's own criteria for distinguishing between sexuality and self-preservation come from evolutionary biology, in which Charles Darwin (and, following him, Ernst Haeckel) had posited *both* natural (preservational) selection and sexual selection as forces necessary to account for biological plurality, since this includes plurality that is not evidently advantageous for survival. The biological difference may be how Freud in fact distinguishes, but it does not hold up to much scrutiny, as Freud himself discovered in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, when he altered the distinction to one between life-drives and the death-drive. Thus, I am trying to render the distinction between sexuality and self-preservation more plausible by presenting it as a difference of two kinds of pleasures. This does not make the sexual drives any less urgent or less physiological; it only makes them more focused on the activity itself, as Freud himself suggests most plainly with his account of autoerotism.
[1011] Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, ch. 2 (SE **21**). Cf. the hint he drops in "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (SE **14**:126).
[1012] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4, 1174b32-34, tr. Joe Sachs (Focus Publishing, 2002). Note that Freud's thinking of all such pleasures as sexual (and thus, for example, as caught up in the drives) importantly modifies Aristotle's theory.

regardless of their adaptive benefits, and the enjoyment itself has an endless quality to it, even if practically it must be interrupted or reach an end.[1013]

Furthermore, thinking about the classification of drives in terms of Aristotle's distinction between motion and activity can help make clearer what it would mean for the sexual and self-preservative drives to be in conflict, which is what Freud often blames as the source of neurosis. In fact, it can clarify this at a fairly basic level, prior even to the renunciations of enjoyment required by society. The continuous quality inherent in *activities* (properly so-called) – wanting to go on endlessly playing, thinking, praising, or touching – is necessarily interrupted by physiological needs that require *motion* (again, properly so-called). But even these physiological, internal needs, as I have tried to show (section I.B), are by no means necessarily cut off from the context in which they arise. Instead, when people have compulsions inappropriate to their current environment, Freud consistently locates their source in previous contexts in which those wishes *would* make sense. That is, he recognizes that vital drives, too, are defined by a responsiveness to environment and context, not only by reaction to them.

From the example of drinking, however, it may seem that the two kinds of pleasure are in fact closely bound together: there comes to be something satisfying in the activity of drinking *just because* it quenches my thirst. And this is precisely how Freud accounts for the emergence of the sexual drives, which he says begin by "leaning on" (*anlehnen*) the self-preservative drives, at least some of which were there more or less from the beginning of psychic life.[1014] He postulates the derivation of one kind of drive from the other, which Jean Laplanche – whose account I

[1013] Peter Hadreas has provided a phenomenological account of sexuality that I think is likely to be right, according to which the temporality of sex is peculiar due to its privileging of touch (for which meaning happens in series, by contiguity) over vision (which interprets all at once). Cf. *A Phenomenology of Love and Hate* (Ashgate, 2007), ch. 2. Such an interpretation would have to come to terms with the voyeurist and exhibitionist dimensions of sexuality, but I think this could be done through Hadreas's examination of the phenomenon's peculiar temporality. Perhaps it could be said that the sensual gaze lingers and slides, as if it were a mode of touch.

[1014] I follow Laplanche's account of this process in chapter two of *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, which chapter is itself a reading of Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality* (SE **7**).

follow here – describes as a peeling away (like paint) or stripping off (like wallpaper). The experiences of satisfaction to which the sexual drives lay claim take their character from the satisfactions of vital drives. So, in our example, there is a movement from drinking as thirst-quenching, through a middle ground of enjoying one's thirst-quenching activity, to drinking fine scotch purely for the enjoyment of the activity, even though it actually makes one *more* dehydrated. And, as in all of Freud's genetic accounts, none of these stages are completely left behind – we can continue to enjoy drinking in all of its various modes.[1015]

But what is responsible for this peeling away of one drive from the other? Why would one ever *begin* to take pleasure in the activity, and not only in the result? The self-preservative drives are responses to previous satisfactions of real needs, as we saw in the first section, but to what are the sexual drives a response? At the origin of specific sexual drives (as very local organ-pleasures, they are *all* specific at first, only later consolidated around the genitals)[1016] we find once again a solicitation, but this time of a different order.

The adult who provides for the child's needs, performing some of the specific actions to which the vital drives lay claim, already *has* sexual drives, and thus a) takes both conscious and unconscious pleasure in the activities of caring for the infant, and b) treats the erogenous zones in ways inevitably overlaid with sexual meaning. The infant, presumably, cannot fully understand these surplus investments – indeed, even the adult does not recognize the unconscious ones – but Freud finds through analysis that infants must nevertheless be able to apprehend such investments as peculiarly significant, even if they misunderstand the meaning. The pleasure taken by the adult in the activity of feeding or cleaning – which is clearly not only pleasure in the release of tension when the child stops crying – is evident to the child, but only in what Laplanche has called an "enigmatic" way. Thus the child responds to the enigma of a pleasure that it does not understand

---

[1015] Nor should we forget, in a discussion of sexuality, the original mode of drinking from the breast.
[1016] *Three Essays*, SE **7**:197; "Instincts," SE **14**:126.

by finding in it a solicitation (or seduction) also to enjoy the activity itself, investing it with a certain surplus of meaning related to the love of the caretaker, even if this surplus must remain misunderstood. Here we could be said to have one unconscious in communication with another. Hence the love expressed to the child, through all of its complicated, proto-Oedipally ambivalent undertones, gradually teaches the child, too, to love, by finding pleasure in shared activity.[1017]

One upshot of such a theory of the sexual drives is that adult sexual pleasure (in the more popular, limited use of 'sexual') is necessarily highly overdetermined. If we take as an example the caress, it is a kind of touch that has mostly set itself free from any self-preservative need (although perhaps, like the hug, it is always in part a response to the vital need to be touched). The pleasure is thus primarily in the activity itself – the touch that seeks to go on touching, the being-touched that seeks to go on being touched – or at any rate the pleasure lies in the complex of sexual activities in which the touch plays a part. But this pleasure will also be part of a dialectical relation: the pleasure of giving pleasure to the partner, and of realizing the partner's desire for one's own pleasure. Furthermore, that dialectic will always be complicated by relation to one's own early caretakers, as well as to the partner's relation to his or her early caretakers, no doubt at both a conscious and an unconscious level for all parties involved. The essential point here is that this kind of drive-pressure grows ever more complex as a response to what we might call the primary seduction: implicit solicitation by the caretaker (and, let us not forget, also explicit solicitation in cases of abuse).

I would claim, then, that for Freud the two kinds of drives can be distinguished by the kinds of external solicitation to which they constitute responses – one from the field of objects generally as sources or hindrances of life, and one from specifically human (i.e., split by their unconscious) caretakers as sexual beings. The former involves (or at any rate solicits) a kind of

---

[1017] My account here makes it sound as if this all goes quite smoothly, but I will revisit (and further complicate) it in part II, below.

assumption-trust in the stability of objects and their relations, while the latter both involves and solicits personal trust. Laplanche characterizes this difference in terms of channels of communication, since the child expresses its self-preservative needs and the caretaker expresses love: "The child … evolves from adaptation to sexuality, but Freud unhesitatingly states that in her relationship with the child, a mother moves from sexuality to affection," that is, *toward* a primarily preservative or adaptive concern.[1018] I think we must add simply that the movement in either direction is capable of failure.

D) Two Kinds of Psychic Functioning

So far, it looks reasonable to think that Freud's theory presents the drives in general as structured responses to the external world, and to think that those drives can be differentiated by appeal to different kinds of pleasure arising as responses to different kinds of worldly solicitation. This provides us with at least initial evidence that the Freudian subject is not primarily closed in on itself. But I am claiming that *all* psychic accomplishment, *including psychic development*, is at least partly a response to the external world.[1019] Here we run into at least two problems. First, there is the well-known psychogenetic narrative, alluded to at the beginning of Freud's essay on drives, in which an originally non-world-related organism is forced out of its shell into interaction with the external world. The narrative is so prominent in psychoanalytic literature that I can hardly fail to treat it here. Second, there is Freud's claim that sexuality, which we have just seen to emerge secondarily, on the basis of self-preservation, obeys what he calls 'the *primary*

[1018] Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, 98.
[1019] Cp. Heidegger's brief account of infantile being-there as amidst beings (*Sein bei*) and directed (*gerichtet auf zu, hin zu, weg von*), even if not yet oriented by a determinate goal (*ausrichtet auf Ziel*). Children thus are not closed in on themselves, even if their being amidst things is hazy or cloudy (*noch umwölkt*), and they are certainly structured by affectivity from before the very first yell. "*What* one is alongside [is something that] arises for being-there. This is a clarification of a previous having" (*Introduction to Philosophy*, GA 27:125-6, my translation, emphasis added).

process.' That seems to be backwards, especially since 'the secondary process' is designated primarily as self-preservative.[1020]

These two problems hang together. In order to address the developmental account, I shall have to begin by saying something about a second set of structures, those by which we actually *do* the processing. My intention here is to show that Freud understands the structures of subjectivity as a) primarily open to reality through mere reaction and b) nevertheless always meaningfully responsive to the claims of the drives that arise from within itself. This will suggest that we try to interpret the infant as in one way dwelling in the truth from the beginning, affectively and proto-understandingly immersed in the world, but in another way as not yet in the truth in a full sense, since there remain important and unavoidable hurdles on the path to its developmental fulfillment of the existential structures of being-there that Heidegger has articulated. Our investigation of the psyche's fundamentally conflicted functioning will also set into relief the situation of psychosis, in which the primary process seems somehow to reassert itself as primary, but now in a mode inflected by the loss of the world.

Beginning already in the unpublished "Project for a Scientific Psychology," from 1895, Freud consistently organizes his developmental account by distinguishing between two basic kinds of psychic functioning, both of which include a dimension of interaction with the world. These are supposed to account for how we can meet the claims of the drives for psychic work.

We have already seen that sexual and the self-preservative drives differ as responses to different kinds of worldly solicitation, and that this can produce conflict between them. We might think, however, that since the drives call for two different modes of engagement, we could simply divide up our time between one and the other. This is, after all, mostly what we In fact do. Conflicts between, say, the (self-preservative) drive for nourishment and the (sexual) drive for enjoying the eating activity would then be relatively easily moderated. But if this were the whole

---

[1020] For my attempt to sort out the temporal confusions here, see part II, below.

story, then Freud would not be able to make sense of the deep levels of conflict in his analysands, since the account would overlook the imperative nature of the drives' claims.

The sexual drives, Freud thinks, lay claim to *nothing but* continuous enjoyment of their aims, and are even quite plastic in the objects that will satisfy those aims. Their claims, then, really take no account of the need for self-preservation; no quarter is given to exhaustion, illness, or impracticality. And as many an addict has discovered, there is one mode of psychically investing those claims that involves no hindrance or inhibition. Something appears here that Freud calls 'the primary process.' By contrast, our initial assumption that we could simply divide our time between satisfying different kinds of drives lets appear a different way of psychically dealing with the drives' claims, which Freud calls 'the secondary process.' It is precisely a matter of inhibition, a distribution (or even distraction) of drive energy so that we can carry on without destroying ourselves.

I want to try to make sense of these processes as what perpetuate drive-conflicts in us, but we should note philosophically that there is some separation between the drives themselves and the psychic processes that govern our investments in them. Freud assigns the primary process to the sexual drives and the secondary process to the self-preservative drives, but this is a general statement. Although the primary process seeks the immediate removal of all tension, the sexual drives as we encounter them in life, for example, involve some claims for the heightening of tension, for attention to the setting of the activity, and so on, which clearly require the secondary process. Moreover, while specific drives can be temporarily satisfied, the processes are continuously functioning – this is just part of what it means to be alive as a human being.

The *primary process*, then, is explicitly modeled on the functioning of dreams, parapraxes, jokes, neurotic symptoms, and other modes in which what Freud calls unconscious thinking shows itself by betraying the smoothness of conscious thought. He characterizes it in terms of a simplified reflex arc, primarily marked by the complete dissociability of "affect"

(psychic energy,[1021] or a kind of intensity of feeling) from particular ideas or memories.[1022] This "total displacement of affect" (Laplanche's term),[1023] or what Freud calls its "free outflow" (*freies Abströmen*),[1024] is part of an attempt to account for the seeming absurdity of unconscious phenomena when they appear in conscious life – as they do most vividly in psychotics. But unconscious, primary processing is not only visible when it is right out on the surface. When a neurotic both avoids like the plague and yet repeatedly circles back toward and around a phrase that no one else would find particularly upsetting, or a dreamer finds herself inexplicably horrified by the image of an ordinary red wagon, or an otherwise normal person is overwhelmed with anxiety about having forgotten a marginally important name, it seems that the strength of the affect – the psychic energy with which the given idea is unwarrantedly invested – must be coming from elsewhere. Freud's attempts to map the logic of the primary process are precisely attempts to explain the associative rules according to which affect flows (freely or via detours) from one idea to another.[1025]

[1021] Freud speaks here, as always in the "Project," of quantities of energy – specifically, of 'Qη,' quantity of *internal* energy. It is philosophically more fruitful simply to take 'energy' in a very broad sense, somewhat as we mean it in everyday language: 'I don't have the energy for that' does not strictly mean 'I have not taken in sufficient nutriment or rested sufficiently for my nervous system to stimulate my muscular system to the requisite action.' Instead, it may include not knowing enough about the situation, feeling the world generally as too daunting, not having received much relevant encouragement from others recently, being preoccupied with something else, and so on. Freud at this point in his thought would have translated all of these into Q, so we may as well translate them back into their lived richness. It was, after all, only through noticing both his patients' strong resistance to his attempts at curing them (experienced in terms of the energy he had to spend combating it, cf. *Studies on Hysteria*, SE **2**:111) and the relation between the 'amount' of psychical trauma and the seriousness of the symptoms that he first decided it was "impossible any longer at this point to avoid introducing the idea of quantities (even though not measurable ones)" (SE **2**:86).

[1022] Laplanche, among others, has shown the correlation of meaning between the "Project's" 'quantity of excitation' and 'neurons', on the one hand, and the clinical categories of *affect* and *ideas* (or presentations), respectively (*Life and Death*, p. 56).

[1023] *Ibid.*, p. 38.

[1024] *Interpretation*, SE **5**:599, trans. mod.

[1025] Thus Fayek can say that the forging of links between an idea and its affect, a drive and its presentation, or the aim of a drive (the activity sought) and the object of that drive (the support of that activity) is precisely what Freud means by the primary process ("Psychic Reality," 489). Freud's name for this unconscious, free-flowing affect is *anxiety*.

Freud posits that the logic of the primary process is governed by what he calls the 'pleasure/unpleasure principle' (*Lust-Unlustprinzip*), which sets up this psychic process along a single axis of movement. This axis is that of increase and decrease (or release) of psychic tension, which we experience consciously as unpleasure and pleasure, respectively. These are the only qualities of which we are aware with regard to this process.[1026] As the names 'pleasure' and '*un*pleasure' might suggest, this process moves energy always and only in one direction along the axis.[1027] Put colloquially, in this process the psyche flees whatever brings unpleasure and seeks whatever brings pleasure, so that Freud can also characterize it as pure wishing (*wünschen*).[1028] It cannot, he says, "pull anything uncomfortable [*Unangenehm*, unpleasant] into the context of thought";[1029] it can only wish, that is, seek pleasure in discharge.

Yet since, as we shall see, everything here is processed at the same level – everything perceived is equally real – the primary process can technically be said neither to flee nor to seek, as if it were a subject relating to objects; rather, it takes place as *mere reaction*, an engagement with the world that does not reach the level of meaningful *response*. It is purposeful, but it is simply a full outflow of any energy received, regardless of the affect's source or meaning, since at this level all affect is equivalent. This is to say, I think, that there is a dimension of primitive sensory openness to things, not yet *as* things, that works unnoticed in our relations with the world. It is what Freud calls 'irritability,' and it is not qualified on the one hand by any psychic resistance, nor on the other by any special attention or emphasis: it is the pure sharing of the real,

---

[1026] According to Freud, consciousness just is awareness (the sensation of intrapsychic processes according to pleasure/unpleasure and of perceived things according to sensory categories), and what it is aware *of* are (by definition) qualities. During the period in which he is committed to a purely quantitative (energetic) explanation, he claims that these qualities are really the frequencies (the periods of oscillation) of the quantities of energy as taken up by the system *Cs*. But because *Cs*. can direct attention, consciousness for Freud is neither a mere epiphenomenon nor the necessary subjective correlate of all psychic activity ("Project," SE **1**:308-311).

[1027] But these names do not determine the direction. Freud runs into trouble here, as we shall see in the second part of this chapter.

[1028] Freud defines a wish as a kind of "current" (*Strömung*) in the apparatus, a directed flow of affect, that departs or flees from unpleasure and seeks or aims at only pleasure (*Interpretation*, SE **5**:598).

[1029] *Interpretation*, SE **5**:600, trans. mod.

which (if it could be left to itself) would sensibly take in whatever comes and completely react with movement.

Thus Freud can characterize the (mythical) situation of an isolated primary process organism as a "state of psychical rest,"[1030] in which there is no build-up of affective tension. There is, instead, homeostatic equilibrium, in which a kind of envelope or surface is simply awash in real stimuli. Here the raising and lowering of energy levels in a reactive attempt to maintain homeostasis *just is* what comes to awareness as unpleasure and pleasure (respectively). Thus the psyche operating according to the primary process *can* be said, loosely, to 'flee' memories and perceptions that cause unpleasure, but this means, quite precisely, that it fully displaces psychic energy (affect) away from them and out of the system.

Let us see how this works. Freud always tries to think the subject as a conflicted unity, suspended in tension between at least two structures. So, we have one process that keeps affect moving, tending toward complete removal of energy through full discharge, and one that brings affect to a halt, maintaining it within the psyche (instead of physically reacting to it) and preventing it from investing with affect (and thus bringing to conscious awareness) certain ideas that it recognizes as causing unpleasure. This is evidently a translation into theory of Freud's analytic experience: sometimes, what he calls therapeutic 'material' (speech about free associations, dreams, self-interpretations of everyday activities) flows freely, as if flooding forth; other times, there is very clearly a kind of blockage, a confusing combination of inability and refusal to speak, a stasis in the analysis due to resistance and repression.

But it is not only because he needs to account for observed psychic conflict that Freud has to posit this second process. It is also because the primary process is *clearly insufficient* either to describe or to account for human activity, even of the pleasure-seeking kind. We do not simply react to stimuli via energy discharge, and we do not think only according to the psychic logic

---

[1030] "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," SE **12**:219.

governing free association (i.e., the differential pathways laid down by previous processing of stimuli). Instead, we respond to a determinately structured world through specific, adequate actions, and we think by comparing and contrasting current intentionally structured perceptual experiences with previous ones.[1031] We recognize that reality does not function merely according to pleasure and unpleasure, and that the world requires that we stick around to deal with – rather than simply fleeing – the unpleasant as well as the pleasant. In fact, we are usually concerned with the truth of things, with knowing the world in ways appropriate to its ways of being, and this is often precisely for the sake of seeking (long-term) pleasure and avoiding unpleasure. That is why Freud thinks that something he calls the 'reality principle' (*Realitätsprinzip*), which itself serves the pleasure principle in a kind of roundabout way,[1032] governs all secondary processing.

Freud says that, clinically, one must get used to the fact that unconscious processes (i.e., those obeying the pleasure principle) entirely disregard what he calls 'reality-testing' – that is, they unproblematically equate psychic reality (fantasy) with external reality.[1033] This disregard for testing means not that nothing is real but rather that (in an important sense) *everything* is real.[1034] According to the primary process, thinking makes it so, since wishing (which, as the

---

[1031] I mean 'intentionally structured' here in the sense of classical, Husserlian phenomenology, in which consciousness is always consciousness *of* objects, implying both a correlation and a distinction between the appearing of something and that to which it appears (subject and object, *noesis* and *noema*). Freud refers to it in the late paper on "Negation" (SE **19**:237) as "the antithesis between subjective and objective," which he confirms is not present in primary process thought. My use of phenomenological terminology, however, should not be taken to indicate that I think phenomenology and psychoanalysis are the same.

[1032] "Actually the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle implies no deposing of the pleasure principle, but only a safeguarding of it. A momentary pleasure, uncertain in its results, is given up, but only in order to gain along the new path an assured pleasure at a later time" ("Formulations," SE **12**:223). This is simply a presentation of the everyday strategy of delaying gratification. I will not deal here with the problems of subordinating both of these principles to a single principle of homeostasis, which is precisely the problem of the death drive in Freud's later work (i.e., the question: is there a categorical difference between seeking zero-energy and a constant, minimum energy?), but see Laplanche (*Life and Death*, pp. 113-119) for a more thorough discussion by way of contrast with Fechner and Breuer.

[1033] "Hence also [Freud's own] difficulty of distinguishing unconscious fantasies [of seduction] from memories [of real seductions] which have become unconscious" ("Formulations," SE **12**:225). I will consider this ongoing clinical puzzle in the next chapter.

[1034] Like Hegel's 'night in which all cows are black,' this formulation only really makes sense from a standpoint outside of it, once we have seen that reality-testing occurs by designating certain things as not-

motor of the primary process, simply repeats the previous movement of energy through the system – i.e., invests the incoming energy in the memory-paths of a previous discharge and brings about the same discharge) is the same as fulfillment of the wish (experiencing again the same discharge, or satisfaction). Hallucination is just as good as genuine perception, since both receive the same imprimatur of the indication of reality.[1035] But since no living creature can survive this way while immersed in a real environment – in Freud's terms, not all stimuli can be removed through a simple reflex arc – in any real organism the pure flow of energy must be inhibited from proceeding as if the world called only for mere reaction. The very wish for pleasure, as avoiding unpleasure, must be submitted to reality-testing so that I can *respond* to a coherent *world*.

E) Some Terminological Clarifications

As a final preparation for the account of psychogenesis, let me gather together the various terms introduced so far and schematize their relations. We have now seen that Freud thinks there are two modes of psychic processing (primary and secondary), each of which is governed by its own principle (pleasure and reality, respectively, although we noted that the reality principle also serves the pleasure principle in a roundabout way). We should understand 'principle' here as the goal that organizes a mode of processing. Since I am arguing that we should understand all psychic activity as founded in an interaction with the shared world, even when that activity is a defensive withdrawal from the world, we could think of both modes of processing as modes of reaction, understood in a broad sense. The primary process, however, does not deal with the world as meaningful (as a coherent world), so it is a *mere reaction*. The secondary process precisely does react to the world in terms of meaning, so it involves *response*; it alone can properly be designated 'thinking.' These modes of processing are the ways in which we take up

---

real, which indicates reality as a starting-point, rather than by designating certain things as real, which would indicate the opposite.

[1035] As we will see below, this is why one flees one's own thoughts through repression: if fantasy is indistinguishable from shared reality, then wishing my father dead is the same as killing him.

the claims of (at least) two different kinds of drives (sexual and self-preservative, again respectively). I have proposed thinking of the difference between these two kinds of drives as the difference Aristotle marks between activity (which has no goal outside of itself but is complete at every moment) and motion (the goal of which is a different state or a product, either of which lasts once the motion itself is over).

Finally, and no longer aligned with the previous series of distinctions, drive as such is to be distinguished from a purely physical stimulus (what I called a 'prompt') that acts on me as if externally, even if my own body is involved. Such is the case with reflex actions and, it seems, some other autonomic nervous system functions.

Freud tries to prioritize within the distinctions between processes and between drives, but he does so differently in each case. So, with regard to the processes, he admits at each repetition of the developmental account of the psyche that what he calls the primary process could not really have been chronologically prior in any real living being – that it is interrupted "from the first"[1036] – but yet he insists on calling the one 'primary' and the other 'secondary'. Why? He says in the *Interpretation of Dreams* that "the primary processes are given [*gegeben*] in the psychic apparatus from the beginning onward [*vom Anfang an*]."[1037] How can they be given as primary? It is as if one said, in phenomenological terms, that the secondary process is only a founded mode.

Freud himself provides two ways to understand this. The first is a difference in the temporal structure of the two processes, rather than a difference in when they appear in chronological development. Thus he claims that the secondary processes always arrive in a way too late ("*verspätet*"), since the primary processes, given from the first, govern desire, which is

---

[1036] "Project," SE **1**:296. Cp. *Interpretation* (1900), SE **5**:598, 603; the famous footnote of "Formulations" (1911), SE **12**:219-20n4; and "Supplement" (1915), SE **14**:231 – in all of which Freud explicitly acknowledges that the positing of an organism operating purely on the pleasure principle is necessarily a myth or theoretical fiction (*Fiktion*).
[1037] *Interpretation*, SE **5**:603.

the "core of our being [*Kern unseres Wesens*], consisting of unconscious wish-impulses … derived from infancy, which can neither be destroyed nor inhibited."

What Freud is pointing to here is that there is no development in the primary process. There is change, of course, as memory pathways are deepened or fall into disuse, but there is also a kind of permanence that goes along with the indestructibility of infantile wishes and the disregard for real distinctions. We may detour or replace primary processing with secondary process thinking, but there is no way to make the primary process itself 'grow up,' – it simply does the same thing all the time. Thus Freud's impression of the timelessness of the unconscious: experiences of many years prior, long repressed, may suddenly appear, and with greater clarity than something that happened earlier this morning. And for some people, the same failed pattern of relating to others faithfully repeats itself in relationship after relationship, never learning to do something better.

All development happens with (and in) the secondary process. The ego, which permits secondary processing by inhibiting the primary process, is a basic disturbance in the purity of the primary flow. All thinking, learning, and maturing take place within this secondary process; it is continually modifying itself, yet it can only ever overlay (*überlagern*) the foundation that is the primary process.

The other way of understanding Freud's claim appeals to a difference in extent of mastery. Freud says that precisely *because* the secondary processes always come on the scene too late, the primary process kernel of our being "remains inaccessible to the understanding and inhibition of the preconscious."[1038] The primary process governs the deepest parts of us, where the secondary process has no authority. Furthermore, the very energy for the work of the secondary processes comes from unconscious wishing (i.e., the drives). The primary process is

---

[1038] SE **5**:603-4.

primary, then, as transcending the realm of the secondary processes, and the secondary processes are only possible as founded upon the primary.

In the case of the drives, on the other hand, Freud *does* claim chronological priority for the self-preservative drives, but we are about to see that this is complicated by the nature of the sexual drive, which seeks to return to a mythical origin and thus pretends to a temporal priority it cannot have – a pretense that is strengthened by its being joined to the primary process.

II. Psychic Development: Counting the Cost

"The possibility of disruption is built into the very idea of mindedness. This becomes especially clear if we think of the mind as a differentiated unity capable of growth. For how could a differentiated unity grow other than by disrupting itself and then, as it were, healing over that disruption?"[1039]

We are now prepared to examine Freud's theory of psychogenesis. Our philosophical concerns with primitive trust and originary truth, and especially our intention to expose those concerns to the challenges of psychosis, require us to address psychogenesis as a theory of subjectivity in its birth, development, and essential conditions. These various themes are brought together by Freud himself in his important essay on "Negation."[1040] Let us therefore proceed in the manner of that essay, studying psychic development through various modes of negation.

In order to keep track of these modes of negation, it will be helpful to delineate, very quickly and in preliminary fashion, the various German terms for negation at work in Freud's texts (not all of which appear in the essay). *Verneinung* is the broad term used in the essay's title. It can mean 'negation' or 'denial,' and (following Hyppolite) we should keep the distinction in mind, since 'negation' suggests the content of a judgment, while 'denial' suggests an attitude of

---

[1039] Jonathan Lear, *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 90.
[1040] Jean Hyppolite tries to show that at stake in this essay is the very birth of thought. See "A Spoken Commentary on Freud's *Verneinung*," included as the Appendix to Lacan, *Seminar 1: Freud's Papers on Technique*, especially pp. 290-1.

protest.[1041] *Verdrängung*, repression, we saw (chapter 5, section I.G.1) to be the strategy of neurotic illness. It consists in the psyche's conscious flight from unpleasant thoughts by forcing them into a different register (the unconscious), in which they appear as symptoms. Recall that we also distinguished an originary (or *primal*) instance of such repression from any subsequent instance; this more fundamental move is a renunciation of (mythical) complete unity, in which the individual accepts a mediated, limited relation to things in exchange for subsequently being driven by a fantasy of that unity. *Verleugnung*, which Freud uses in other texts, is a kind of refusal or rejection of what has been encountered. As such, he uses it technically to mean 'disavowal,' as when one knows something but somehow proceeds as if one did not (this is the structure of perversion), but he also occasionally uses it more loosely. *Verwerfung*, finally, is a second version of refusal that Freud does not rigorously distinguish (at least in his usage) from *Verleugnung*. We have already encountered this *Verwerfung* as a complete rejection of or foreclosure on some element of language (and hence of the whole of language as a system in which one can dwell) – in other words, as a refusal of primal repression.[1042]

A) From Indications of Reality to the Reality-Ego

In this 1925 essay of only about five pages, Freud's topic is judgment, which he analyzes into various, increasingly sophisticated kinds of negation and affirmation.[1043] He begins from what is encountered clinically, claiming that what is unconscious can only be allowed into consciousness on the condition that it be negated. Some lifting of the repression must have happened for an association to an unconscious idea to enter my awareness, even if I can only

---

[1041] As his presentation is in French, Hyppolite does not use these terms for the distinction, but he insists upon the distinction itself as crucial for understanding Freud's essay. See "A Spoken Commentary," p. 290.

[1042] Freud's terms for it here, it seems to me, are *ausschliessen* ('to keep out'), and *Ausstossung* ('expulsion'). *Verwerfen* makes an appearance in a probably non-technical use, when Freud claims that the obsessive is 'rejecting' "the correct meaning of the obsessive idea" ("Negation," SE **19**:235).

[1043] Cp. Heidegger's indication that one would need phenomenologically to distinguish rejection or turning-away (*Abkehr*) from defense or fending-off (*Abwehr*), and both from resistance (*Gegenwehr*), in order to make sense of children's intentionality (*Introduction to Philosophy*, GA 27:126).

speak that association under the sign of negation. (E.g.: 'I thought of my sister's old necklace, but that obviously has nothing to do with what you asked about.')

Both in this essay and in his paper on "The Unconscious,"[1044] Freud characterizes this speech under negation as 'partial intellectual acceptance' of what is repressed. He distinguishes it from full intellectual acceptance, in which I may even be able to explain my neurosis to a great extent, although I have not yet experienced the unconscious thoughts with their proper affect. The latter can only happen in the transference and is necessary for recovery.[1045] On the basis of these clinical distinctions, then, Freud further distinguishes between various modes of judgment, taking it that "to negate something in a judgment is, at bottom [i.e., indicating its psychological origin], to say: 'This is something which I should prefer to repress.'"[1046] (In the example just used, 'that obviously has nothing to do with what you asked about' is the negating judgment that allows the thought about the necklace to appear and be spoken.)

Judgment is thus a more developed mode of negation than simple repression, and it indicates a level of successful psychic achievement. It implies some recognition of the difference between thought and external reality: thinking of someone with hatred is not the same as killing the person, so I can at least allow myself to become aware of the thought *I hate my father*, even if only as negated ('partial intellectual acceptance'): *I don't hate my father*. There is then a continuum of growth in recognition of the difference between psychic presentation and reality: thinking (affirmatively) that I hate someone does not kill the person; speaking my thought aloud is not equivalent to murder; nor is telling the analyst (making my thoughts known generally) even

---

[1044] Cf. "Unconscious," SE **14**:175.
[1045] As we saw in chapter 5, Freud thinks that even if full intellectual acceptance is possible for psychotics, the curative power of transference is not. We also saw that he is wrong about this.
[1046] "Negation," SE **19**:236.

the same as telling the person whom I hate; and so on. It is along something like this scale that the progression of intellectual acceptance proceeds.[1047]

Freud then follows the traditional classification of judgments as predicative or existential. The former seeks object-unity: the unity of substance with attributes. The latter instead seeks unity between the *psychic presentation* of an object and *perception* of that object. (In phenomenological terms: existential judgment concerns the fulfillment of an empty intention.) Freud takes the originary version of the former, predicative judgment, to be valuation (i.e., the object is good, and therefore should be in me, or bad, therefore alien to me, according to the pleasure-ego). Likewise, the originary version of existential judgment is reality-testing (the object I am psychically intending is given externally as perceived, as discerned by the reality-ego).[1048] But both of these more originary versions are evidently ego-functions – as judgment always is – and I will argue here that both presuppose more fundamental distinctions in how the world is given. Namely, both presuppose the division between internal and external, since this is a condition of all ego-functioning, while that division itself presupposes the initial 'indication of reality', which is independent of the ego.

Thus do we arrive, perhaps inevitably with Freud, at the very origin of development: at the processes that are given – we saw above in what ways – as primary.

1. Negation as 'Flight'

> [A]ll presentations [or ideas: *Vorstellungen*] originate from perceptions and are repetitions of them. Thus *originally* [*ursprünglich*] the mere existence of a presentation was a guarantee of the reality of what was presented. The antithesis between subjective and objective does not exist from the first [*von Anfang an*].[1049]

[1047] There is much more to be said about the other crucial step, the *regression* to experiencing the hate-filled rage as in tension with the possibilities created by intellectual acceptance, but that is, as Freud discovered, no longer simply in the realm of judgment.
[1048] "Negation," SE **19**:236-7.
[1049] "Negation," SE **19**:237. Cp. "Project," SE **1**:296; *Interpretation*, SE **5**:565ff, 598ff; "Formulations," SE **12**:219; "Supplement," SE **14**:231-2.

Nor, by extension, does the distinction between perception and psychic presentation yet exist, at least not *for the psyche*. I take this to be Freud's attempt to establish our primary openness to beings as pre-intentional – that is, as independent of the correlation between a separate subject and its object. Everything perceived is psychically presented (and processed); everything presented is invested as if it were perceived. Said another way: there is as yet no distinction for the psyche between internal and external. Thus, as I put it earlier, all input and processing is on the same level, that of reality. The flow of affect is uninhibited, being transferred completely between ideas according to the pathways laid down by prior experiences of satisfaction or frustration, and so 'memories' of satisfaction-experiences (i.e., previously traveled pathways toward discharge) are completely invested with affect. What is 'remembered' is as vivid as what is perceived (i.e., the former is hallucinated), and *psychic images* of things that produce unpleasure are reacted to just like *perceptions* of things that produce unpleasure.

Here, negation is what we have mythically called 'flight' from tension. It appears between quotations because 'flight' is understood as complete but uncoordinated motor discharge, and because it is only so interpreted after the fact, by contrast to repression.[1050]

We could *try* to interpret the primary processes in terms of intentionality. We could, for example, take the homeostatic principle to mean (as Freud sometimes implies) that in the primal situation, the organism seeks rest. But this will be meaningless. Strictly speaking, at this level of description we cannot yet account for a living organism; the process under discussion neither 'seeks' nor 'finds' (at very most it wishes, and this can also be described, from the perspective of later development, as fleeing); and the organism's 'aim' on such a construal would not be rest

---

[1050] Freud will also register this by saying that in the unconscious there is "no negation, no doubt, no degrees of certainty" ("Unconscious," SE **14**:186); "in analysis we never discover a 'no' in the unconscious" ("Negation," SE **19**:239); there is only movement toward, as wishing, even though this may be judged consciously (by analyst or analysand) as a flight from.

(continuing to exist while temporarily without motion) but simply nothingness, the cessation of the organism as alive.

In Freud's terms, then, our primary access to the world occurs with "entire disregard of reality-testing."[1051] And yet this disregard for testing means not that nothing is real but rather that, for the (mythical) 'primitive organism,' everything is real. In the "Project,"[1052] Freud explains that consciousness reacts to perceptions with a discharge, and this discharge is a kind of stamp or *ding!* that indicates the reality of the thing perceived (i.e., it is registered in memory as 'given in perception'). This 'indication of reality' (*Realitätszeichen*), as Freud calls it, is completely independent of the introduction of the ego, which latter alone provides "a criterion from elsewhere in order to distinguish between *perception* and *idea* [*Vorstellung*]."[1053] Thus, independently of the ego, whatever is "abundantly invested" will be taken as perception; it will be experienced as real. This means that we can become conscious of the primary process in terms of two different qualities: pleasure/unpleasure (which is in a sense only one quality, but with degrees) and reality (which is not a continuum but simply an absolute value, granted to anything over a certain intensity). But neither of these, according to Freud, yet implies an object for a subject (at least not in a robustly epistemic sense).

The clinical phenomenon for which Freud is trying to account is that of the strong sense of reality in dreams and hallucinations – a sense of reality strong enough to persist past any intellectual identification of them as unreal. In fact, they seem to share the kind of immediate sense of reality given along with all perception, which sense is itself both curiously strong and yet incomplete. We have already seen (chapter 5, section I.F) that, just as with optical or acoustic illusions, we can be convinced that dreams or hallucinations are illusions without thereby being able to see through them. I may, for example, become convinced that I am dreaming, while I am,

---

[1051] "Formulations," SE **12**:225.
[1052] "Project," SE **1**:325.
[1053] *Ibid.* As Laplanche has shown (*Life and Death*, pp. 59-62).

in fact, dreaming, and yet be unable to wake myself. I then have to negotiate the environment of the dream with a kind of reluctant engagement, since I in some sense know that it is not really there, but its immediacy still requires a certain respect. They retain an 'indication of reality' due to their strong perceptual presentation even if we do not, upon reflection, believe them to be real. This suggests that, at the most basic level, things are simply given as real or not. Laplanche emphasizes this point with regard to hallucinations: one may convince a psychotic that the voices in her head are not real, but they do not thereby go away.[1054] I would add that she may be able to ignore them, but only in the way that anyone may be able to ignore an external, genuinely perceived object (a human being of the wrong color, for example, as in Ellison's *Invisible Man*): via an effort of attention, which can eventually become habitual but does not cease to be a positive intentional act.

In this regard Freud himself conducts a very interesting phenomenal investigation.[1055] In describing the characteristics of dreams (a subset of hallucinations in general), he points out first that they often differ from mere presentation (*Vorstellen*) by being more imagistic (in the sense of perceptual). Thus it is not enough to say simply that what is censored during the day comes out at night, for in that case we "should have dreams which were in the nature of ideas [*Vorstellungen*]."[1056] All dreams would proceed as only a few in fact do: in language, like everyday thinking, which uses only the haziest of images and perhaps uses even them only as symbols and placeholders. So dreams are more like purposeful recollection (*absichtliche Erinnern*) and other parts of our normal thinking that summon up specific remembered or invented images.

Secondly, however, hallucinations set themselves apart from recollection and imagination by their intensity, the way that they induce belief. As pointed out a moment ago, they give

---

[1054] Laplanche, *Life and Death*, p. 61.
[1055] "Experience shows us…" *Interpretation*, SE **5**:542.
[1056] SE **5**:542.

themselves as immediately real in just the way perceptions do. Freud attributes this to their following the primary process: "the intensities attaching to ideas [*Vorstellungen*] can be completely transferred by the dream-work from one idea to another,"[1057] so the stored memory-images are invested with the intensity of the wish, becoming thereby just as intense as perceptions.

We have, then, three categories. At one extreme, *hallucinations* (including dreams) present things as real and for the most part as perceptible. Such presentations are not straightforwardly *about* anything other than themselves, even if they may be interpreted as embodying a wish. Occupying a middle realm, *recollections and imaginations* present things in a perceptual manner, but not as currently, externally given ('real'). These presentations may or may not be *about* something else, as in the case of imaginarily rehearsing for a future performance or mentally composing a sketch that is of a particular person. At the other extreme, normal, verbal thoughts mostly present named or symbolized things rather than perceptions of those things. Following Husserl, we can say that they are necessarily *about* whatever subject-matter they present.[1058]

The upshot is that one cannot find an independent court of appeal to which to compare what we perceive or hallucinate, to check whether or not it is real. Yet we do continually distinguish between perception and memory, and even between real and unreal perceptions. So, as Freud puts the question, what gets us out of the (mythical) situation of hallucinatory fulfillment? Where does psychic development begin? In my terms, how does mere reaction become specified as response?

Strictly speaking, the answer is: nothing gets us out. If we really had to move *from* the mythical, changeless primary givenness of reality *to* something else, nothing could ever bring that

---

[1057] SE **5**:543.
[1058] Even thoughts that are self-evidently true are *true* rather than real because they are *about* what is real.

about. Freud implicitly admits as much when he says that the only way for hallucinatory satisfaction to be successful would be for the hallucination to be sustained just as continuously as the drive-pressure – and that this is precisely what happens, albeit with regard to only a part of life, in hallucinatory psychosis and hunger fantasies, "which exhaust their whole psychical activity in clinging [*Festhaltung*] to the object of their wish."[1059]

Of course, Freud acknowledges that the psyche does develop, and so we see that the primary process organism, in its pure form, *can be* only a theoretical fiction (though primary process*ing* in a more complex organism is not a fiction, on Freud's account). It is theoretically useful as an effort to think about all the implications of a very basic level of processing, but as a fiction it sometimes gets him into difficulties because of its superficial similarities with real infants.

If we wanted to maintain something like the primary process situation for the real infant, we could follow Laplanche and interpret the very early organism as a kind of permeable membrane, an envelope embedded in reality. This would be fruitful in that it could give us an 'I' to accompany every psychic structural moment, without attributing more psychic structure to the neonate than seems plausible. We could think of this initial formation as a literal "body-ego" that "coincides … with the periphery that delineates the individual."[1060] In other words, this 'ego' would not yet include a unified sense or image of itself, even though *for others* it delineates an inside and an outside of the individual. In thus treating the body-ego as the person, the adults around it contribute to the real infant's psychic investment of itself as an I – they suggest to it the contours of its own budding self-image.

[1059] *Interpretation*, SE **5**:566. We saw in chapter 5, section I.G, that in fact even such psychotic episodes do not fulfill the mythical situation, since they arise through regression (whether collapsing or fleeing) from a more complex state and retain traces of that state.

[1060] Laplanche, *New Foundations*, p. 134. We could also think of it, along with Dan Zahavi, as simply an experienced dative of manifestation, not yet cognitively reflexive. See Zahavi, "Self and Consciousness," in *Exploring the Self*, pp. 55-74.

Whichever way we go, we have to recognize that in fact the psyche develops as a series of complications of *judgment*, or a series of levels of reality-testing. We saw earlier (part I) that, initially, the infant is so helpless that it does not even know what it needs; it has needs but no idea what they are (i.e., no psychic presentation thereof). As soon as those needs are met by the specific actions of a caretaker, however, psychic development *has already begun* in response.[1061] The experience of satisfaction is recalled, reinvested with the intensity of the desire, the psychic tension is discharged completely in screaming, flailing, crying … and nothing changes. The caretaker is asleep, or fails to guess what is needed, has his/her own (unconscious) desire, or whatever it may be. Psychic 'flight' (as the repetition of a previous discharge), which worked well enough in the case of external, physical stimuli, fails to make the physiological pressure of the self-preservative drives go away. The real organism has a body with real needs, whether it knows what they are through previous satisfactions or not. The needs may be appeased, and in this sense disappear (temporarily), through further specific actions in the external world. To respond to these constant claims, and not only to the occasional impinging of external irritation, the primary process is insufficient: one must also *engage* with what brings unpleasure, not simply flee from it.

2. Negation as Rejection (*Verleugnung*, *Verwerfung*)

> Expressed in the language of the oldest – the oral – instinctual impulses, the judgment is: 'I want to eat that' or 'I want to spit it out'; and, put more generally: 'I want to take this into myself and to keep that out.' That is to say: 'It shall [*es soll*] be inside me' or 'it shall be outside me.'[1062]

Here we have a second version of negation, one which seems to accept the irreducibility of a distinction between internal and external that is not given in the primary process. In this passage from the essay we see that even the most ancient situation of the drives – the oral phase

---

[1061] There is something unexplained here, but let us simply recognize that Freud is not going to solve the Meno problem for us.
[1062] "Negation," SE **19**:237, trans. mod.

that is only postulated by Freud but not in fact remembered by his analysands[1063] – presupposes a division between internal and external. A paragraph later in the essay, Freud will say explicitly that the reality-testing performed by the ego is "*once more* a question of external and internal."[1064]

Freud summarizes the distinction itself in the "Metapsychological Supplement" to his book on dreams. "A perception which is made to disappear by means of an action is recognized as external, as reality; where such an action changes nothing, the perception comes from within the individual's own body – it is not [externally] real."[1065]

Freud offers the following analogy: consciousness 'perceives' internal psychic processes as the sense-organs perceive the shared world.[1066] Consciousness 'perceives' what is happening psychically in terms of pleasure/unpleasure (from the unconscious, primary process) or reality/unreality (from the preconscious secondary process). By contrast, perception of the world through the sense-organs may or may not be conscious. We perceptually register quite a bit that we do not consciously notice. But we saw that the drives are defined as psychic representatives of physiological impulses. Thus, the distinction between internal and external sources of stimuli – between physiological and physical stimuli – is precisely the difference between what is given as currently perceived (physical) and what is given as calling for some action (physiological: i.e., in terms of wishes), between what is fulfilled and what is emptily intended. If I want to see the football game (empty intention), I must turn on the TV (action) if I am to watch it (fulfilled intention).

Within the primary process, there is no difference between the two; this is what Freud calls *hallucination*. All intentions are 'satisfied' by fully invested presentations as they are

---

[1063] See *Three Essays on Sexuality*, SE **7**:198, where Freud calls it a "constructed phase of organization."
[1064] "Negation," SE **19**:237, my emphasis.
[1065] "Supplement," SE **14**:232.
[1066] "The Unconscious," SE **14**:171.

formed, since the process of forming the intention (investing oneself in a remembered satisfaction) is identical with the process of 'satisfying' it (*over*investing the memory, experiencing it as presently given). But insofar as a constantly invested sense of self is taken up (an ego), hallucination is inhibited, and the distinction between internal and external, what the drives claim and what I perceive, has sense. What Marie Leclaire has labeled "immediacy-testing" is now possible: that is, the indication of reality that a strongly invested *memory* would receive under the primary process is now inhibited, allowing the person to recognize such a memory as 'given (originally) in perception but not so given right now,' whereas a current perception would continue to receive the stamp *real*.[1067]

Furthermore, secondary process thinking inhibits investment in a drive until what is desired can be brought to perception in the external world. This 'bringing to perception' just *is* the specific, more or less coordinated motor action that is initially provided by the infant's caretakers, but gradually becomes the child's own (in part through developing what once were reactive discharges, like screaming, into specific, responsive, communicative actions). From this perspective, that which can be removed by means of action is external – hence, it always only *was* really there – whereas what remains, to be temporarily satisfied or not by the results of the action, is internal. My body and desires are the parts of reality that are inescapable.

But they do not *come to be* inescapable, even if they must come to be recognized as such. Their inescapability is just part of what it means to be embodied. On one hand, then, we have Freud's claim that "a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed."[1068] Thus he tries at various points to work out "the most obscure

---

[1067] Following a suggestion of Freud's in "Supplement" (SE **14**:233n2), Marie Leclaire rigorously and persuasively differentiates between immediacy-testing (*Aktualitätsprüfung*) and reality-testing (*Realitätsprüfung*). See Leclaire, "The 'Mad Scientists': Psychoanalysis, dream, and virtual reality," *IJP* **84** (2003): 331-346. See also Leclaire and Scarfone, "Vers une conception unitaire de l'epreuve de realite," *Rev. franc. psychanal.* LXIV (2000): 885-912.

[1068] "On Narcissism," SE **14**:77.

problem: the origin of the ego,"[1069] and he tells over and over a story of passage (through disappointment) from the primary process to the secondary process.

On the other hand, it seems as if there can be no real development or psychic change except *through* the ego, and Freud repeatedly qualifies the departure point for the passage from a single-process organism to one that is a tension between two processes as a myth or theoretical fiction. I said above that Freud was not going to solve for us the *Meno* paradox (i.e., how does learning get started?), and in fact I think there is no unified resolution of this problem to be found in his work.

Nevertheless, we can see that the problem itself makes some sense as a phenomenon if we return to the clinical situation out of which Freud theorizes. In analysis, the ego (the I) appears both as that which is capable of learning and growing – becoming less repressive, for example – and as that censor which prevents speech or produces empty speech and thus resists analysis, refusing to change, often with great vigor. It presents itself as a) the source of primary defense against the real-life failure and consequent unpleasure that would be precipitated by allowing the individual to be completely governed by premature discharge (mere reaction) rather than specific action (response). This makes it seem originary. But it also turns out to be b) often a bit too late with this defense, like an overworked fire brigade with flames repeatedly springing up behind its lines. This makes it seem secondary.[1070]

Upon returning our attention to clinical phenomena, however, we are also struck by the models from everyday life (*normale Vorbilde*) on which Freud explicitly relies in characterizing

---

[1069] "Project," SE **1**:369.

[1070] It is in this context that the deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*) characteristic of sexuality – as intrinsically marked in human beings by an interregnum (the latency period) – comes to the fore. Thus, in the section of the "Project" dedicated to psychopathology, Freud describes the ego as betrayed from inside by the *proton pseudos*: the ego's attention is invested outward, in monitoring perceptions; it does not defend against innocuous perceptions; but an otherwise-innocuous perception that only becomes traumatic when combined with a memory "unexpectedly releases unpleasure, and the ego discovers this only too late" ("Project," SE **1**:358).

the ego: grief, infatuation, sleep, and dreaming. Freud claims that in our preparations for sleep, we put aside both physical and mental acquisitions so as to "approach remarkably close to the situation in which [we] began life. … The psychical state of a sleeping person is characterized by an almost complete withdrawal from the surrounding world and a cessation of all interest in it."[1071] Characterizing sleep as a withdrawal from reality that brings us close to the beginning of life should remind us of the plight of the mythical primary process-governed psyche: there is too much reality (everything is fully invested, so everything receives the 'indication of reality') and no distinction between exterior and interior, i.e., no stable, distinct self. The demands for attention from objects in the external world, especially when combined (and mixed up) with the pressures from the self-preservative drives that may or may not be presented by conflicting memories of satisfaction,[1072] would certainly be exhausting and overwhelming. The emergence of the ego, then, which solves both of these problems merely by its existence, would be the individual's response to being overwhelmed: withdrawal from the solicitations of reality into the developing self; a temporary loss of interest in anything other than the private image of oneself as a competent, unified whole (i.e., the forerunner of the Freudian ego-ideal).[1073]

If we follow this line of thinking, taking ego-formation itself to be a defense against a primal, overwhelming reality, we can go quite far in making sense of certain of Freud's pronouncements. For example, he admits that he owes the postulate of the primary process as hallucinatory to the phenomenon of dreams: dreams "are *wish-fulfillments* – that is, primary processes following upon experiences of satisfaction… It is precisely from this that I am inclined

---

[1071] "Supplement," SE **14**:222.

[1072] The claims to nourishment that require the infant to suck and swallow, for example, are frequently prejudicial to the claims to continued breathing, and the coordination of both must be learned.

[1073] Here I am following a suggestion of Laplanche's with regard to sleep (*New Foundations*, pp. 94-5), one that – as we shall see – is far from foreign to Freud's texts. Laplanche later claims directly that "[t]he stage (or repeated stages) of the emergence of the ego … has to be described as a period of *primary narcissism*" (134, original emphasis).

to infer *that primary wishful investment, too, was of a hallucinatory nature.*[1074] Furthermore, as we saw in chapter 5, Freud's own investigation of the ego as such (in, e.g., "On Narcissism") only becomes possible in the context of studying psychosis, which he takes to be precisely a withdrawal from the world. Similarly, he compares the wish to sleep to the rejection or refusal (*Verleugnung*) of reality in amentia, when the ego simply denies a real loss that it finds unbearable.[1075]

Here we find a second mode of negation – one proper to the internalization of the organism in ego-formation, and one that is central to the structure of psychosis. As we saw (chapter 5, section I.G), Freud compares rejection (*Verleugnung* or *Verwerfung*) to repression (*Verdrängung*): the latter "treats internal unpleasurable stimuli as if they were external – that is to say, reckons them as belonging to the external world,"[1076] while the former rejects the external world as having any import or interest for the psyche at all. In other words, just as repression makes use of the internal/external distinction by treating drive-pressures as alien, something escapable, so rejection *in fact* does its best to escape from the demands of the shared world.

In sleep, however, such rejection is incomplete. What Freud calls the day's residues (*Tagesreste*), the thoughts and impulses and emotions not adequately worked over from the previous day, retain a certain investment, even when all other investments are withdrawn and turned to the ego. These day's residues, then, function in one way as Trojan horses, threatening to betray the withdrawal into sleep by giving the other drives vehicles of expression in the psyche. Dreams, which present the residues as if they were external perceptions (i.e., as hallucinations), are thus the psyche's way of defending its sleep against its restless drives.[1077] This *projection*

[1074] "Project," SE **1**:340, original emphasis.

[1075] "Supplement," SE **14**:233. Cp. "Formulations," SE **12**:219n3: "a prerequisite of sleep is a deliberate *Verleugnung* of reality (the wish to sleep)."

[1076] "Formulations," SE **12**:219n4, trans. mod.

[1077] "Supplement," SE **14**:223-24. In another way, the day's residues provide an outlet for the tension of repressed wishes, which would otherwise wake us up, and so actually aid our sleep.

(externalization of an internal claim) mimics the process of repression, only in reverse, and complements the rejection of reality that is involved in fulfilling the claim to sleep.

If this line of thought is supportable as a reading of Freud, we can make two observations. First, the self-preservative drives, which appeared to function so smoothly in the static account given earlier, now show themselves, in their emergence and intramural conflict, to be overwhelming and frightening as well as useful. (We shall see in a moment something similar with regard to the sexual drives.) Openness and responsiveness to reality may be good and beautiful, but it is a significant achievement (known as *primal repression*) to reach the point of psychic structuring from which they appear that way (see section II.A.4, below). In Freud's words, "[a] strong egoism [i.e., a flight inward] is a protection against falling ill."[1078]

Second, we may observe that if ego-formation is itself already a defense against overwhelming reality, then reality for Freud is *not* understood merely as a correlate of internal representations, somehow to be reached from a kind of Cartesian closure.[1079] It is, rather, a kind of baseline, to which all psychic formation is a series of responses.[1080]

To this second claim, which sums up one major thesis of the present chapter, someone might object that Freud's accounts of reality-testing frequently characterize what stems from the self (including the body) as unreal, in contrast to external reality. In the very paper that I am interpreting here, he says, for example, "What is unreal, merely presented, subjective, is only internal; the other, what is real, is also there *outside* [*Draußen*]."[1081]

By this he means only that everything unreal is also internal – in other words, only we can make things up. I have argued above that the drive-pressures themselves in a way come from outside (since they present themselves as oriented to real satisfactions), so that what seems

---

[1078] "Narcissism," SE **14**:85.
[1079] This much is Cohen's thesis; see "Freud's Baby."
[1080] Lacan, too, recognizes this. Cf. *Seminar 1*, p. 49, on the porosity of the child.
[1081] "Negation," SE **19**:237, trans. mod.

internal is in a way external; but perhaps this is a sophistical distinction. At any rate, even if this objection holds, it says nothing about whether or not the originary situation – which is *not* auto-erotism – is awash in reality or closed in on itself.

But someone might further object that when Freud compares sleep to the primary process, he takes the autistic closure of sleep to mimic the originary situation of the organism itself, not just primary process functioning as an aspect of a more complicated organism. In a footnote to "Formulations," for example, he claims that "the state of sleep is able to re-establish the likeness [*Ebenbild*] of mental life as it was before the recognition [*Anerkennung*] of reality."[1082]

I can respond to this second objection in three ways. 1) First, by pointing out (following Laplanche) that if the originary situation were really like sleep, there would be no difference for the infant between sleep and waking.[1083] This is surely nonsense. Even in the womb, the infant is sometimes awake and sometimes asleep.

Its being nonsense, however, by no means entails that Freud did not say it, especially since I have been emphasizing the mythical quality of this originary situation. So, 2) let us recall what I have tried to show above: that for Freud (at least at certain moments) the originary relation to reality is pre-intentional[1084] – i.e., one does not experience a coherent 'reality' as such, but only a conflicting mass of claims and solicitations, of which only the weak ones fail to be marked as real. This is still a relation to what is real (not a closed-off, purely hallucinatory state), but as awash in it; it is logically prior to the birth of the as-such, so there is no difference between dreams and perceptions. Full-fledged reality-testing, which can properly be called a 'recognition' of reality, only emerges subsequently.

[1082] "Formulations," SE **12**:219n4.
[1083] Laplanche, *New Foundations*, p. 95.
[1084] In Heidegger's terms, it is not oriented by an understanding of being.

Indeed, it is to something like this fragmented pressure of solicitations that one regresses in psychosis, except that (as we saw in chapter 5, section I.G), psychosis remains haunted by the dispossessed fragments of meaningful relations to the shared world. Such fragments are cut adrift from worldly organization, and thus are primarily oppressive, but this is not the same as simply being awash in disorganized stimuli.

3) My third response requires an account of the emergence of the sexual drives. This is appropriate to the objection, since Freud claims that, in sleep, "the libido [regresses] to the point of restoring primary narcissism, while [the ego] goes back to the stage of hallucinatory satisfaction of wishes."[1085] The 'libido' to which he refers here is psychic energy stemming from the sexual drives, which, we saw above, emerge by being stripped off of the self-preservative (or ego) drives. This stripping-off is occasioned by the enigmatic quality of the caretaker's sexual investment of certain activities and of certain zones of the body. And it takes place as a more or less gradual relocation of pleasure in response to seduction, from enjoyment of the meeting of a self-preservative need (pleasure of satiety) to enjoyment of the activity itself, including enjoyment of the sheer stimulation of the erogenous regions.

But focus on the activity as the locus of enjoyment means that the object – the support for the activity, for example the person with whom one does it – begins to matter less and less. The pleasure comes from stimulation of the organ (touching of the lips, for example), with less regard for the object (who does the touching). Indeed, it may be best if one does it oneself. At any rate, one *can* do it oneself, in many cases, and so the organ becomes its own object, the support for its own pleasure. This is what Freud refers to as the *auto-erotism*[1086] (or, here, as the *primary*

[1085] "Supplement," SE **14**:222-23, trans. mod.
[1086] Freud, "Instincts," SE **14**:132.

narcissism[1087]) of sexuality. It is important, however, that auto-erotism is primary to sexuality only insofar as the latter comes to be fully distinct from the self-preservative drives. Hence, Freud claims already in the *Three Essays* that when

> the first beginnings of sexual satisfaction are still linked with the taking of nourishment, the sexual instinct has a sexual object outside the infant's own body [which, we may add, is itself not yet well-defined psychically] in the shape of his mother's breast. It is only later that the instinct loses that object […]. As a rule the sexual instinct then becomes auto-erotic.[1088]

A second contributor to this auto-erotic turn that marks the emergence of a new kind of drive is related very precisely to the formation of the ego that is taking place in this step of the developmental story. Freud says less about this, but Laplanche and others have filled it in for us. Just as the solicitations of the external world can be oppressive, turning the infant in on itself, so can the enigmatic sexuality of the caretakers. There is a *helplessness of love*, as well, complementary to the omnipotence of the caretaker.

On one hand, because the person who provides for the infant's needs communicates love to the infant precisely thereby, and is occasionally evidently disappointed in the child, the infant will feel the difference between the capacity of the caretaker to love and its own capacity to love, and will nonetheless want (and, increasingly, feel responsible) not to disappoint. On the other hand, because the caretaker both provides and refuses to provide for reasons that the infant cannot understand, it will feel itself completely at the mercy of the caretaker's whim – in other words, without any realm over which it has control or in which it can have its own desires.[1089] This two-fold feeling of its own helplessness, as excessively responsible and yet as divested of any realm under its own control, fearful of being crushed by the love of the caretaker, motivates it to withdraw into itself.

[1087] Geyskens points out that it is in his further investigations of psychosis that Freud will come to designate auto-erotism as a turn away from objects altogether (like schizophrenia), reserving the term 'narcissism' for a turn away from currently external objects toward the self (like paranoia) (*Our Original Scenes*, ch. 4).

[1088] *Three Essays*, SE **7**:222, my addition in brackets.

[1089] Cf. Philippe van Haute, *Against Adaptation*, pp. 112-19.

Let us mark this as a felt *betrayal*, which is one meaning of what Freud calls 'frustration' (*Versagung*), from which the child mentally flees back to its own self. This makes clear that the child's relation to its primary caretakers is always a question of trust, but also that it is really a *question* of trust, that whatever assumptive security-trust (see chapter I, section II.A) the infant may have is structurally challenged here. It seems that a personal trust in the parent is called for, one that can survive such betrayals. Should such personal trust fail to arise, the child's full adoption of the parent's world is at risk.

Since the sexual drives emerge from a multitude of particular enjoyable activities, they are initially dispersed and multiple. Eventually, and even then only to a certain extent, these drives may come to be united upon a single loved person, more or less organized around the unity of genital pleasure. Initially, however, they are simply claims to (bodily as well as temporally) isolated re-enactments of previous satisfactions – what may be called organ pleasures.[1090] They may be more or less concentrated on the typical erogenous zones, but Freud goes so far as to say that pretty much any motion or activity can become eroticized for the child.[1091] This means that the involvement of another person, while perhaps necessary for one or a few such pleasures, will certainly not be necessary for all of them. So it is their very style of emergence that makes possible their initial auto-erotism, neither centered on a singular object nor (at least in some cases) necessarily involving another person.

Thus, it is in the primary auto-erotism of sexuality, along with the sleep-like retreat into ego-formation, that we *do* find something like the infant closed in on itself, concerned only with satisfying its sexual drives, perhaps with little reference to the external world. The very existence of those drives is not originary – they emerged by leaning on the externally oriented self-preservative drives, and they were peeled off by the solicitations of other people – but they *are*

[1090] *Three Essays*, SE **7**:168, 204, 233; "Instincts," SE **14**:126.
[1091] *Three Essays*, SE **7**:233. Laplanche also emphasizes this in *Life and Death*.

originary insofar as the sexual realm is concerned. Furthermore, with their emergence, the psyche defensively regresses to being governed by the primary process, which presents itself as originary for the reasons given earlier. This is the same regression that the psychotic break retraces, should it later occur.

In this circumstance, then, there lies a confusing ambiguity that leads to frequent, perhaps unavoidable confusions on Freud's part and gives rise to the objection – namely, that Freud takes the autistic closure of sleep to mimic the originary situation of the organism itself. For it is this 'primary narcissism' to which the sleeper's *libido* regresses that Freud then pairs with the *ego's* regression to hallucinatory satisfaction.[1092] But in "Narcissism," written roughly a year before the "Metapsychological Supplement," he makes clear that primary narcissism belongs to the sexual drives, not the self-preservative (or ego) drives. There he says that it presupposes the auto-erotism of the libido, but we have already seen that the sexual drives emerge only from the self-preservative drives. The realm of sexuality only *pretends* to be originary; in fact, it occurs only *after* the initial formation of the ego.

Although sexuality, too, obeys the pleasure principle as if free of the reality principle, it is not the same as the (mythical) primal moment; it is necessarily a turn to primary process functioning precisely as an abandonment of the secondary process. Indeed, as suggested by the analogy with sleep, this same regression occurs as part of the ego's formation. When the external world and the omnipotence of the caretaker become too overwhelming for the infant, it withdraws (rather imperfectly) into its newly formed self-image, refusing (as far as possible) to engage with anything external.

Perhaps we can see best what Freud means about this from a rather vivid description in *Civilization and Its Discontents*: "the frequent, manifold, and unavoidable sensations of pain and

---

[1092] See the quotation above, from "Supplement" (SE **14**: 222-3): in sleep, "the libido [regresses] to the point of restoring primary narcissism, while [the ego] goes back to the stage of hallucinatory satisfaction of wishes."

unpleasure" act as "incentive[s] to a disengagement of the ego from the general mass of sensations." Just as we continue to do periodically in sleep, early on we respond to overwhelming reality through a withdrawal, an attempt "to separate from the ego everything that can become a source of such unpleasure, to throw it outside and to create a pure pleasure-ego"[1093] – i.e., an ego with (partially developed) secondary processing capacities that nonetheless lives by the pleasure principle.

3. Negation: Repression (*Verdrängung*) as Refusal to Think

> [T]he original pleasure-ego [*Lust-Ich*] wants to introject into itself everything that is good and to eject [*werfen*] from itself everything that is bad. What is bad, what is alien to the ego and what is external are, initially [*zunächst*], identical.[1094]

Here we have the third step of the process: the ego as defensively obeying the pleasure principle, making judgments for the first time, but only of the predicative sort (e.g., 'x is bad,' regardless of x's status as real). I list this as a third step, differentiating it from the second step (ego-formation as distinguishing between internal and external), in order to mark a moment in Freud's work when he refers to that second step as "the original 'reality-ego'."[1095] His distinction, made only in the essay on drives, is based on two ways of differentiating between internal and external. The reality-ego does so in the terms laid out above: what can be made to go away by specific action (external) vs. what is inescapable (internal). As we saw, this is what Leclaire calls 'immediacy-testing'. By contrast, the pleasure-ego, as is by now evident, differentiates on the

---

[1093] *Civilization and Its Discontents*, SE **21**:67.

[1094] "Negation," SE **19**:237, trans. mod.

[1095] "Instincts," SE **14**:136. As an indication of Freud's confusion about this, see his footnote (and Strachey's editorial addition) to "Instincts" (SE **14**:34-35n2). Freud claims in 1911 ("Formulations") that there is a progression from pleasure-ego to reality-ego; in 1915 ("Instincts") that both proceed, in the same order, from a more originary reality-ego; in 1925 ("Negation") that "the definitive reality-ego … develops out of the initial pleasure-ego." He repeats this last position in *Civilization*, SE **21**:67-8. Cf. Cohen's article, "Freud's Baby," which discusses this uncertainty on Freud's part and follows David Rapaport in considering the pleasure-ego and reality-ego to be "simultaneous processes," response options between which the ego chooses in any given conflict. My own solution (which follows) is inspired by Laplanche's emphasis on the self as structurally self-deceptive in fantasizing (i.e., creating myths about) its own past. (Although I think Cohen is right insofar as psychic structures are never simply abandoned.)

basis of the primary process: what is pleasurable (internal) vs. what is unpleasurable (external). In other words, where the reality-ego asks, 'Is it *really* inside or outside me?' the pleasure-ego asks, 'Should it (in terms of my wishes) be inside or outside?'

Whether or not the original reality-ego is formed defensively, as I argued above, what Freud designates here as the pleasure-ego is clearly defensive in its orientation. Although it presupposes both of the steps we have seen so far, it responds to the frustrations inherent in reality not by *thinking* but by fleeing to the pleasure principle, leaving the reality principle behind. That is, it "can do nothing but *wish*, work for a yield of pleasure, and avoid unpleasure."[1096] Wishing, as we have seen, is simply investing a memory-image of a previous satisfaction. And as Freud says in the book on dreams, the primary process aims "to produce a 'perceptual identity' – a repetition of the perception which was linked with the satisfaction of the need."[1097] Thus, the question is only one of matching up what is perceived with what I remember, aiming at predicative unities.[1098] The general formula for such judgment is given in the "Project": "[T]he dissimilarity between the wish-investment of a memory and a perception-investment that is similar to it … gives the impetus for the activity of thought, which is terminated once more [in action] with their coincidence."[1099] A presentation has the intensity – and thus the status – of a perception.[1100] Does it satisfy? In other words, does it belong to the set of presentations that are

---

[1096] "Formulations," SE **12**:223, original emphasis.

[1097] *Interpretation*, SE **5**:566.

[1098] Obviously, not all predicative judgments are to be ascribed to the pleasure-ego. The important point is only that predicative unity in terms of one's claims for satisfaction is prior to the more complex and ascetic predications of secondary process thinking.

[1099] "Project," SE **1**:328, trans. mod.

[1100] Here Freud's own description of the pleasure-ego betrays the latter's pretense. Freud says that the question is "whether something perceived (a thing) [*etwas Wahrgenommenes (ein Ding)*] shall be taken into the ego or not" ("Negation," SE **19**:237, trans. mod). I take this to mean 'something with the intensity of a perception' (i.e., including a hallucination) because he says elsewhere that the pleasure-ego seeks hallucinatory fulfillment, but it is also the case that the pleasure-ego, as ego, at some level differentiates between what is perceived and what is hallucinated; thus it is also fitting that its question be put in terms of uniting a real, perceived Thing (the 'constant perceptual component' of the "Project" (SE **1**:328)) with its relevant attribute ('good' or 'bad'). The process might be imagined along the following lines: Here is a thing. Is it tasty? (Prior to language, this means something like: satisfying or not? To be consumed or not?)

good (hence, to be joined to the ego)? Or does it belong to the set of those that are bad (hence, alien to the ego)?

This means that although, being an ego, the pleasure-ego does *in fact* inhibit hallucination, presenting things as perceptions (real) or fantasies (unreal), it does not let this distinction make a practical difference. Rather, it indulges freely in fantasies of satisfaction and pretends like they are sufficient.[1101] For, in fact, with the emergence of sexual pleasure (whose relation with fantasy Freud always acknowledges to be very close), fantasies *can be* sufficient for satisfaction in the auto-erotic realm of sexuality. Although this does not make them sufficient for self-preservative pleasure, we saw from their manner of emergence that the sexual pleasure and the self-preservative pleasure taken in an activity can be joined in confusing ways, and perhaps can even pretend for a time to substitute for one another.

Moreover, because the pleasure-ego is formed as a response to frustration – the frustration that arises when it seems like the need-satisfactions are being refused – its regression to the primary process appears as an attempt to regain a fantasized originary state: that of itself as a plenum, containing all and only goodness. This is a modification of the ego's basic fantasy of being completely self-unified. As specifically a pleasure-ego, it seeks to include in that unification the good caretaker (or, rather, all the things that bring it pleasure, including some facets of the caretaker). Rather than a world split between the stable self and permanent object(s), between which there could be a relation – and both of which could be at times satisfying ('good') and at times not – the world (in fact a kind of hybrid self-object) is split between good and bad. Like auto-erotism as a pretended self-sufficiency of sexuality, then, the pleasure-ego's repeated attempt to completely reinvest a never-extant primal state of unity with the mother – in which

---

[1101] Cp. Cohen's characterization: "The pleasure-ego replaces realistic recognition of dependency on the part-object [e.g., the breast] with omnipotence and persecutory anxiety: recognition of drives pressing from inside and the need-satisfier as absent gives way to delusions of possession and the perception that all unpleasurable tensions originate from without" (p. 887-8).

satisfaction would never be denied – by proceeding according to the primary process appears in analysis as a kind of pretense to originarity (i.e., a kind of Romantic fantasy: 'this is how things used to be').[1102]

If the form of negation in the previous step was rejection (*Verleugnung* or *Verwerfung*), i.e., keeping out what is already out, refusing it completely, the pleasure-ego continues this at a certain level but adds to it repression (*Verdrängung*): treating as alien what is within, ejecting (*von sich werfen*) it. In other words, where 'flight' is simply independent of thought, and rejection forecloses on a condition for the possibility of thought, repression is a *refusal to think* about (in the sense of recognizing or accepting) whatever might sully the self's goodness. It is a response to the infant's own frustration (*Versagung*), one which projects that frustration onto whatever seems to be denying it satisfaction. Like the pleasure-ego itself, this form of negation is a primary-process reaction (a version of fleeing) in an individual otherwise governed by both psychic processes.

Here we can get some purchase on Freud's repeated story: that of the failure of the primary process to avoid unpleasure (its frustration), which leads to an acceptance of the reality principle. For now both kinds of principles are available to the individual. It has an ego that is constantly trying to more thoroughly unify itself by expelling whatever it considers 'bad', but as a pleasure-ego it is trying to get by with using only one of the two principles of psychic engagement with the world. It makes sense, then, that within an environment where its needs are mostly but not completely (and certainly not immediately) met by its caretakers, it could gradually learn that the reality-principle is necessary. It can realize that satisfaction really is not hallucinatory, even if it would prefer things otherwise.

[1102] Cp. Lacan's account of fantasy as maintaining desire by substituting partial objects for the unapproachable Thing (*Seminar 6*).

This realization is a matter of coming to trust the world as a whole, to belong to it, to let it be disclosed as capable of sustaining me and worthy of my full investment in it. That investment centrally involves moving beyond the pleasure ego, letting reality (truth and falsity) matter to me as something other than a frustration. I have said that such primitive trust emerges in a circulation with personal trusting, and here we can see what that means. If the child is taken care of by more or less trustworthy adults ('good-enough parents'), then these adults act as representatives of what will show up as a good-enough world. The child is then seduced into (involuntarily) transferring its trust to that world. But it must already have had some measure of primitive trust in order to come to personally trust its parents, in such a way that its trust could survive the inevitable frustrations and the structurally overpowering situation. So the two kinds of trust seem to emerge together, or perhaps they are simply not differentiated until later – maybe there is not yet a difference for the child between its parents as people and the structure of its world. (Maybe at first they do not act as representatives of but simply *as* the world's structure.)

However we wish to parse those details, if I am right that the pleasure ego is a defensive retreat from an already available reality-principle, and that the child must be solicited or seduced into affirming the shared world by trust in its parents, then this is strong evidence that primitive trust and personal trust belong together in a kind of circulation.

Before moving on to the final step, let me give an example at least of the phenomenon in adult life to which Freud is pointing. For simplicity, recall Sartre's café scenario (cf. chapter 2, above):

I am expecting to meet Pierre at a certain café. (This, then, is my wish, correlated in this example to the internal claim of the drive to the enjoyment of seeing or speaking with Pierre.) I walk in, and my gaze searches the room. I see someone who looks like him and move toward the person, but as I draw nearer I notice that it is not really Pierre. (The perceived person is similar to but not identical to my presentation. There is a mismatch between intention and satisfaction,

already noted by immediacy-testing.) Now, according to Freud, there are two ways to respond to this disappointment. I can simply decide that in fact it must be him, repressing all frustration, and continue on as if it *were* him, taking the person to be Pierre and even treating him accordingly. This is the response of the pleasure-ego. Alternatively, I could examine the situation more closely, comparing my presentation of Pierre with the man in front of me, keeping open both the possibility of a mistake in my memory, such that this *is* Pierre, and of a mistake in location (one or the other of us got the time or place wrong), such that it is not. The result of my reality-testing may well be that I end up waiting for Pierre or going to another café in an attempt to bring my presentation into unity with my perception. This is the response of the reality-ego.

The pleasure-ego tries to cover up the fact that there are two steps here. There is first the mismatch between the invested presentation and its lack of satisfaction, and only *then* the (probably unconscious) decision to reject disappointment. The pleasure-ego, however, carries on more or less delusionally, as if this really were Pierre, pretending that the moment of immediacy-testing never happened. Thus, the confused stranger's attempts to convince me that he is not Pierre are either ignored or interpreted as a kind of conspiracy against me – he is playing a trick on me, and the more insistent he is, the more unkind the trick. Above all, it must not be my fault for arriving at the wrong café or at the wrong time.

4. Symbolic Negation

> [T]he final [*endgültig*] reality-ego […] develops out of the initial [*anfänglich*] pleasure-ego. It is now [a question of] whether something which is in the ego as a presentation [*Vorstellung*] can be rediscovered in perception (reality) as well. It is, we see, once more a question of *external and internal*. […] In this stage of development, regard for the pleasure principle has been set aside. Experience has taught that it is not only important whether a thing (an object of satisfaction) possesses the 'good' attribute and so deserves to be taken into the ego, but also whether it is there in the external world, so that one can get hold of it whenever one needs it. […] The first and immediate aim, therefore, of reality-testing is, not to *find* an object in real perception which corresponds to the one presented, but to *refind* such an object, to convince oneself that it is still there.[1103]

[1103] "Negation," SE **19**:237-38, original emphasis, trans. mod.

Now we have reached the ego that acknowledges its need for the consistency of external reality (what is called 'object-permanence'). Having been exhausted by its efforts to maintain hallucination long enough to outlast the constant drive-pressures (without any sufficient source of energy for those attempts), the psyche as pleasure-ego finds itself betrayed by its own attempt to live by the primary process and has to "resolve [*entschließen*] to form a conception of the real circumstances in the external world and to exert itself to alter them."[1104] The symbolic 'forming of conceptions' differs from hallucination as dipping one's foot in the water differs from leaping in: it allows for what phenomenology would call emptily intending, thinking of something without its being present perceptually. As the entrance of symbols into the order of images, it allows one to remain at a certain distance from imagination. It is a measure not of how involved one is in reality as a whole but of how much one is willing to commit to some entity as real in the current situation. In Freud's terms, forming a conception involves only tentatively investing a presentation, so as to delay (and thereby bring about more reliably) satisfaction.[1105] By 'exert itself to alter' the real circumstances, Freud means acting specifically or adequately in a coordinated response to both the internal claim and the external situation.

Negation at this stage is no longer repression (refusing to think about something, not wanting to know it) but precisely *thinking* something: purposefully attending to it as a presentation, at first somewhat independently of its instantiation in reality but eventually adding a judgment as to the propositional truth or falsity of the presentation. Thus, I can consciously think about getting revenge on someone, and even plan it elaborately, without actually doing it: I both affirm it (as a wish) and negate it (refusing to invest the relevant motor actions, even if only for a time). Further, I can consider whether or not (or, later, in what ways) *I* am bad; I can subject that

---

[1104] "Formulations," SE **12**:219, trans. mod.
[1105] "[T]hinking possesses the capacity to make present once more [*wieder gegenwärtig zu machen*] something that has once been perceived, by reproducing [*Reproduktion*] it as a presentation [*Vorstellung*] without the external object having still to be there" ("Negation," SE **19**:237).

presentation (myself as the source of frustration) to the judgment of truth or falsity, precisely *as* a presentation that may or may not match reality.

It is with this final step that truth as correctness appears in its full force. The negation (and thus mediation) made possible by symbolic thinking characterizes the rest of the ego's reality-submitted development throughout its life, even though that submission to reality is never simply taken over whole-heartedly. As a founded mode of activity, we find that thinking *logically presupposes* each of the first two steps. What is encountered perceptually must be taken as real (the 'indication of reality'), and what is not perceived but only presented must be taken as unreal (immediacy-testing, an inhibition which requires the ego). The distinction between internal and external must also be in place, since it is marked out in the very formation of the ego.

According to Freud's psychogenetic account, thinking also *temporally presupposes* the third step (the pleasure-ego), for it is constituted as a way of tentatively exploring the situation before fully investing a memory of satisfaction. It is, in that sense, a response to the *failure* of the pleasure-ego: this version of the reality-ego emerges in the resolute taking-up of the realization that sheer intentional givenness (e.g., a memory-presentation) is not yet enough to satisfy the claims of the drives. Giving thought to something, which for Freud obeys the reality principle, is thus in fact a roundabout way of satisfying the pleasure principle.[1106] It is the process of delaying action (i.e., the full investment of motor neurons) by small investments of memory and perceptual neurons. One casts about, both in the presently given external world and in one's memories, seeking certain unities. Where the pleasure-ego stopped with the discovery of unities between its psychic presentations and its wishes – this is the precursor to *predicative* judgments – the reality-ego additionally delays full investment until it finds a sufficient unity between the whole object as psychically presented (the 'empty intention', along with the pressure of the internal claim) and

---

[1106] "Formulations," SE **12**:223.

448

the perceived, external situation. This latter unity is an *existential judgment*, founded on but transcending the various *predicative judgments*.

As a temporary delay of action, then, thinking for Freud is preeminently practical. Its sole work is to "strive for what is *useful* and guard itself against damage"[1107]; or, as he puts it in the passage from "Negation" quoted at length above, to ensure that one 'can get hold of the object whenever one needs it'.[1108] Freud takes this way of engaging with the situation to be an extension of reality-testing. It is an advance over mere presenting (*Vorstellen*), or what I am calling predicative judgments, but it need not yet be what Freud understands by conscious thought, namely, proceeding at the level of awareness. We process and judge any number of things every day without attending to that processing as such, and so Freud calls it the 'unconscious thinking-process' (*unbewusstes Denkprozess*).[1109] Conscious thought, for Freud, implies by contrast the use of language, which requires the further association of objects (both presented and perceived) with word-presentations.[1110]

This primary practical orientation can, according to Freud, give way to theoretical consideration either in the absence of strong drive-pressures[1111] or in the presence of significant differences between the object as psychically presented (remembered) and the object as perceived. The "reproduction of a perception as a presentation is not always a faithful one; it may be modified by omissions, or changed by the merging of various elements. In that case, reality-testing has to ascertain how far such distortions go."[1112] To return to our example by modifying it a bit, I might be led, after failing several different times to meet up with Pierre, to a more

---

[1107] *Ibid.*, original emphasis.

[1108] In Heidegger's terms: thought is at first and most of the time about the ready-to-hand (*Zuhandenes*).

[1109] Heidegger agrees here as well, although he would call this version of 'unconscious' simply the structure of concealment upon which disclosure is founded. Freud's 'unconscious thought-process' is not repressed but only unnoticed or pre-linguistic, so he and Heidegger disagree on this point only in terminology.

[1110] "Formulations," SE **12**:219.

[1111] Through satisfaction *or* sublimation. See the first chapter of *Civilization* (SE **21**) for a catalogue of ways to deal with the drives.

[1112] "Negation," SE **19**:238.

fundamental consideration of the whole situation, although still ultimately with a practical orientation. Nevertheless – modifying once more – if I were to arrive at where I thought there was a café and discover that there was just nothing there, this might push me out of the practical orientation entirely, into something like the pathlessness (*aporia*) in which the ancient Greeks began their reconsiderations of basic assumptions. At that point, I would respond with a very complex attempt to compare some of my more fundamental presentations to the experienced (and baffling) reality. Hence we have here reality-testing in its full, two-fold complexity: not only seeking whether certain intended objects are real, but also considering the nature of reality as such (i.e., the meaning of being).

What of this claim of Freud's that reality-testing proper proceeds by trying to 'refind' an object already once given perceptually? What can this mean for our relation to being? From one perspective, this can be understood as a general, psychological description of what has just been described as the thinking process – i.e., as 'convincing oneself that the object is still there'. From another perspective, however, it also refers to the specific situation of the infant's helpless dependence. When the psyche becomes capable of full intentional life through this fourth step, then the primary caretaker can emerge as a whole, self-unified object, over against the ego's distinct self (a self which can now also be unified as one ego, since it is allowed to be recognized as something other than the sum of all good). Rather than a series of part-objects, some good, some bad, the primary caretaker becomes available as something like a real person, functioning with her own desires in various shared contexts that fill out a world.

Yet Freud points out that just at the moment of accepting the other as a self-unifying person separate from the self, one's fantasized complete unity with her (the retrospective goal of the pleasure-ego) appears as impossible. "This object [the mother's breast] is later lost, perhaps at the very time when it becomes possible for the child to form a total presentation of [himself, i.e.,

of] the person to whom the organ granting him satisfaction belongs."[1113] With the emergence of the ego, which makes possible the sexual turn from sheer auto-erotism to primary narcissism, inevitably comes the irretrievable loss of the fantasized object. All real unity now must be acknowledged – practically, even if not theoretically – to include difference.

The reality-ego thus gives up the fantasized satisfaction of the pleasure principle in order to submit to the more complex consistency of the reality principle. Being is both pleasant and unpleasant, objects are unities that both satisfy and frustrate, and reality has its own, differentiated unity, one that can be generally trusted, even when it is disappointing to my wishes. Thus, mediation – access to the world that can be rebuffed by and learn from that world – is gained at the cost of enjoyment. The ego accepts partial satisfactions because it recognizes that if its demand is all-or-nothing, it will end up with nothing. This is what we earlier designated 'accepting castration': there are laws of reality that force compliance; these laws are symbolically enforced by other people; thus one cannot have everything, beginning with the fantasized fusion with one's primary caretaker.

Notice, then, what else is presupposed by this emergence into the realm of mediated truth and falsity: a summons into the shared world, and enough trust in the person making the summons that one can thereby trust that the world will provide *something* if one gives up the demand for everything. That summons, furthermore, cannot simply be peremptory, or it will be suffered as only another overwhelming demand made by the world. It must rather have the character of invitation – we could even say, of seduction. For a child is invited not only into *some* world, *some* structured way of relating to things, but into a specific world, a particular clearing.[1114]

[1113] *Three Essays*, SE **7**:222, trans. mod.
[1114] I return to this below, chapter 7, part III.

This way of putting the matter should remind us that submission to the reality principle must also, eventually, be undergone by the sexual drives. I said above that these kinds of drives are not less intense, only more inward. In Freud's words: "The continuance of auto-erotism is what makes it possible to retain for so long the easier momentary and imaginary satisfaction in relation to the sexual object in place of real satisfaction, which calls for effort and postponement."[1115] Because the sexual drives begin with a turn away from objects, they are not so susceptible to being denied by the caretakers (although their being symbolically forbidden will give rise to other problems). And because the child is inherently unprepared for its encounter with adult sexuality, there is a latency period until puberty, during which sexuality remains undeveloped in comparison to the rest of the child's psychic functioning. Thus, Freud indicates that "the sexual drive is held up in its psychical development and remains far longer [than the ego-drives] under the dominance of the pleasure principle, from which in many people it is never able to withdraw."[1116] Fantasy continues to reign in the realm of sexuality.

These structural features allow for a more gradual transition (never fully completed) into the realm of the reality-principle. But precisely as stretched out over time, that transition also highlights the complexity of a mediated relation to reality. Questions about one's own origins from one's parents, about sexual difference, and about the differences between kinds of love give rise to childhood sexual theories that get worked into fantasy (chapter 7, part III). Confusing desires, painful renunciation, overwhelming attachment first to one and then to another person, defiance, and fantasy itself all play their roles in this transition. And that is only a description of the Oedipal complex, which has to be sorted out (initially) in early childhood! The self has not yet even reached puberty. Yet the structural problem of the Oedipal situation can be put quite generally: we must somehow navigate the role of a third, an interloper, in the middle of – and as

---

[1115] "Formulations," SE **12**:223.
[1116] *Ibid.*, p. 222, trans. mod.

part of – being seduced into a full affirmation of the shared world that transcends a merely dual relation.

The structurally necessary loss of this fantasized object (i.e., of complete unity) thus affects both sets of drives in a way that could be called traumatic, even if it does not constitute full-blown trauma.[1117] In the case of the ego drives, it reinstates a kind of helplessness and thus revives the infantile feeling of panic when abandoned (i.e., radical passivity), which can also be named 'death-anxiety.' This anxious helplessness is, according to Geyskens, precisely what we are compelled to repeat in neurosis – it is the original traumatic structure to which all future traumata recur. In the case of the sexual drives, the initial object-loss produces a constant seeking of the lost object in various partial objects. Subsequent failure of such objects to satisfy does not, in this case, leave one passive (helpless) but instead turns the drive back once more toward auto-erotism,[1118] whether in the mild form of frustrated masturbation after a break-up, or in the all-encompassing form of catatonic schizophrenia after a betrayal by the whole world.

If Freud is right about this necessarily conflictual progress of development, then the costs of psychic achievement are not trivial. In the course of thinking through Freud's account, I hope to have made it plausible that what one achieves just is ontological freedom, thought in the Heideggerian sense as an understanding of being, a structured, responsive openness that allows for intentional world-directedness. Although Freud's account is quite different, they are addressing the same phenomenon. Yet the price of this freedom is, according to Freud, at minimum either neurosis (a symptomatic and deeply conflicted sexuality) or sublimation (a continual reorganization of one's desires that includes a heavy component of renunciation). Perhaps this is nothing new philosophically, but let me press the point. What Heidegger calls the

---

[1117] For an argument that it is important to distinguish between 'traumatic' and 'full-blown trauma', see Greg M. Horowitz, "A Late Adventure of the Feelings: Loss, Trauma, and the Limits of Psychoanalysis," in *The Trauma Controversy*, eds. Kristen Brown Golden and Bettina G. Bergo (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009), pp. 23-44.
[1118] Geyskens, *Our Original Scenes*, pp. 68-74.

anxiety of finitude – the terror of non-being that psychoanalysis also discovers, especially in the fantasy of castration – is also included in the price. We might even be able to say, with Geyskens, that primal repression – this giving up of the fantasized complete unity that I have been describing – implies the following:

> Because of the traumatic kernel of the unconscious [i.e., the loss of the primary object], the subject is essentially concerned with its own disappearance, and subjectivity *is* this continual, compulsive repetition of and resistance to its own disappearance in[to] a radical passivity.[1119]

If we put that in Heidegger's terms: our forgetful, distortive relation to being, which opens us up to what-is, is maintained and endured in the face of a profound threat to this very relation, i.e., in (ontic) anxiety about (ontological) world-collapse.

Through a consideration of the nature of the drives and the story of their emergence, then, I have tried to show that what Freud characterizes as 'internal' always emerges in part as a response to the shared world, whatever may be its later fate. Thus, even physiological claims to satisfaction are structured by the determinateness of their relation to that world, and can be systematically differentiated according to the kind of enjoyment taken. I have suggested that Aristotle's distinction between motion and activity gives a helpful model for understanding such differentiation. Finally, I have tried to show how Freud's story about our earliest psychic development can be made consistent: by finding in it a kind of pretense at the heart of sexuality, a pretense to chronological originality that would support its bid to be central in human life.

B) Implications for Psychosis

Let me try now to sum up what this means for our study of psychosis. Jean Hyppolite emphasizes that the "Negation" article I have been interpreting concludes with a surprising turn. Freud claims that "in analysis we never discover a 'no' in the unconscious."[1120] Is the

---

[1119] *Ibid.*, p. 75. Cf. Bernet, "The Traumatized Subject," p. 169.
[1120] "Negation," SE **19**:239.

unconscious then the one place free of any form of negation? Yet there is surely *destructiveness* among unconscious wishes. Hyppolite also indicates that Freud has given us a way to make sense of that destructiveness just a few lines earlier. For Freud attributes "the general pleasure in negation [or desire to negate, *Verneinungslust*], the negativism which is displayed by some psychotics,"[1121] to a *Triebentmischung*, a decoupling or disentangling of the drive from its objects. By analogy to situations of interpersonal betrayal, we could gloss this as the pleasure that someone in despair might take in burning all connections and walking away. It is thus quite close to regression, which we have seen is a way of understanding the psychotic withdrawal from common sense (chapter 5, section I.D.2).

Freud differentiates this powerful affective negativism from negation in judgment because the latter is made possible by the introduction of a *symbol* that "has endowed thinking with a first measure of freedom […] from the compulsion of the pleasure principle."[1122] This mediating distance opened up by the symbol as a first negation of the thing is precisely what psychosis forecloses on. As a rejection of the costs of the symbolically structured world, it is a refusal or inability to accept for itself the freeing distance that comes with thinking. The trade-off here is thus a matter of the mode that destruction takes: either negation of things by symbols, beginning with primal repression, which turns out to expose us to things in a bearable way, or rejection of the shared world, refusal of the coherence of reality (and thus of common sense), which turns out to expose me to things unbearably by alienating me from their coherent being. The latter kind of exposure weakens and can ultimately destroy any stable, integrated self.

The pleasure in destruction that Freud identifies here is attested to by Kaysen, who lived for a while on the edge of psychosis. She confesses that the drive to destroy at times seemed to be all that was holding her together; though in remaining on the borderline, she still encountered

---

[1121] SE **19**:239, trans. mod.
[1122] SE **19**:239.

things primarily in language. "My ambition was to negate. The world, whether dense or hollow, provoked only my negations. […] All my integrity seemed to lie in saying No."[1123] Whether it was that she had never made the initial foreclosure – in other words, that trusting affirmation had won out from the start – or whether she simply managed to fend off, by this violent verbal negation, the demand for a signifier that would have brought the whole system tumbling down, I do not know. But the edge along which Kaysen moved, the boundary between the world of symbolic negation (mediated openness to reality) and psychosis, is charted in Freud's essay, according to Hyppolite, by a not-quite-parallel indication:

> Affirmation [*Bejahung*] – as a substitute [*Ersatz*] for uniting – belongs to Eros;
> negation – the successor [*Nachfolger*] to expulsion [*Ausstossung*] – belongs to the destruction drive.[1124]

Affirmation here *substitutes* for unification, i.e., replaces it or simply takes over the drive energy oriented toward unification. Eros can be fully expressed in affirmation. But negation, if Hyppolite's reading is right, requires a break, a *succession* that would arrive only after some delay. This allows us to mark expulsion (or rejection, or foreclosure) as the operation of a fundamental destructive attitude that should remind us of the primary process: everything goes away immediately; all unities get dissolved. Freud explicitly ties these primordial possibilities (affirmation and expulsion) to the pleasure-ego, allowing us to locate the place of the original foreclosure within the developmental account we have articulated (section II.A). That foreclosure lies in refusing the move from pleasure-ego (which pretends to have only one mode of processing) to reality-ego (which owns up more or less to its own internal conflicts) – which is the move we have just been discussing under the name of primal repression. Instead of entering the world of symbolic structure that opens up through symbolic negation, the individual refuses that whole world, which is expelled from the self, only to return, externally, as persecution.

[1123] Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*, p. 42.
[1124] "Negation," SE **19**:239.

Hence, we can recognize in the recalcitrant, overwhelmed pleasure-ego the adequately unified self-image that we saw as marking paranoia (by contrast with the perforated body of schizophrenia). The pleasure-ego, refusing both immediacy-testing and reality-testing, yields perceptual certainty with regard to everything, hallucination included. Nevertheless, beyond its pretense, it *is* capable of immediacy-testing, meaning that it can be led to recognize a difference between hallucination and reality – only, as we saw earlier (chapter 5), *without the certainty disappearing* concerning what appears in the hallucination. Richard Boothby illuminates this situation by pointing out that reality-testing allows for the interweaving of presence and absence, in which what is not there can shape what is there. Reality is not simply on or off (like immediacy); it entails uncertainty, which is precisely what paranoia cannot tolerate.[1125]

III. Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that Freudian drive theory not only begins with an understanding of the person as awash in the world and proceeds by understanding the drives to be formed as responses to that world, it also reads the withdrawal from reality (in initial ego-formation or in psychosis) as a failing defensive attempt to avoid what is overwhelming and maintain one's own integrity. This whole picture is summarized nicely by Moyaert, who claims that the schizophrenic, for example, is confronted with the following puzzle:

> how do I get the other, who is always already in me, out of myself? With regard to schizophrenia, it seems that the point of departure of human intersubjectivity is not a solipsistic ego that wants to break out of itself, but a symbiotic entanglement where the outside is in the inside long before there can be any talk of an inside that can withdraw into itself.[1126]

So much, in a way, only brings Freudian analysis close to Heidegger's thinking. What Freud recognizes additionally is that in some way development is optional; it can break down radically, when the costs are too high for a particular person to pay, or when one's trust in the

---

[1125] Boothby, *Freud as Philosopher*, pp. 279-80.
[1126] Moyaert, "Body," p. 52.

adults caring for one is broken or insufficient. This means that our finitude and fragility are not simply a matter of exposure to things *as* being-there; rather, we may refuse (or find it impossible) to be 'there' at all any longer.

<div align="center">

Chapter Seven
"Truth's Tokens Tricks Like These"
wherein Heideggerian Objections are entertained and countered,
whereupon Truth as Openness to World finds its Way through Fantasy[1127]

</div>

Introduction

At the end of our previous discussion of Heidegger's thought (chapters 2-4), I proposed a turn to the matters themselves to see what character our fundamental relation to being might have. Having now examined the possibility of a break with being in significant detail, it remains for us to integrate the insights gained from the matter itself with the discussion of Heidegger's philosophy. Here we must consider Heidegger's criticism of Freud's approach, since so much of our investigation has been indebted to Freud. It will also be necessary to reconsider the matter of trust for Heidegger, so as to articulate more clearly what is questionable in his relation to the great thinkers of the Western tradition.

I. The Challenge
"What does such anxiety, as a destiny of being, have to do with psychology or psychoanalysis?"[1128]

In chapter 5, we interrogated some ways in which a person's relation to reality can radically fall apart, usually involving an experience of having died in some way that is not simply physical cessation. The intent there was to make sense of psychosis as a limit-experience that challenges Heidegger's account of being-there as being-in-the-world, i.e., to call into question his apparent premise that the human being is *always* both in the truth and in the untruth. Let me not neglect to consider a possible response from Heidegger, nor to test one more time the force and plausibility of his position. But I want to begin by being quite clear about the nature of my challenge.

[1127] The title of this chapter is from "Brothers," by Gerard Manley Hopkins. See *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 1ˢᵗ edition, ed. R. Bridges (London: Humphrey Milford, 1918), p. 50, line 22. (The line is altered in more recent editions, which follow one of the four other draft variants.)
[1128] Martin Heidegger, "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'" GA 9:371/*Pathmarks* 282. In context, the question is rhetorical.

Heidegger's position, as we saw (chapter 3), is that being and the human essence (i.e., being-there understood as thinking, waiting, or dying) belong together. We are, essentially, in the truth. Even in the midst of his most apocalyptic concerns about the danger that our essence is exposed to at this point in history (when thinking, waiting, and dying well seem to be disappearing as possibilities), he still interprets that danger as structural to being itself, hence merely as further evidence of its relentlessness in requiring us as the place it can show up. Since Heidegger does not think essence as constant presence, we had to ask how he understands belonging. We discovered that it consistently means being both appropriated and expropriated, being in-between or underway. Thus, we cannot be fully alienated from our essence, any more than we can thoroughly fulfill it. "Think of the extreme case of madness [or delusion: *Wahnsinn*], where the highest degree of consciousness can prevail and still we say: The person is de-ranged, dis-placed, away and yet there."[1129]

But in the meantime, we have seen that what happens in a psychotic break, as baffling as it is to observers, should probably be understood as just such an alienation from the human essence, an endless falling away from the shared world and the organized mattering of truth. In other words, it should probably be understood as a kind of death.

Indeed, it looks as if the pure structure of being-there, as described in *Being and Time* (and affirmed much later, in the *Zollikon Seminars*), were hollowed out in psychosis. In such perpetual anxiety,[1130] a person no longer experiences himself as *amidst* (*bei*) real things, encountered in their being; rather, he suffers amidst disconnected and oppressive remnants. Nor is he *with* other people (*Mitsein*; although the fantastic powers that persecute him may emptily echo other people), *in* a meaningful world that is structured by affectivity, projective understanding, and language (*Befindlichkeit*, *Verstehen*, *Rede*). Rather, he has fallen (or is perpetually falling)

[1129] GA 29/30:95/*Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* 63, trans. mod.
[1130] Recall my discussion of the psychotic's presentation of flat affect as often concealing an incommunicable excess of affect (chapter 5, section I.C).

out of the world: affect is dispersed and appears radically diminished or radically increased, so that attunement fails; understanding is caught between utter bewilderment and a certainty with no distance, no possibility of being wrong, and thus no reality; language is encountered as if from outside, as an immediate bodily effect, or played with as a strange game, not dwelt in as the mediating organizer of a coherent world. Together, these modifications yield a fragmented experience of too much meaning, which refuses to submit to shared structures.

This is not to say that people in annihilation states have *no* contact with things or people, but rather that the organization of "normal" or everyday reality, in which meaning is shared, is now splintered.[1131] What is at stake is not some reality in-itself, which Heidegger has shown to be a matter of high-level abstraction for the human being, but meaningful reality, the world as it lays claim to me. This is a world, as Lacan puts it, "which doesn't present us simply with footholds and obstacles, but a truth that verifies itself and installs itself as orienting this world and introducing beings […] into it."[1132] In other words, what disappears in a psychotic break is the reality that should show up in common sense and, according to Heidegger, is organized by a given constellation of originary truth, an understanding of being. As he puts it: "Only on the basis of the belonging together of throwness and understanding through language as saying is the human being able to be addressed by what is."[1133] We could gloss 'understanding' here by specifiying that the address is at least minimally organized, an address to me that does not simply dissolve my self.

Lest it be thought that I have overstated the essential connection between being-there and the structures of ecstatic being-in-the-world, I would point out Heidegger's clarification in 1928

[1131] Cp. Sass, *Paradoxes of Delusion*, p. 49: "The anxiety of this quasi-solipsistic universe is ontological and totalistic …. What is threatening about such [psychotic] experiences concerns the ontological framework itself."
[1132] Lacan, *Seminar 3: The Psychoses*, p. 204.
[1133] *Zollikon Seminars* 182-3/139, trans. mod.

that "being-in-the-world characterizes the basic mode of being, the existence of Dasein."[1134] Or, as he also puts it, "All comportment of being-there […] is as such a being-in-the-world."[1135] What this entails, he says, is that "[i]f Dasein in fact exists, then its existence has the structure of being-in-the-world, i.e., Dasein is, in its essence, being-in-the-world, whether or not it in fact exists."[1136] *My* claim is, then, that people in annihilation states undergo the kind of break with being-in-the-world that exiles them from being-there at all. Their understanding of being (as Heidegger interprets it), their experiential access to the as-such, disappears (although not without remainder), and the noticeable symptoms of psychosis are attempts to rebuild or to re-enter that way of being. "The mode of human existing is to determine itself in and on the basis of the whole. Dasein's being-in-the-world means to be in the whole"; this sort of being-in is to be understood "specifically with respect to the how [of existing]," by which Heidegger means "comporting itself to what is and to itself, [when this comporting is] taken in its totality."[1137] But it is precisely this 'in the whole' to which I refer in speaking of a structured or organized world.

Heidegger *can* allow for a certain amount of distortion in the structure of being-in-the-world via his thinking of negative modes. As we saw in chapter 4 in the discussion of the human essence, it is only because we are essentially 'there' that we can mostly be 'away,' dispersed among things.[1138] His early analyses of this aspect of the phenomenon can be represented for present purposes by what he says of idle conversation (*Gerede*) in *Being and Time*. Heidegger claims that it is the way of being of "uprooted" understanding. It "floats unattached," "cut off

---

[1134] Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, tr. Michael Heim (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 169/GA 26:217. Hereafter, *Metaphysical Foundations*.
[1135] *Introduction to Philosophy*, GA 27:179.
[1136] GA 26:217/*Metaphysical Foundations* 169. Cp. *Zollikon Seminars* 182/138: "Not only can the human being not be separated from his world, but here the idea of separability [*Trennbarkeit*] and inseparability does not have any foundation in the condition of being-in-the-world."
[1137] GA 26:233/*Metaphysical Foundations* 181, trans. mod. Cf. his claim in the "Letter on Humanism" that "'world' does not at all signify something that is or any realm of what is but the openness of being" (GA 9:350/*Pathmarks* 266, trans. mod.).
[1138] Cf. GA 29/30:95/*FC* 63: "the human being has the potential to be away in this manner only if his being has the character of being-*there*." Cf. GA 65/*Contributions to Philosophy* §§177, 183, 201-2.

from its primary and originarily genuine relationships-of-being towards the world, towards being-there-with [*Mitdasein*], and towards its very being-in."[1139] This begins to sound as if it could be a serious break. But Heidegger then claims that even in such an inauthentic way of being, being-there "is always amidst the world, with others, and towards itself [i.e., towards its own being-in]." Such an uprooting finds its very possibility, Heidegger claims, in ontological disclosedness – what he also calls being in the truth. This disclosedness is "constituted by discourse as characterized by understanding and affectivity"; in other words, such disclosedness "*is* its 'there', its 'in-the-world.'"[1140] So, being-there is what makes possible the being-away of inauthenticity, which would include madness for Heidegger.

But in the course of examining major depression, Matthew Radcliffe and Matthew Broome claim that "[i]f all sense of practical significance were eradicated from experience, along with any sense of potential emotional connectedness with others, the structure of projection would be radically altered along with that of thrownness."[1141] The question is, just how radically? Their discussion concerns the destructuring or wholesale loss of certain kinds of possibility, where possibility means something like 'experienced ability-to-be', not merely logical or physical possibility. For example, one may lose the ability to experience others as people at all; that whole category of possible encounter disappears. It is in this context that Radcliffe and Broome note the repeated description of such an experience "as akin to a living death."[1142] People speak this way when their very temporal structure has been altered or closed down. "Without significant differences between past, present, and future, without a sense of possible activities transforming one's situation in a meaningful way, the phenomenological distinction between past, present, and

---

[1139] *Being and Time (BT)* 170/214, trans. mod.
[1140] *Ibid.*, trans. mod.
[1141] Radcliffe and Broome, "Existential Phenomenology," p. 379.
[1142] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

future is eroded."[1143] Heidegger, for his part, speaks of the failure of these significant differences as the fundamental mood of anxiety, but he does not seem sufficiently to consider what can happen if that anxiety ceases to be short-lived.

Alphonse de Waelhens, too, finds himself admitting that, at least in schizophrenia, transcendence (in the Heideggerian sense just mentioned of being-in-the-world as relation to the structured whole) may be abolished; existence (again, in the technical sense) may cease.[1144] He thinks that psychotic mood disorders escape this fate, which amounts to a "challenge, in the most radical fashion, [to] a person's being-in-the-world,"[1145] and he may be right – there are certainly marked differences – but I have tried to show that such disorders, in their radical disturbance of affectivity, also eject one from the world, at least for such a time as one remains in a psychotic phase.

To put all of this another way: we saw in chapter 5 that language, world, time, affectivity, and embodied spatiality all go haywire in psychosis, while anxiety stretches on beyond any bounds that could let it be disclosive. But these are precisely the modes of relation to being that Heidegger consistently evokes as most central, and for good reason. It follows, I think, that psychosis, in its acute form, is the destruction of a person's relation to being. This does not mean that my being ceases to be at stake for me – that much of being-there does not seem to go away, although it may be affectively muted – but the very structures of being in which those stakes normally arise have disintegrated. This complexity indicates, I have tried to show, that we need to rethink Heidegger's understanding of our relation to being in light of the intrinsic possibility of becoming overwhelmed, of having "an encounter with beings (or a loss of beings) that shakes being itself. In trauma, the way we are open is altered by something that we encounter within our

[1143] *Ibid.*, p. 378.
[1144] Alphonse de Waelhens, *Phenomenology and Lacan*, p. 283.
[1145] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

opening – something that shakes the very heart of our understanding."[1146] Such vulnerability to what is encountered within the world, I propose, is just what it means to have one's being at stake.

II. Heideggerian Rebuttals

But to what extent can Heidegger's philosophy accommodate these claims? Since my interrogation has proceeded in two major parts – the initial, immanent critique about modes of trust (chapters 2-4), and the second, external critique developed on the basis of psychoanalytic thinking about psychosis (chapters 5-6) – I will return to those parts in turn. However, I will do so in reverse order, so as to leave Heidegger's positive engagement of trust for last. (Recall that a certain range of possibilities for his response has already been explored in chapter 3, as part of my argument for a tension internal to his work.)

A) Psychosis vs. No Longer Being-There (*Nicht-Mehr-Dasein*)

First, then, the confrontation with Freud and with the question of psychosis as a proposed radical break with being-in-the-world. I have already dealt with some of Heidegger's concerns about Freud in the Introduction and in chapter 5, so I will not cover that ground again. Instead, let me begin here with his brief discussion of the unconscious in 1929-30, then move on to his most interesting concerns about Freud in the *Zollikon Seminars*, and finally take up the question of the possibility of a radical break with being.

In the context of discussing what is involved in awakening a fundamental mood (or basic attunement, *Grundstimmung*) in us, Heidegger takes the unconscious as a convenient example of something that we think of as present-at-hand in us while still somehow being absent, i.e., absent from consciousness. But this relation of presence and absence is not adequate to the phenomenon

---

[1146] Richard Polt, "The Burning Cup," p. 6. Cf. de Waelhens, who takes psychoanalytic research to have established that "madness is an *intrinsic possibility of human existence*" (p. 304, original emphasis), a thesis that philosophy – including phenomenology – cannot afford to ignore.

he is after, for three reasons: first, and most obviously in his philosophy, phenomena that are basic modifications of being-there (like *Grundstimmungen*) are not faithfully interpreted within the present-at-hand mode of being. Being-there is not primarily a matter of objective presence. Second, 'absent from consciousness' is much too broad a category; sleep cannot be simply the absence of consciousness, for dreams burst the direct opposition between conscious and unconscious. Third, the phenomena of attention – i.e., of intentional directedness – allow for being-away as distraction despite (indeed, *because of*) being-there, and this version of presence and absence is not reducible to a simple opposition.[1147]

Heidegger's concerns here in 1929-1930 about the unconscious are both important and, ultimately, superficial. They are important exegetically, since he continued to think about the issue in roughly this way for many years;[1148] they are important philosophically, since it is true that Freud often seems to be thinking of the unconscious as something at-hand, spatially located, and so on (he even draws pictures!), and it is crucial not to get stuck understanding it this way. But these criticisms are also superficial, since, for example, even for Freud – who is pretty thoroughly wedged in metaphysical oppositions – the dream was a fruitful phenomenon precisely because it involved complex *interrelations* between consciousness and the unconscious. Indeed, the whole field of psychoanalysis is oriented toward such interweavings, moments in which conscious/unconscious cannot be understood as a simple opposition between presence and absence. Furthermore, it is often just those phenomena of attention that Heidegger wants to explore phenomenologically that alert Freud to the workings of the unconscious. For example, a person may be physically and actively *there* (standing with and speaking to her brother) and simultaneously somehow *not* there (speaking primarily to someone else who is far away, dead,

---

[1147] This discussion is found in GA 29/30:92-97/*FC* 61-64.

[1148] Cf. the second of the *Country Path Conversations* (from 1946): "Teacher: To this and this alone [i.e., to the representation of the human as an organism and subject of consciousness] belongs also the unconscious. The consciously maneuvered interest in the unconscious is a sign of the last triumph of the conception of the human as the subject of consciousness" (GA 77:183/*CPC* 119).

imaginary, etc.). But for Freud this goes beyond straightforward distraction, in which she would be here with the person and also away (with the object of her concern); for it is not necessarily the case that her conscious attention is drawn away from the conversation – she may be very attentive – yet she is somehow actively barred from recognizing to whom her speech is primarily directed.

More interesting are some of Heidegger's later criticisms from the *Zollikon Seminars* (1959-1969), which we could see as developments of the worries just laid out. One set of such concerns has to do with method quite generally. As I mentioned at the beginning of chapter 5, Heidegger tries always to think from the perspective of the whole (which is also the *Heil*, the healthy), and he insists that this is both phenomenologically and philosophically required. So, for example, even his *analysis* of being-there in *Being and Time* continually emphasizes that all of its moments or aspects belong equiprimordially to a unified whole (care). And he says in the *Seminars*: "Every synthesis always occurs only in such a way that one has a unity in view already beforehand regarding which one joins things together. It is not the case that piecing separate things together could ever result in a synthesis."[1149] One has to have a glimpse of the whole, the essence, in order to see how various aspects belong to it.

Freud, by contrast, proposes that we are precisely *not* primarily ordered and whole, but irreducibly conflicted. Thus he both begins from the unhealthy (psychopathology) and admits to a kind of personal inclination toward analysis over synthesis. It is no accident that he calls his method psycho*analysis*; he tends to think that once the components are analyzed out, the synthesis, if there is to be one, will just follow on its own.[1150] He is also highly suspicious of phenomena that are *too* well-integrated. Thus, for example, his technique of dream interpretation

---

[1149] *Zollikon Seminars* 249/200-1. Specifically with regard to illness, Heidegger puts the genetic viewpoint into question, saying, "In order to give a genetic explanation of how a condition of illness originated, a clarification, of course, is needed beforehand regarding what this condition of illness is in itself. […] An explanation presupposes the clarification of the essence of what should be explained."
[1150] Or maybe that the ego is so fixated on defensive synthesis that it does not need any assistance in that direction. See Freud, "Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy," SE **17**:160-1.

paradigmatically involves breaking up the dream-report into its components, then having the analysand associate to each component. For especially important dreams, the analyst then wants to draw some of the details back together to see what the dreamwork has done in disguising them. This is supposed to overcome the disguising effects of what Freud calls 'secondary elaboration' – the work of censorship in weaving together the repressed wishes and connections into a more or less intelligible-seeming whole (the dream), which is then further worked over as the person recalls and reports it to the analyst.[1151]

To respond to Heidegger's line of objection here, we should begin by acknowledging that, philosophically, Heidegger may be right that one has ultimately to think from the whole. But I think he is on shakier ground in proposing that this is where one always has to *start*. Here I think his phenomenological conviction that being must always somehow appear gets him into trouble. This is not because he is just wrong – being mostly *is* faithful to appear – but because one does not have to get a grip on the whole phenomenon (its peculiar way of being) *before* beginning the analysis. That is especially true in relation to *psycho*analysis, since as a way of being with another person that makes that *person* thematic, trying to begin by getting a grip on the whole phenomenon here might even be a kind of violence. To assume beforehand, for example, that the other person's world is whole or adequately coherent, even if excessively closed off, would be to prevent radical fragmentation from showing itself, just as much as assuming irreducible conflict can prevent unity from showing up. So, when Heidegger claims that "explanation extends only so far – if it is appropriate to the matter – as far as that which has to be explained is clarified in its own essence beforehand,"[1152] this seems true of a complete explanation, but not of what we might call research, the kind of tentative investigation that Freud mostly undertakes. It seems clearly *untrue* of something like pathology, in which of course one has to begin with a general familiarity

---

[1151] Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE **5**:488ff.
[1152] *Zollikon Seminars* 266/213. Cf. pp. 97-8/75-6.

with health (this is how the hermeneutic circle works), but one's *interpretation* of health need not be fully worked out beforehand. Heidegger thus overstates his case when he claims that "only in the light of this projection [of human being as being-there] can what-is (the human being) be investigated [in a way that is] appropriate to being-there."[1153]

This issue is closely related to Heidegger's other line of concern: his repeated worry that Freud (like other natural scientists) fails to attend sufficiently to the phenomenon before trying to explain it, i.e., to find its causes.[1154] A generic example would be the following: say several biochemists declare that they have isolated the physical causes of love. Journalists then proclaim that love just is set X of hormonal shifts. Now it may be quite right that the phenomenon of love always involves the hormonal interactions in set X, but that does not mean that set X is equivalent to love. The set X was discovered by correlating experimental results, but it is not as if the biochemists were just looking at sets of various experimental results one day, noticed a pattern, and decided to call that pattern 'love'. Instead, they already had an everyday understanding of the phenomenon and looked for experimental unities that might correlate with recognizable manifestations of *that*. They had to be able to identify instances of the phenomenon in an everyday way in order both to produce and to interpret the experimental data.[1155]

Now Heidegger is worried that Freud systematically commits a version of our imagined biochemists' reductive error. It is a bit more insidious because Freud has a greater sensitivity to human psychology, but it is essentially the same. So, instead of saying that love is a cascade of chemicals in the brain, Freud says (roughly) that love is an attempt to reenact the complete unity

---

[1153] *Zollikon Seminars* 223/280, trans. mod. Heidegger continues: "The elimination and avoidance of inappropriate representations about this being, the human being, is only possible when the practice of experiencing being-human as being-there has been successful and when it is illuminating any investigation of the healthy or sick human being in advance."

[1154] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 8/7 and 293/232. Cf. p. 282/224: "Were there even a trace of phenomenological-ontological determination present in Freud's basic approach, then it would have prevented him from the aberration of his 'theory.'"

[1155] The code word for this is 'operationalizing variables'.

with one's mother (or primary caretaker) that one fantasizes was once real. This, too, is an interpretive move in search of causes rather than a phenomenological interpretation. Heidegger does not wish to say that causal interpretation is just off the table, but only that it has to be philosophically secondary to an adequate interpretation of the phenomenon.

As I hope became clear in chapters 5-6, I think Heidegger is right about the necessary priority of phenomenal accounts, but I also think that Freud is far more sensitive to this than Heidegger allows. It is not enough for Heidegger to accuse Freud of theory-laden interpretations, for example, since this is to some extent unavoidable in the hermeneutic realm. The question is whether Freud is open to having his theory upended by the phenomena. I think I have shown that he is, at least in some important instances, so that from there the question can simply be raised on a case-by-case basis. Even from Heidegger's perspective, there should be no question of *not* reading Freud, but only one of reading Freud carefully, of giving some benefit of the doubt to the latter's own claims to attend to the phenomena: "I learnt to restrain speculative tendencies and to follow the unforgotten advice of my master, Charcot: to look at the same things again and again until they themselves begin to speak."[1156]

The other objection in this line is a specific case of the objection just discussed. Heidegger claims that Freud rushed to posit an entity (the unconscious, or maybe 'unconscious thinking') in order to explain the gaps [*Lücken*] in his therapeutic experience. Heidegger seems to think it would have been better to remain with the phenomenon and acknowledge that it might be proper to some phenomena to include gaps,[1157] the way it is proper to some membranes to be permeable. (There is, e.g., no need to posit a dynamic intramembranous struggle.)

[1156] Freud, "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement," SE **14**:22.
[1157] *Zollikon Seminars* 260/207-8: "For conscious, human phenomena, [Freud] also postulates an unbroken chain of explanation [*die Lückenlosigkeit in der Erklärbarkeit*], i.e., the continuity of causal connections. Since there is no such thing 'within consciousness,' he has to invent 'the unconscious,' in which there must be an unbroken chain of causal connections." Cf. p. 266/213: "an objective clarification of the essence of a

A first reply might be that while Freud is certainly inclined to move very quickly to aetiology,[1158] I think I have shown (chapter 5, part II) that in fact it is attention to a *human* phenomenon that grounds the inference to the unconscious. As a further reply, however, we would have to think carefully about where Freud is grasping unities of experience (similar to, say, Heidegger's claims about the history of beyng) and where he is just positing more or less temporary anchors for interpretation. We should at least listen to (though not immediately believe) his claim in the case history of the Wolf-Man that there are "narrow limits to what a psycho-analysis is called upon to explain. For, while it is its business to explain the striking symptoms by revealing [*Aufdeckung*] their genesis, it is not its business to explain but merely to describe the psychical mechanisms and drive processes to which one is thus led [by those efforts at revealing]."[1159] We would also, I think, have to ask which things that he takes as entities need not be understood or described that way. The latter situation seems especially true of the unconscious, about which Freud was occasionally very cautious in his characterizations,[1160] and which does not need to be interpreted as an entity any more than openness for Heidegger needs to be thought as the brain, although of course in both cases the entity is integrally involved.

Let me turn now to the question of whether Heideggerian thought can itself accommodate my appeal to certain Freudian insights in support of the claim that a person can suffer a radical break with being. I take this to be the most serious philosophical question for my project, and it arises from two different directions.

---

condition of illness could lead [to the insight] that its essence rules out the possibility for the desired, causal-genetic explanation."

[1158] Cp. Freud's claim, against phenomenology, that "acts of consciousness are immediate data and cannot be further explained by any sort of description," only by dynamic foundations ("An Outline of Psycho-Analysis," SE **23**:151). This simply makes clear what most Freudian analysts are happy to admit, that Freud does not have much of interest to say about consciousness. But Heidegger is not exactly in search of accounts of consciousness, either.

[1159] Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis [Wolf-Man]*, SE **17**:105.

[1160] See, e.g., Freud, *Interpretation*, SE **5**:610-12, where he moves from a topographical account to a dynamic one. Cf. the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, SE **15/16**, in which he builds his account of the unconscious very gradually.

First, in defense of his own phenomenological work, Heidegger might simply claim that *he has already given* an interpretation of what it would mean to fall outside the relation to being, one which of course requires expansion but does not call for a rethinking of originary truth. At a certain point in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, just when it seems as if being really might be an empty word – 'a vapor and an error,' as Nietzsche put it – Heidegger proposes that although we have a relation (*Bezug*) to what is, we "nevertheless have long since fallen out of being [*herausgefallen sind*]."[1161] But do we not *belong* to being, according to Heidegger? What kind of belonging is this, if we have fallen out of it ever since the ancient Greek beginning of philosophy?

In order to delineate human being in its peculiar belonging to being, Heidegger turns to Greek tragedy, to an interpretation of one of the choral odes of Sophocles's *Antigone*.[1162] Here he finds being figured as *to deinon*, the terrible, and the human being as *to deinotaton*, the most uncanny (*unheimlich*) entity. In his interpretation, Heidegger understands being's terribleness as the overwhelming (*das Überwältigende*), that which governs and prevails (*waltet*) regardless of anything that any entity can do. (We just find things stubbornly showing up as real or essential, no matter what we wish.) As exposed to this overwhelming being, and as the very ones who violently (*gewalttätig*) use it to gather entities into intelligibility in our comportment, we are the most uncanny of beings: like Antigone herself, we are *cast out* of what would otherwise have been our homeliness (our unproblematic fit within the world) and thus violently *step out* of homeliness (as an orientation toward what is as a whole in terms of particular investments). This is the way in which being overwhelms us, brings us to calamity or ruin.

As manifestations of the overwhelming in us, Heidegger mentions the existentials from *Being and Time* – language, understanding, and affectivity as mood and passion – as well as

---

[1161] Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trs. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 39/GA 40:40. Hereafter, *IM*.
[1162] It is generally known as the "Ode to Man." Heidegger's interpretation is found on GA 40:155ff/*IM* 156ff.

building in its relation to dwelling. These overwhelming ways of being *are* our being, that which

we are called to take over explicitly, even though most of the time we merely take our own being

for granted. They are what we must gather up into violent path-breaking, opening through them a

coherent world amidst entities, but in such violence we get stuck on those paths and shut

ourselves out (*sich aussperrt*) of an explicit relation to being. In other words, we take the paths as

permanently and objectively open, rather than as opened up by our (somehow violent)

investments. Creatively violent ones who seek to break new paths then risk "disintegration, un-

constancy, un-structure, and unfittingness."[1163] Our violence-doing itself shatters (*scheitert*),

Heidegger says, against death, the limit beyond all limits.

Here it sounds as if the strife between the violence-doer and the overwhelming, what

could be called the struggle of existence (between thinking and being), could ultimately go very

badly for the violence-doer in a way that would be irremediable. Heidegger speaks of the

possibility of perdition (*Verderb*), and it is hard not to think of this initially as just the kind of

break we have been trying to understand. But Heidegger then almost at once qualifies this

shattering as *necessary*, as something *needed* by being in order to bring its own violence to

appearance. As we have seen before (chapter 4, part II), even the finitude of death is thus

recuperated as part of the structure of being's self-showing in withdrawal. For such being-needed

turns out to be the essence of being-there; the human being comes to be understood as "the breach

(*die Bresche*) into which the excessive violence of being breaks in its appearing, so that this

breach itself shatters against being."[1164] Now we are back to the formulation of *Being and Time*

(albeit transposed into a newly violent register), a formulation according to which being thrown

---

[1163] *Das Auseinanderbrechen*, *die Un-ständigkeit*, *das Un-gefüge*, *der Unfug*, all figured as articulations of the ancient Greek *adikē*, which in a less ontological register would mean 'injustice'. We should not forget that Heidegger is giving this lecture course in 1935, only a year after resigning as National Socialist rector of the university, and that he still considered himself one of these creative ones "who sets out into the un-said" (GA 40:170/*IM* 172). Indeed, he ventures on into the unsaid of the poem on the very next page.
[1164] GA 40:172/*IM* 174.

into being-there as the place of being's appearance means being projected toward my own death. The essence of the human being, then, is what Heidegger calls here a *Zwischenfall*, a falling in between being and what is, which falling first opens up this very difference and lets what is show up in its being. What was couched in the rhetoric of a radical break thus turns out to be, once more, the same structure of exposure to what-is via the intertwining of revealing and concealing – and it is precisely this structure that we have called into question earlier in this project (chapter 3).

Let us now shift to the other side of the argument. In a more explicit defense of our irrevocable embeddedness in the world, Heideggerian thought seems to move away from thinking the self on the basis of the I (or of any personal pronouns) already in *Being and Time*, but especially in the private writings of the late 1930s and the thinking of mortals in the 1940s and onward. Instead, Heidegger shows repeatedly that *there is* a clearing for being to structure what is, and this clearing gets individuated whenever a person takes up a proper relation to finitude. That is to say, he might object that an argument about the possible disintegration of the self/world relation does not establish anything about what is more fundamentally at stake: beyng as it essences in the event, and being-there as the site for this event to take place.

In the *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger formulates the objection this way (against Ludwig Binswanger): "Being-in-the-world is not a condition for the possibility of Da-sein […]; on the contrary, it is the other way around."[1165] And "the understanding of being is *the* fundamental characteristic of Da-sein as such." But the understanding of being means "ecstatic standing-within the clearing of the Da as the opening into which what is present presences."[1166] Therefore, standing within the clearing is the more originary matter, to which being-in-the-world belongs regardless of its internal modifications.

[1165] *Zollikon Seminars* 239/192.
[1166] *Zollikon Seminars* 239/191-2.

I take it this is another way to develop being-there as the *essence* (or even the *future essence*) of the human being (cf. chapter 3, section III.C). Heidegger's concern here is that identification of being-there with any particular human being (or even with human being as such) risks making it "only a more extensive and more useful characterization of the subject's subjectivity,"[1167] using it as a sort of transcendental argument. I agree that characterizing it that way would be to miss the insight into the *self*-showing of being, the *making* of the difference between being and what is, which we merely watch over or wait upon (more or less faithfully).[1168] In other words, by contrast to a transcendental investigation into the conditions of possibility for human experience, Heidegger tries to think what takes place of its own accord (i.e., in one sense independently), which then catches the human up into it.[1169] Transcendence is thus not something we do or fail to do, but is equivalent to being-in as such, or to what he sometimes calls, in a different register, "sojourning."[1170]

If 'being-in' means in this context being-claimed *at all*, in any sense, then I admit that psychosis involves no radical break with being-in. We have seen that it is usually a matter of *too much* meaning, of overwhelming demands and claims, rather than of no meaning at all. If suffering is only possible for the human being as being-there, then people suffering from psychosis surely remain, in some very attenuated sense, *there*.

But the language of 'sojourn' (*Aufenthalt*) seems to me to imply an organized world within which I find myself standing – a world not of my own making (i.e., not delusionally rebuilt). And I take the projective understanding of being, or standing within the clearing, essentially to involve a *structured* being-claimed. This does not require, it seems to me, thinking

---

[1167] *Zollikon Seminars* 236-7/189-90.
[1168] He calls the event (*das Ereignis*) in these seminars "transcendence as being" or as "the word for the being of what is," which "*in itself* [opens] *the difference* from what is!" (*Zollikon Seminars* 240-2/193-5, trans. mod.)
[1169] Cf., for example, *Besinnung*, GA 66:210 (my translation): "Da-sein is because [it gets] appropriated by beyng as a staging area [*Austrag*], not only as [the] ground of human being."
[1170] *Zollikon Seminars* 241/192.

being-there as a new version of the subject's subjectivity. Rather, as we saw in chapters 3-4, it is no small matter for Heidegger that beyng needs (*braucht*) the human being. That need is precisely beyng's givenness as finite, which correspondingly marks us out as historical (in that different characteristics of things appear as essential in different epochs). The question is, how are we to think this?

One way to understand it would be to say that, as mediating exposure to what is (beings), beyng opens its site (i.e., appropriates human beings) irrevocably. We are exposed; we cannot get out. For, even if we could make sense of 'getting out' of the world, there would then be no ontological possibility of re-entry – neither therapy nor drugs *could be* any help because foreclosure would be a death sentence, on this interpretation. That is just what it means for being-there (or waiting, or sojourning) to be our essence – for it to constitute the ability-to-be (*Seinkönnen*) that structures us and does not disappear unless we do. This is why, in an interpretation of the recurrent question of pain in Heidegger's late thinking (the 1940s and after), Andrew Mitchell writes that "to never be conquerable by pain means, at the same time, to never be conquered by pain, to be able to bear any pain or, rather, to have to do so, to be surrendered over to an endless pain that will never conquer us and never bring the desired relief of our demise."[1171]

On one hand, Mitchell's interpretation is an attempt to think pain as our ontological situation, i.e., to think the human being as exposed essentially. We can cover up our inherent painedness, forget about it, and reinterpret ourselves as Cartesian impenetrable fortresses, but that does not remove the *fact* of our being-in, the pain of exposed investment in what is. Thrownness is inexorable. Any defense of the possibility of a radical break would then be simply a return to the metaphysical opposition of presence and absence. On the other hand, the quotation from Mitchell is also quite a good description of the person situated between two deaths in psychosis;

[1171] Mitchell, "Grace," p. 315.

there seems to be nowhere to go in either direction, neither back toward the shared world nor forward into death, since the self is already (symbolically) dead, and not even this has removed the suffering.

The difference in how one hears Mitchell's description has to do, I suggest, with how much emphasis is put on *involvement of people* in the essencing of beyng. (We could also say that it has to do with the characterization of the *relation* to beyng.) The 'I', the 'you', and the 'we' are somehow at stake here, for Heidegger, but always derivatively.[1172] Thus, my reply to Heidegger's objection is as follows: while it is true that the living individual is irrevocably exposed to the claims of things, it is not clear a) that *I* or *we* are so exposed, since the consistency and identity of the self may be radically lost, nor b) that being as the structured import of things irrevocably shows itself here, even in the mode of withdrawal, since all stable structure to experience may also be lost. If such a catastrophic expropriation (*Enteignis*) comes to pass, it may still be true that the individual is *essentially* being-there and thus has the possibility of return to health; but instead of being an existential possibility (a lived ability-to-be), this designation will be highly abstract. By 'abstract' I mean that, as a prognosis, it can only be offered from a position distanced from any experience of the matter itself.

Let me specify. For the sufferer, the possibility of a return is not at all evident. Even when he can recognize that he suffers in a way that others do not, this is insufficient to do more than deepen suffering, or (sometimes) motivate self-medication. He cannot, from within himself, see a way back into the shared world. For those of us who do not currently suffer such a break, we have no way to positively predict the outcome of any particular person's attempt at recovery. We can say that it is statistically either decent or quite bleak, depending on our measurable standard for recovery; we can fall back on the ontological argument that this way of being is just

---

[1172] Heidegger, GA 65/*Contributions*, §§197-8.

another outworking of the constitutive incompleteness of the human essence.[1173] We can to some extent indicate what approaches are very unlikely to promote recovery. But unlike even some other mental illnesses that are unpredictable due to their dependence on the sufferer's will and resources (addiction, for example), if we take a person who had an iron will prior to the break and give her all the resources we can think of, we still cannot predict recovery with confidence, precisely because the contingency of the event is (as Heidegger establishes) a matter neither of will nor resources.

We will be confronted with this question of the singular person's role vis-à-vis the event of the truth of beyng once more – and rather insistently – if we now turn to a consideration of the places where interpersonal trust is most in evidence for Heidegger. But first, let us briefly sum up the negative path of our investigation. We have now considered Heidegger's own dismissals of the unconscious, as well as three interrelated criticisms he advances against Freud's work. We have also developed and confronted, at some length, two possible Heideggerian objections to my argument, one from each side, as it were. The first such objection proceeded by agreeing that a radical break with being is possible, but then claimed that Heidegger has already accounted for it in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. I demonstrated that his account cannot fulfill such a promise. The second objection, then, tried to show that there could not be such a break, ontologically speaking. I acknowledged this at a certain level, then marked out the kind of break that might escape Heidegger's thinking while still remaining below that level. Now we should consider Heidegger's positive counterproposal concerning the relation of trust to originary truth.

[1173] See *Zollikon Seminars* 202/157, where Heidegger speaks of the human "capacity for being ill" as "connected with the *Unvollkommenheit seines Wesens*."

B) Personal Trust for Heidegger

"Those who properly understand are always the ones who come a long way on their own ground, from their own territory, the ones who bring much with them in order that they may transform much."[1174]

I have tried to show that, in interpreting our relation to being, Heidegger consistently understands that relation as a structural matter, one that shares the characteristics of assumption-trust in a system or an institution, although in this case without positing any *entity* (other than myself) as the guarantor of that trust. I have further argued that this is a misleading path; we should interpret our relation to being on the model of interpersonal trust, although again phenomenologically, without necessarily positing any *entity* as its guarantor. But this seems to leave unaddressed Heidegger's important emphasis on conversation, in which personal trust would appear to play a central role. What is there to be said about this?

Because he is one of the most interesting (and provocative) interpreters of the history of philosophy we have known and someone whose most respected conversation partners were the historically great thinkers and poets of Western Europe, questions about the relationship between trust and truth as we find it in Heidegger must contend with his reading strategies. For although it may seem as if Heidegger's insistence on attending to the philosophical matter at stake more than to a strict *re*-presentation of what the great writers have said exhibits a lack of charity, that insistence can also appear as precisely a kind of stubborn faithfulness to their vision, an effort to join them in considering what they also found important.

Surely Kant, for example, would prefer that we work to figure out how the schematism genuinely mediates between intuition and understanding, rather than merely repeating ever more carefully what he has already said about it. In fact, Heidegger's objectionable interpretations may not even be so different from the strategy behind more conventional calls to read charitably, in

---

[1174] Heidegger, GA 6.1:361/*Nietzsche II* 142.

which one is supposed to construe others' arguments in the most convincing way.[1175] Maybe his strong readings are a matter of trusting his predecessors to have thought more creatively than we are inclined to give them credit for (or than we are usually able to recognize). Does he not also trust his readers or auditors to be already capable of understanding Kant in a more straightforward way (thus to be looking to Heidegger for something *more* than what is straightforward), *and* to use that 'desire for something more' to attend to the matter at stake?

Furthermore, although it seems like, on Heidegger's reading, every important philosopher turns out to be either helping or failing at Heidegger's own project – this is even quite close to the way he interprets Socrates's claim that all philosophers try to say the same about the same – yet he maintains (in a letter to Medard Boss from 1948) that "a conversation [*Gespräch*] still continues to be the right way to follow the paths of thought in their most subtle distinctions, thereby to examine each other's views and thus to learn in a mutual way."[1176] In fact, Heidegger later radicalizes this practical privilege of the conversation for mutual learning, first into a sort of ethical ideal, then into an ontological structure. In 1966, he tells Boss: "Instead of always only speaking of the so-called I-Thou relationship [*Verhältnis*], one should speak of a Thou-Thou relation [*Beziehung*] instead. The reason for this is that an I-Thou is always only spoken from my point of view, whereas in reality we have a mutual relation [*gegenseitige Beziehung*] here."[1177] Heidegger's explicit reference is of course to Martin Buber's work, but we can also hear in his call for ethical understanding an appeal to the Aristotelian friendship of equals. A year later, Heidegger echoes Hölderlin in claiming to Boss that "a conversation [*Gespräch*] with other

---

[1175] The most succinct version of this call comes from Jacques Lacan, who disparages a certain interpretation of some lines of *Antigone* with the following: "It's not clear that it was the poet's intention to emit such a platitude" (Lacan, *Seminar 7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 275). Cp. Heidegger, GA 6.1:123/*Nietzsche I* 122.

[1176] Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars* 301/239, trans. mod., from a letter of June 14, 1948.

[1177] *Zollikon Seminars* 263/210, trans. mod.

human beings is what we ourselves *are*."[1178] And this is after he has already explained to the seminar participants that "[i]nsofar as the human being is being-with [*Mitsein*], as he remains essentially related to another human, language as such [i.e., language "as the original manifestness of what is"] is conversation."[1179]

And yet… even if we cannot easily pin what is troubling about Heidegger's interpretive strategy to lack of charity or to monological arrogance, I maintain that there is something legitimately concerning here. So as to justly consider Heidegger's thinking of trust in the context of being with others as conversation – and, along the way, to locate what is legitimately problematic about this thinking – I will turn to the few things Heidegger wrote that could be called philosophical dialogues in the Platonic vein. These include the three *Country Path Conversations*, written between 1944 and 1945, as well as the "Conversation on Language" with a Japanese gentleman that was written 10 years later and published in *On the Way to Language*.

If we look at this later conversation, we find confirmation for such an approach in Heidegger's own words. A major concern of that conversation, as with most of his later work on language, is to avoid speaking *about* language, since this objectifies it and thereby overlooks the phenomenon. He thus tries to show that speaking about language is not the same as speaking *from* language. The Inquirer, who is Heidegger as a character, eventually concludes that this "speaking *from* language could only be a conversation."[1180] We should take this conversation to include attempts to interpret previous writers, since the Inquirer has already said:

> Every person is at every moment in conversation with his forebears, and perhaps even more and in a more concealed fashion with those who will come after. […] [F]or us today, it may become an

---

[1178] *Zollikon Seminars* 268/217, conversation of July 6, 1967, trans. mod. and emphasis added. See Hölderlin, "Friedensfeier," in *Sämtliche Gedichte*, op. cit., pp. 338ff, line 92.

[1179] *Zollikon Seminars* 183/140, interpolated quotation taken from the same page. Although much has been said and still remains to be said about Heidegger and psychoanalytic experiences of language, I limit myself here to a discussion of language only insofar as it is involved in conversation and trusting interpretation. For an analysis that brings Heidegger and Lacan close together, see William Richardson, "Heidegger Among the Doctors."

[1180] Heidegger, "Conversation on Language," GA 12:41/*On the Way to Language*, p. 51, trans. mod.

urgent need to prepare [thoughtful] conversations by interpreting properly [*eigens*] what earlier thinkers have said.[1181]

In the present context, then, I want to read portions of these philosophical conversations in light of Heidegger's own comments concerning his strategy for interpreting the thought of others. The focus will be on his interpretations of Nietzsche and of Kant, since in my view he is at his most methodologically reflective in those readings. My claims in response to Heidegger's objection here are, first, that genuine, fruitful conversation integrally involves trusting another *person*, and, second, that although Heidegger implicitly recognizes that first claim, his emphasis on instead trusting *the conversation itself* as an event in which something comes to light is what gives rise to our unease about interpretive violence. In other words, although he tries to bring about what he calls a confrontation (*Auseinandersetzung*) with other thinkers by attending to the phenomenon at issue, and although he is at one level quite right to do so, he nonetheless fails to reach the kind of 'Thou-Thou relation' that he himself calls for. I will further try to establish that this failure is due to overlooking the *singularity* of the person with whom he is speaking. His concern is rather with the history of the understandings of being, a history that speaks regardless of the person's choices or character, which presumably means that in principle it could speak through *any* given representative of that beyng-historical epoch.

1. The Conversation is Prior to You and Me

One striking feature of these four written conversations is the extraordinary degree of explicit consideration of what *happens in* the course of the conversation. As we will see, the course (*der Gang*) or the path (*der Weg*) very nearly becomes another character. It is in this way that one thing becomes unmistakably clear: Heidegger is not seeking to produce realistic or representational art here. Self-reflection is surely far from rare in live philosophical

---

[1181] GA 12:117/*OWL* 31, trans. mod. Cf. 144/52, trans. mod.: the Japanese gentleman adds that "it would remain of secondary significance whether the conversation lies before us as written or has at some point resounded as spoken."

conversations, but here it is thematized at least as much and as strangely as in Plato (although sadly without much of Plato's humor). Maybe unsurprisingly, then, this thematization *itself* is explicitly brought up at various points, and one of these reflective moments makes clear that the major axis of such reflection is a question of trust.

In the "Triadic Conversation," the Guide argues (against the Scientist) that they should not plan out the course of the conversation, on the grounds that they need to be "freed from the ties to everything thematic."[1182] (Here we have the general version of the earlier worry over speaking *about* language.) The Scholar then asks, "Why do you so mistrust [*misstrauen*] what is thematic?" The Guide explains that a theme, taken over from ancient Greek *thema* and *thesis*, are from the verb *tithenai*, to put, to set, or to posit. This kind of willful setting up and ordering is precisely what Heidegger hopes thinking can free us from. So, the Guide says that "what is spoken of may of itself bring itself to language" or raise itself as a discussion topic. This prompts the Scholar to conclude that "in speaking, a 'listening into' the conversation would almost be more essential than the 'speaking out'" involved in making statements.

The call to listen to the conversation itself as the latter brings its own topics into language suggests that along with a *mistrust* of what is thematic goes a corresponding *trust* in the course of the conversation as an event in its own right. We can confirm this hint quite rigorously from the text. The Scientist is eventually led to a conversion away from his desire for imposed order by "the course of the conversation, rather than the representation of any specific objects we considered."[1183] He characterizes this leading as a 'compulsion without force,' one which relaxes him and brings him to "trust [*vertraue*] the inconspicuous escort [*unscheinbaren Geleit*] who takes us by the hand, or, more aptly said, by the word in this conversation."[1184] This conversational course, which is also the course they are walking along the country path, is

---

[1182] All quotations in this paragraph from GA 77:75/*CPC* 47.
[1183] GA 77:117/*CPC* 76.
[1184] GA 77:107/*CPC* 69.

inconspicuous, non-apparent, because it is silent.[1185] Nevertheless, it comes up for discussion in all four dialogues.

The escort shows up in the "Tower" conversation when the Warden contrasts "having a presentiment" (which relies on being capable of receiving this escort that arrives unforeseen) with sight ("which is all too sure of itself"[1186] in presuming that it has no need to trust). The path (*der Weg*) as what "leads [or escorts: *geleitet*] us into our own essence"[1187] is emphasized once more by the Older Man in the "Evening Conversation." Finally, at a crucial moment in the "Conversation on Language," just when the two participants realize that the two guiding questions for that conversation – What is hermeneutics? And what is the Japanese word for language? – really ask the selfsame question (i.e., just when the European and the East-Asian discover between them a kind of fusion of horizons), the Inquirer says that they "may, therefore, calmly trust [*vertrauen*] to the concealed pull [*Zug*] of our conversation,"[1188] which has brought them together so neatly.

I think we can make sense of this by keeping with Heidegger's general project, one which he himself characterizes as a phenomenology of the inconspicuous, of the non-apparent. As we have seen, for Heidegger, unlike for Husserl, the phenomenological reduction is not something performed consciously by the subject in order to attend to appearances; instead, the world reduces itself and thereby implies or hints at what does not explicitly appear. This is true on the simplest level – the tool that breaks or goes missing – as well as on much more complex levels: anxiety reveals my thrownness; the forgottenness of the question of being reveals being's own finitude; the breaking of the word reveals the essence of language.

[1185] Cf. the Guide's words on GA 77:118/*CPC* 76, as well as his naming of the escort at the very end of the conversation: the "course" is dubbed *ankhibasiē*, 'going-into-nearness' (GA 77:156/*CPC* 102).
[1186] GA 77:189/*CPC* 123. Cp. my discussion of self-assurance in chapter 3, section II.B.
[1187] GA 77:226/*CPC* 147.
[1188] GA 12:116/*OWL* 30, trans. mod.

It is in this way that Heidegger can reasonably claim that his violent interpretations of the history of Western thought form part of a strategy for avoiding arbitrariness in his own thinking.[1189] In attending to the work of previous thinkers, especially where that work breaks down, the conversation across epochs and the phenomenon around which it centers are disclosed as important for human being as such, not only for us at this moment. Indeed, this very insight itself, the Inquirer says, "has been learned in turn by listening to the thinkers' thinking."[1190] For Heidegger, since being always shows itself, even if only in a concealed, hinting manner, then the thought of those who preceded us is one form of the speech of being itself. As he asks in the Le Thor seminar many years later, "Does being *speak*? […] Who decided that only entities can speak? Who has so gauged the essence of the word?"[1191]

2. The Echo of Being's Withdrawal

When we listen into the conversation, receiving its course as an inconspicuous escort, we respond to the claim of being upon us, the way that it calls us to a certain way of seeing. The Guide tells us that "a conversation first waits upon [*wartet auf*] reaching that of which it speaks. And the speakers of a conversation can speak in *its* sense only if they are prepared for something to befall [*widerfährt*] them in the conversation which transforms their own essence."[1192] But if what is primarily at stake in Heideggerian phenomenology is attending properly to the self-reduction performed by the world as it transforms us, then phenomenology is understood here as a mode of receptivity to the event, a receptivity that seems to entail a kind of trust.

In the Tower conversation, in fact, the Warden explains that he and his companion, the Teacher, are not yet properly receptive, so as to be able to engage in a meditative pursuit of

---

[1189] The other part of the strategy, even more startlingly, is the use of the etymologies for which he has been pilloried. Cf. GA 12:114-15/*OWL* 28-29.
[1190] GA 12:117/*OWL* 30-31.
[1191] GA 15:346/*Four Seminars* 47, trans. mod.
[1192] GA 77:57/*CPC* 37, emphasis added.

something that would be other than metaphysics. "[W]e still lack the trust [or confidence: *Zutrauen*], or even the proper aptitude for this trust in what carries [*Tragenden*], [in] that by which nonmetaphysical thinking is claimed."[1193] The name in the "Conversation on Language" for the course of the conversation, that which claims us and carries us along, is simply 'the undetermined – or even indeterminate – determiner,' *das unbestimmte Bestimmende*.[1194] Listening to and heeding or obeying this address, this claim, just is authentic conversation – in which (the Guide tells us) "an event takes place [*sich ... ereignet*] wherein something comes to language"[1195] for the first time.

Note that this *something* that comes to language when we receive it is precisely the matter at stake, *die Sache*, the very phenomenon guiding the conversation. It is, perhaps appropriately, *not* the people involved. The Guide asks, "what if a conversation is only concerned with first of all *finding* the matter?"[1196] This would be in line with authentic solicitude (*Fürsorge*) as delineated in *Being and Time*, where genuine *Sachlichkeit*, responsiveness to the matter at stake, is first enabled by authentic being-with-one-another (i.e., by conversation).[1197] Heidegger distinguishes a range of positive modes of solicitude that is bounded by two extremes: leaping in (*einspringen*) for or standing in for someone is the misguided extreme, an attempt to do for someone what she can only do for herself – thus an attempt to dominate her. By contrast, leaping out ahead (*vorausspringen*) of someone involves recognizing that only she herself can take responsibility for who she is and helping her to see this for herself – thus liberating her from her entanglement in the crowd.

[1193] GA 77:187/*CPC* 122, trans. mod.
[1194] GA 12:106/*OWL* 22. The Inquirer and the Japanese gentleman soon specify this determining voice, which addresses us but is not determined by us, as the essence of language, at least (but not only) in *their* conversation.
[1195] GA 77:57/*CPC* 36.
[1196] GA 77:46/*CPC* 30, emphasis added.
[1197] *BT* 122/158-9. Heidegger's whole discussion takes place on this one German page.

We get an example of leaping out ahead in the "Conversation on Language." There, because of appropriate concerns about translation, the Japanese gentleman hesitates for most of the discussion before revealing the Japanese word for language. When it does finally happen, the disclosive event only comes about, he makes a point of saying, because (the character) Heidegger's patient listening to him has inspired the necessary confidence (or trust: *Zutrauen*). But even in saying this, the Japanese gentleman turns it away from the personal realm: "Since you listen to me, or better, to the probing intimations I propose […]."[1198] This is the same shift urged by Heraclitus, when he calls us to "listen not to me but to the *logos*." It is also the shift from listening to a person to listening to what else speaks *through* a person.

Marking that shift in the text makes clear that the distinction between liberating and dominating solicitude is structured as a mode of response to (or receptivity for) the matter at stake. Already in *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes that mode of response as a question of trust. Competition between those who are merely employed for the same task breeds mistrust, he says, while those who are themselves invested (*Sicheinsetzen*) in a shared matter are each determined by a being-there that is gripped by the matter. He names this latter way of being-there "authentic unity [*eigentliche Verbundenheit*]," that which first makes possible an appropriate orientation toward the matter,[1199] but we should recognize in it, at its heart, a certain trust of the other person with regard to the matter at stake.

The role of this kind of trust is all too quickly upstaged for Heidegger by our relation directly to the matter at stake. As inconspicuous, *die Sache* is what goes *un*said in the conversation while nonetheless quietly guiding, escorting, or determining its course. If we are to attend to it, then, or even to encounter it, we must wait, letting go of our imagined control over the conversation so as to let what is be *as it is* (i.e., in its being). We saw in chapter 4 that

---

[1198] GA 12:134/*OWL* 45.
[1199] *BT* 122/159.

'waiting' is the designation of the human essence that shows up the most in the *Country Path Conversations*, and it is also here that Heidegger marks authentic waiting (i.e., explicitly owning up to one's essence, to the essence of thinking) as 'releasement' (*Gelassenheit*).[1200] It is a receptivity that precedes or escapes the scale of activity and passivity,[1201] a receptivity understood as letting-come what approaches us, what has been entrusted to us. This letting-come of being in its self-showing is precisely waiting on it,[1202] listening to it – what Heidegger elsewhere names the piety of thinking.[1203] In this waiting receptivity, we become "gathered in attentiveness" to that in which we belong;[1204] in other words, we are opened up to an experience of being itself through a certain submissiveness to the matter at stake.

One aspect of such waiting, as inherently open to the future, is that one releases one's own thought and work to other (unknown) contexts, in which what is unsaid in it can and will emerge. In a note to the "Triadic Conversation," Heidegger asks, "Where else could the unspoken be purely kept [*bewahrt*], heeded [*gehütet*], other than in true conversation[?]"[1205] In a similar context, he refers to "the most beautiful dialogues [*Dialoge*] of Plato,"[1206] which conceal their import from anyone who looks for a particular result or doctrine rather than attending to what is unsaid in them.

> The uninitiated believe that the unsaid is only the remainder […]. Yet the unsaid has its place only in what is said, and only through the highest force of saying can it become and be such. Through the unsaid we first catch sight of the *matter* [*die* Sache] of thinking in its whole importance [*Sachheit*].

It should not be surprising, then, that this inconspicuous, unsaid phenomenon is also what Heidegger seeks in his conversations with the thinkers and poets of the tradition. When Kant's

---

[1200] GA 77:116-24, 148/*CPC* 76-80, 97.

[1201] GA 77:109, 144, 172/*CPC* 70, 94, 112.

[1202] GA 77:217-18/*CPC* 140-1.

[1203] See "The Nature of Language," GA 12:165-6/*OWL* 71-2, where Heidegger revises his previous characterization of questioning as the piety of thought (from "The Question Concerning Technology," GA 7:36/*QCT* 35).

[1204] GA 77:226/147.

[1205] GA 77:159/*CPC* 104.

[1206] This and the following taken from GA 79:164/*Basic Principles of Thinking* 154-5, trans. mod.

work comes up in the "Triadic Conversation," the Guide points out that "[t]he thinker even says more than he *himself* can know, such that he is surprised and above all surpassed by the inexhaustibility of his own word."[1207] Similarly, Heidegger claims that Nietzsche's thought is "wrapped in thick clouds – not just for us, but for Nietzsche's own thinking."[1208]

Hence when Heidegger seeks what is unsaid, he is most interested in what a thinker characteristically did not – and indeed *could not* – see. That is why we cannot be content to repeat Kant's or Nietzsche's words, nor even to come up with explanatory paraphrases. "Now, if an interpretation [*Interpretation*] merely gives back what Kant has expressly said, then from the outset it is not a laying-out [*Auslegung*] […]."[1209] Instead, laying-out the thought of someone like Nietzsche appropriately, according to Heidegger, requires "a prior glimpse of the essential questions"[1210] that are raised by the phenomenon Nietzsche is thinking through. This independent attention to the matter at stake (i.e., to the things themselves) on the part of the interpreter opens up a way toward what is *unsaid* by Nietzsche, in the process doing a kind of violence to what is written. Heidegger speaks, for example, of "wringing" "what Kant 'had wanted to say'" from what Kant really did say.[1211] Such violence is both enabled (literally, driven: *treiben*) and guided, however, by "the power [*Kraft*] of an idea that shines out," presumably from the text. Only under such power can an interpretation "risk what is always presumptuous: to entrust [*anvertrauen*] itself to the concealed inner passion of a work, so as by this passion to be placed into the unsaid and compelled to say it."[1212] Here there is a complicated mix of submission and self-assertion, for in seeking the unsaid, Heidegger also claims that "one can trust [Kant] without reservation [since]

[1207] GA 77:100/*CPC* 64, emphasis added. Cp. the end of part three of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. Richard Taft (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997): "Kant himself, however, was not enabled to say more about this. For in general, with any philosophical knowledge, not what is said in uttered propositions but what it sets before our eyes as still unsaid, in and through what has been said – this must become decisive" (GA 3:201/*KPM* 140, trans. mod.).

[1208] Heidegger, GA 111/*What Is Called Thinking?* 108.

[1209] GA 3:201/*KPM* 140.

[1210] GA 6.1:283/*Nietzsche II* 69.

[1211] GA 3:201-2/*KPM* 141.

[1212] GA 3:202/*KPM* 141, trans. mod.

one has with Kant […] the immediate certainty that he does not cheat."[1213] While he might not say anything quite so strong with regard to Nietzsche, he does claim that an interpretation of Nietzsche "must allow itself to be guided by meticulous deference toward what Nietzsche himself *did* say."[1214]

The fact that interpretation necessarily involves maintaining the tension between these two poles – between one's own questioning of the phenomena themselves and what the other person really said of those phenomena – comes as no surprise. That is the perennial interpretive challenge. The puzzle for us is how specifically Heidegger understands the pole of 'meticulous deference'. His interpretations of other thinkers are certainly meticulous – the line about trusting Kant absolutely comes at the end of some 400 pages of interpretation – yet sometimes in ways that not only break open the text but simply pass it by. He claims, for example, that Nietzsche's "philosophy proper" was unpublished – that the published material was always mere "foreground"[1215] – and so Heidegger attends principally to the *Nachlass* for his interpretation of Nietzsche.

This and other reading decisions are justified by Heidegger's avowed attempt to take on a person's thought at its strongest points, rather than picking on weaknesses.[1216] Those readings seek to "bring his thought out into the open and make it fruitful,"[1217] and to do this above all for his "genuine philosophical thought."[1218] They even remain explicitly tentative: in the "Conversation on Language," the Japanese gentleman tells the Inquirer that "it had always

---

[1213] Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason, trs. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 293, trans. mod./GA 25:431.

[1214] GA 6.1:283/*Nietzsche II* 69, trans. mod., emphasis added. Indeed, he comes close to saying that Nietzsche *does* cheat in calling truth an error. GA 6.1:558ff/*Nietzsche III* 125ff. For the previous discussions of Nietzsche's "ambiguity" to which Heidegger refers here, see GA 6.1: 148ff, 213ff, 459ff, 481ff/*Nietzsche I* 146ff, 211ff; *Nietzsche III* 34ff, 54ff.

[1215] GA 6.1:6/*Nietzsche I* 9.

[1216] GA 6.1:3/*Nietzsche I* 5. Cp. GA 65/*Contributions* §93, where Heidegger claims that the *Auseinandersetzung* is constructed so that "every philosophy, as something essential, comes to stand in the manner of a mountain among mountains and thereby gives standing to what in it is most essential."

[1217] GA 6.1:65/*Nietzsche I* 68.

[1218] GA 6.1:21/*Nietzsche I* 24.

seemed amazing that people never tired of imputing to you a defensive or deprecating relation [*abwehrendes Verhältnis*] toward the history of previous thinking, while in fact you strive only for an original appropriation [or adoption: *Aneignung*]." The Inquirer, who answers for Heidegger, immediately adds that the "success" of this appropriation "can and should be disputed."[1219]

Yet Heidegger understands a thinker's 'genuine philosophical thought' as an event (*Ereignis*): "[s]omething other than he himself […], something that no longer belongs to him, the thinker, but to which *he* belongs,"[1220] something that he "properly wanted to think"[1221] – and this something, as we have seen, is precisely the event of the truth of being. Thus, for Heidegger, it is possible to think a person's 'genuine philosophical thought' when we take as a guide "the movement of thought which occurs when *we* ask the genuine questions," i.e., when we try to hear the person precisely *in order to* ask after the innermost matter of Western thought – namely, the givenness of being.[1222]

This characterization echoes those given above of authentic conversations. We saw that such conversations, for Heidegger, are drawn along by their own gravity, guided by the happening of being. Thus it is not so much the other *person* he wants to listen to – or, in this case, the particular previous thinker – as it is the determining something else, that which speaks in the movement of the other person's thought and the movement of one's own thought. It is not so much the content of the thinking as the phenomenologically encountered happening – what *takes*

[1219] GA 12:104/*OWL* 20, trans. mod.
[1220] GA 6.1:233/*Nietzsche II* 13, trans. mod., emphasis added.
[1221] GA 6.1:63/*Nietzsche I* 65: *eigentliche Denkwille*.
[1222] GA 6.1:21/*Nietzsche I* 24.

place in this thinking. That is why Heidegger suggests that when thinkers and poets speak to us, "another claim meet[s] us through them."[1223]

The problem, I think, is something like this: the joint appeal to my own work of questioning and to the concealed work of being (both in and behind the back of my interlocutor) leaves *me* as the one who determines my interlocutor's genuine thought, her strongest points, etc. I construct the confrontation, so (within certain limits) I determine what is most essential in her thinking. My deference is not to her but to the phenomenon as it gives itself to me *in* (and even *as*) her thought, and thus finally as *I* interpret it. I determine, for example, the essential questions that must be asked in such an interpretation. Such an approach does open up a third position in the conversation (that of being's happening or of the course of the conversation itself), but, as we have seen, this turns out to be graspable as a unified structure of revealing and concealing. It is not a *person* who would be free either to thwart my understanding or to actively work *with* me. Instead of finding myself given over to another who might offer something radically different, I am stuck with my own ability to hear and interpret being's claim. The authentic unity that is possible in being-with and that should *subsequently* orient us toward the matter at stake is passed over from the beginning in favor of moving directly into an engagement with that matter.

While it seems like Heidegger's picture does capture part of the excitement and wonder of a good conversation, we should pause over what is missed if we attribute that conversation simply to the complex phenomenon of being. It seems, rather, to be dependent on being-with, not only in the sense that Heidegger straightforwardly recognizes (being requires a *there* that is structured communally), but in a way that requires the ontic singularity of specific people. In other words, we should ask, as I have tried to throughout this project, how the third position in the conversation is given and what relation it bears to the other, human participants. We might say,

---

[1223] Heidegger, GA 50:140/*Thinking and Poetizing*: 45. Cf. GA 10:37/*Principle of Reason* 24, trans. mod.: "What is great and lasting in the thinking of a thinker simply consists in its expressly giving word to what always already resounds."

for example, that the very peculiarities of the other person are ontologically – and not only ontically – necessary for enabling the conversation, i.e., for allowing being to show up in the matter under discussion. They contribute to the shared world (*Mitwelt*) by opening up paths for me. In knowing and trusting a friend, I have a (non-determinative) sense of which direction he might go concerning the matter, and that orients my own thinking in a way that is more specific than being can grant.

So, I want to say that what is legitimately troubling in Heidegger's approach is something like this: Heidegger claims that a thinker's thoughts are not most importantly the contribution of a particular person. Instead, they are, as he says in his discussion of Nietzsche, "reverberations of the still-unrecognized history of being[, sounding] in the word which that historical person speaks as his 'language.'"[1224] Although he adds that it is only in conversation that such a thought proves itself, since "here the speakers themselves must venture forth into what is spoken,"[1225] we have seen that it is quite clearly not so much the speakers themselves as what happens *to* them in such a venture that interests Heidegger. It is the latter – the happening, the phenomenon's self-showing – in which he places his trust.

3. Who (or What) Stages a Conversation?

This does not yet settle the matter. There are at least four ways in which this complaint might be answered in defense of Heidegger.

1) First, it may be that I am selling Heidegger short on the importance of the interlocutor's singularity. There is really a difference to be marked in this regard between the unpublished *Country Path Conversations* and the text published a decade later as "Conversation on Language." In the latter, there is more clearly a single character in the role of Heidegger, and that character expresses joy over the visit of this specific Japanese gentleman because of his

---

[1224] GA 6.2:34/*Nietzsche IV* 12, trans. mod.
[1225] GA 6.1:271/*Nietzsche II* 52.

peculiar qualifications for the conversation: he has translated some Kleist plays and some of Heidegger's lectures on Hölderlin.[1226] Furthermore, the conversation is presented contextually as stemming from a previous conversation between Heidegger and Count Kuki, who was also peculiarly qualified, having mastery of German, French, and English, in addition to Japanese.[1227] Looking more broadly, we could add that Heidegger consistently honors thinkers and poets above others, and Hölderlin above other poets.

All of this is important, yet it remains striking that all four conversations, including the "Conversation on Language," often sound very much like Heidegger's treatises and lecture courses, only with the various suggestions, objections, and false trails shared out among enduring characters. This feature is especially pronounced toward the end of each conversation, as the participants increasingly complete each other's sentences, but it is not absent early on, where there is a disconcerting element of explicit guessing or surmising about what the other person means. The Japanese gentleman, for example, says at one point: "But then what does hermeneutic mean? I dare not give in to the suspicion, although it lies close at hand, that you are now using the word 'hermeneutic' arbitrarily [*willkürlich*]."[1228] I have re-translated this to make it sound as believable as possible, but it still strikes me as very forced: Heidegger is clearly responding to objections by using this character. Of course, this kind of guessing does go on in live conversations, but such guesses are usually asked as questions – while in Heidegger's writing they are pronouncements.[1229] The resulting impression is that of an *internal* conversation, which is to say, of thinking understood Platonically as the dialogue of the soul with itself, only now made public.

[1226] GA 12:89/*OWL* 8. We should not forget Heidegger's claim in those very lectures on Hölderlin that how one translates is a matter of who one is. Cf. Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* GA 53.

[1227] GA 12:85/*OWL* 4. Of course, if the objection goes through as concerns the "Conversation on Language," then it turns out to support my claim regarding the three *un*published conversations.

[1228] GA 12:93/*OWL* 11, trans. mod.

[1229] Compare natural language formulations like 'Are you saying that… ?' 'You can't really mean … , right?' and 'I take it you're not serious about … ?' to Heidegger's written conversations.

2) Second, it is of course true that Heidegger's emphases on what happens in the conversation and on the unsaid in a person's work are to some extent corrective. We are generally so focused on the actual saying, as failed or successful communication, that we easily miss what is given to but not under the control of the speaker. To the extent that Heidegger is primarily advocating a corrective, I think he is just right – but I also think he is doing more than that. The case is similar to that of his essay on "The Origin of the Work of Art," where Heidegger both corrects the traditional focus on audience or artist by calling us back to the work as a thing *and* tries to rethink both things and the nature of truth on the basis of this work.

3) Third, we could take these emphases as Heidegger's rethought version of the traditional attempt to grasp the universal at work in the particular. No philosopher wants a biography as an interpretation of a thinker's work; one always wants to know what broader significance the work has. Nevertheless, I take it there is quite a range of possibilities between getting caught up in a thinker's personality, on one hand, and starting out by looking for something specific to show itself in her thinking, something that one has already discovered to be 'the innermost matter of all Western thinking', on the other hand. Similarly, there is in fact a considerable range between reducing Aristotle's work to a psychological self-portrait, and Heidegger's hyperbolic claim near the opening of a set of lectures on Aristotle that "[r]egarding the personality of a philosopher, our only interest is that he was born at such and such a time, he worked, and he died"[1230] – at which point genuine philosophical engagement may commence.

4) Fourth, and most crucially: Heidegger might claim that a person only becomes herself *in* the event of the conversation. Phenomenologically, there is not a subject constituted in itself permanently or beforehand to which one could appeal. Rather, Kant is given as (and thus first *becomes*) Kant in the historical interpretations to which he released his work; the Scientist is only

---

[1230] Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, trs. Robert D. Metcalf and Mark B. Tanzer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 4, trans. mod./GA 18:5.

derivatively a character that would be constituted independently of the conversation in which his conversion takes place. Such a response would seek to take fully into account one's temporal structure as a thrown projection that cannot ever take itself completely in hand (i.e., be fully present to itself or to anyone else). We are not only vulnerable to entities co-present with us; we are also (and more fundamentally) historically exposed.

Heidegger's own articulation of this objection is found in his lectures on the *Basic Principles of Thinking*. In the course of making clear what is needed if we are to listen historically, he again labels the 'I-Thou' formula a relic of Cartesianism, since it remains stuck thinking the 'I' as a subject. One subject seeking to understand another is still inadequate.

> As long as one pays homage to this representation of the human as a subject or a person, thinking is closed off against the arrival of the dispensation avowed to us [*des uns zugesprochenen Geschickes*]. One can then logically proclaim that every speaking with history, since it is indeed arranged by a subject, would only ever be a self-made monologue. […] Liberation from this representation requires something simple, that we abandon it in favor of an experience in which we are already sojourning [*aufhalten*]. […] We only catch sight of what has already sighted us, and indeed without our knowledge or effort. We only hear [*hören*] that to which we already belong [*zugehören*] insofar as we stand in its claim [*Anspruch*].[1231]

I cannot answer this objection fully, since it would require its own study of selfhood (*Selbstheit*) in Heidegger, but I can gesture in the direction of an answer. In his conversations with Boss, Heidegger elaborates on the structure of comportment (*Verhalten*) as an essential relatedness (*Verhältnis*) of being-there.

> The 'oneself' in *comporting oneself* [Sichverhalten] […] is to be seen in a purely phenomenological sense, i.e., in the way I comport myself now. In each case the *who* is exhausted precisely in the ways of comporting itself in which it is involved just now. […] This constitutes my being-there in the present situation, at any given time. Nothing more can be said about it. One cannot ask about this comportment's 'porter'; rather, the comportment carries itself.[1232]

This sounds at first like Nietzsche's attempt to leave behind the grammatical subject: there is not lightning plus a flash (constituted subject plus occasional deed); there is only flashing, which we

---

[1231] GA 79:100-1/*BPT* 95, trans. mod.
[1232] *Zollikon Seminars* 204-5/159-60, trans. mod.

misleadingly call lightning.[1233] If that were what Heidegger sought, then in one way my historical exposure would indeed be complete, but in another way there would be no sense in which it was 'my' historical exposure.

For Heidegger, however, any 'just now' is essentially shaped by the no longer and the not yet: I comport myself toward things in their possibilities, not just toward fully present things. Furthermore, since my self *is* only as temporalizing, gathering myself in comporting myself toward entities, something like an enduring or perduring 'I' does emerge. This is not, according to Heidegger, the Freudian I (ego) as present-at-hand represented object. As William Richardson puts it, the word *self* here "stands for Dasein as being-in-the-world insofar as as it remains the same throughout the entire historical [i.e., temporal] process."[1234] Heidegger's own characterization of the self as standing within or amidst (*inständig*) what is allows him to interpret its constancy (*Ständigkeit*) as belonging to or "proper to itself in the sense that the self is always able to come back to itself and always finds itself still the same in its sojourn."[1235] Unlike a substance that is constantly just there (*vorhanden*), the self has itself at issue: it actively relates itself to its own possibilities, including (though mostly not explicitly) its ability to return to itself. Phenomenologically, then, the self is encountered as a possibility of repetition that is of crucial import – iterability that matters to itself, we might say. Or, with Heidegger: "When a human being says 'I', this always designates the self insofar as he pays attention to it at any given time." 'I', the ego, thus means an aspect of the self, not the whole self, since the latter "can never be realized in one moment."[1236]

There is, we can conclude, an enduring (as unfolding) self that is meant but not directly encountered in any use of the pronoun 'I'. There is not space here for me to do more than suggest

---

[1233] Cf. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Essay 1, §13.
[1234] Richardson, "Heidegger Among the Doctors," p. 55.
[1235] *Zollikon Seminars* 220/175.
[1236] *Zollikon Seminars* 220/174-5. Thus Heidegger can certainly deal with a philosophy of mind not rooted in consciousness, as Freud's is not, even if the *dynamic* unconscious remains unacceptable to him.

that this self is what does not *only* emerge (although, as unfolding, it *does* emerge) in the event of the conversation. It would then be this singular self that can bear the weight of a conversation and be disclosed as trustworthy or not. That is not to interpret the singularized self as a subject, nor to declare that speaking with history is necessarily a monologue because arranged by a subject. Instead, it is *this* Kant or *this* Nietzsche to whom one might submit oneself in the work of an interpretation – in other words, a person one can trust, albeit under the modal limitation to the context of the philosophical matter at stake. That trust of the person, such that one's own project can be upended or at least temporarily set aside, is in fact what it seems to me Heidegger aims at when he speaks of 'authentic unity' or a 'Thou-Thou relation'. Nevertheless, his trust in the structure of being's self-showing – that in which we already stand, which has sighted us independently of our own knowledge or effort – mostly overshadows this meaning by making the disclosure necessarily independent of this singular person.

To put that more succinctly: Heidegger claims that waiting is the essence of releasement, and that "the originary releasement [*Gelassenheit*] of Dasein [is] the trusting of the human to the Da-sein in him and to its possibilities."[1237] Such trust, as a modification of our essential waiting, is primitive: finding oneself given over to the openness of world (Da-sein and its possibilities). That seems right, so long as we recognize that the phenomenal structure of this primitive trusting is primarily that of trusting a person rather than primarily of trusting the complex phenomenon concealment/unconcealment.

III. Originary Fantasy Arises as an Event of Truth

If my argument survives the variety of objections gone through above, then I think we must conclude a) that the phenomenon of psychosis at least gives us grounds for significant hesitation about the way Heidegger thinks our relation to being, and b) that it additionally calls on

---

[1237] Heidegger, *Introduction to Philosophy*, GA 27:401.

us to think through originary truth again, beginning from the perspective of its trusting character. As reasons for (a), we have seen that Heidegger ends up phenomenologically reassuring himself about the relation of thinking and being, even if his own thinking can also be opened up in the direction of a possible radical break with being (chapters 3-4). We have also seen that the functional psychoses in fact involve such a radical break, one that neither Heidegger nor many of his compatriots in phenomenological psychiatry can quite countenance (chapter 5). In defense of (b), we have seen that the phenomenon of originary truth, which Heidegger interprets as the essential unity of a historical clearing for concealment, can also be addressed as primitive trust (chapters 1-2). Indeed, we have even seen that this gives us a fruitful way to think through the moves and tensions in Heidegger's own texts (chapters 2-3). Furthermore, it seems clear that Freudian psychoanalysis has insights into world-entry (and world-exit) that we need as ontologists if we are to make sense of the way the human being is integrated into the shared world (chapters 5-6). Having thus dealt with both what might be called negative objections (section II.A) and positive counterproposals (section II.B), I want to close this chapter by leaving behind the Heideggerian response to my proposal in favor of now exploring that proposal's further implications.

While I have already considered trust on its own terms (chapter 1), trust in its relation to originary truth (chapter 2), originary truth for Heidegger (chapter 2), the role of trust for Heidegger (chapters 3-4 and section II.B in this chapter), and the role of trust in Freudian psychoanalysis (chapters 5-6), I have not yet dealt head-on with the thorny issue of *truth* for Freud. What might Freud and Heidegger contribute to one another in thinking the nature of truth? Most especially, what does psychoanalysis have to offer philosophy in this regard? I think that there is something important to be said here, and I would like to conclude with several considerations suggestive of further research.

In chapter 2, I characterized the question of originary truth for Heidegger as a problem of how things can show up as appropriately independent of us, yet still as *important* for us (where 'important' means both mattering and partially intelligible). Heidegger corroborates this characterization in the "Triadic Conversation," where the Guide claims that the "independence of truth *from* the human is after all […] a relation *to* the human."[1238] The participants do not work out what this means in any detail, but the Guide does emphasize that part of the reason why the human can be needed by beyng in order for beyng to show up in things (i.e., in order for there to be truth) is precisely that "the human by himself has no power over truth, which remains independent of him." We are caught up into a clearing that we cannot simply opt into or out of, and this regime of criteria for what is essential allows entities (including statements) to be true or false independently of which we would like them to be. We are, in Freudian terms, submitted to the reality principle.[1239] The Scholar summarizes the situation as follows: to be human is to be "the one who is required [*der Gebrauchte*] in the essencing of truth"[1240] – the one to whom things show up in a *particular*, minimally coherent, differentially important way.

One way that the same problem arises for Freud is quite simply formulated: if things show up to us as mattering in a way shaped by the drives (as we saw in chapter 6), and the drives, for their part, are correlated with or oriented by fantasy, how can we still be knowingly submitted to real things that are properly independent of our desires?

Note that in an important sense this is the same problem Kant faced; for his part, he solved it by taking the categories and the schemata to be inborn, while abandoning things as they are in themselves to the realm of the unknowable. But Freud recognizes that there is much less

---

[1238] This and the next quotation from GA 77:147/*CPC* 96.
[1239] Reflection shows Freud that the reality principle functions only as a contrast term to the pleasure principle, i.e., to sexuality; it would be worth exploring in what way this is parallel to the discovery of phenomenological reflection (in Heidegger) that authenticity, embracing my belonging to reality, functions only as a contrast term to everydayness.
[1240] GA 77:148/*CPC* 96.

inborn than we might wish. (Things might go much more smoothly than they in fact do if everything were a matter of *innate* predisposition.) We need some account of a non-arbitrary constitution of human openness that can nevertheless arise from accidental (i.e., contingent) situations. In other words, we need a way to acknowledge that what is real shows up as it really is, yet only on the basis of our (contingent, historically concrete) involvements with it. The central such involvement is what I have been calling primitive trust. Or, as Heidegger puts it, originary truth emerges historically, in an event (*Ereignis*) that opens a world in which real things can appear. To such an event we can only respond, either appropriately (*ent-sprechen*) or inappropriately.

I do not want to give the impression that Freud himself ever simply worked out this difficulty. What I do want to say is that he struggled with it in various guises and with varying levels of success, thereby offering to later analysts (and to us) material with which to think through the problem. My proposal is that when Freud turns to originary fantasy as the individual's contingently structured opening onto a constitutively shared world, he comes quite close to some of Heidegger's interpretations of the appropriative event (namely, as an *Austrag* – a staging or carrying-out – of the clearing). Freud's version, however, is at the level of the individual, whereas Heidegger's seems to remain at the level of the community.[1241] Although (as we shall see) for Freud we can delineate a set of oft-encountered originary fantasies, and that is for structural reasons, we are nevertheless not all ontologically shaped by the same historical epoch, since we are not all responding to one event of clearing.

[1241] For Freud's brief accounts of originary fantasy, see "A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Theory" (SE **14**), "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (SE **14**), *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (SE **15**/**16**), *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (SE **17**), and "A Child is Beaten [*Ein Kind wird geschlagen*]" (SE **17**). For Heidegger's discussions of *Austrag*, see *Meditation* (GA 66, esp. §§16, 80-87), *The History of Beyng* (GA 69, esp. §§27, 51-53, 71, 77, 95), *On the Inception* (GA 70, esp. §§1, 25, 77), *The Event* (GA 71, esp. §§255-70, 280-4, 289-90), and "Language" (esp. GA 12:25-7/*Poetry, Language, and Thought* 200-205).

We saw earlier (chapter 5, part II) that a major turning-point in Freud's thinking was prompted by the discovery that at least some his patients' "memories" of early childhood seductions were not (ontically) true. To deal with this problem without giving up on those patients as simple liars, he decided that psychical reality (i.e., fantasy or imagination) could be just as important and meaningful psychically as shared reality is. In other words, he recognized a field in which truth is taken up by the subject, yet not always consciously. This is not merely a matter of private *assent* to what is publicly available; it is a privately undergone *condition of access* to what is publicly available. I encounter things only through a certain mediation, which is what lets the realm of truth and falsity (getting things right) matter, but this mediation is in part my idiosyncratic investment in or involvement in things. Most troublingly, it partially consists in my personal fantasies, over the most important of which I do not even have control.

But this opens directly onto our present (ontological) problem: what then enables us reliably to distinguish between psychical reality and shared reality? How am I related to what is if my perceptions of the world are permanently distorted by fantasy? We have also seen (chapter 6, section II.A) that submitting to the reality principle as something that governs me (i.e., making the transition from pleasure-ego to reality-ego) presupposes contingent events of *seduction*, where this does not mean abuse but an initiation by a loved (and hated) person into a specifically oriented version of the shared world. This raises, once more, the same question: if I can only enter the shared world by being seduced (*verführt*: seduced, enticed, allured, but also misled, ensnared) into a particular perspective on that world, am I not always already betrayed, consigned to inescapable distortion? How can I have access to anything that is objectively the case (i.e., appropriately independent of me)?

To work out this question more concretely, let us recall the example used in chapter 2: hearing a bear growl. One of the important observations made there was that I do not hear a representation of a growl, nor a set of sound-waves that I subsequently infer to be a growl, nor a

pure noise that I project as a growl. Of course, when we use certain instruments to analyze similar sounds, we find sound-waves in particular patterns; we can use other instruments to synthesize such patterns; we can listen to the same noise over and over until the context has been sufficiently modified that they become meaningless, pure noise. But what I hear, in the context given by the example, is from the ground up a bear growl. Even if I am wrong about its source, so long as I am integrated into the shared world, I can only be wrong within limits given by the nature of a bear's growl – its source cannot really have been a soprano singing an aria.

When Heidegger makes this point in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, his claim is that under most circumstances we hear what the noise *is*, not only the noise. In fact, "it is hard and unusual for us to describe the pure noise, because it is precisely *not* what we generally hear. (Reckoned from the perspective of mere noise,) we always hear *more*."[1242] This receptivity to the being of things is what he calls an understanding of being, the principle feature of standing within a clearing.[1243] But if we think about what it means to 'hear more' in a Freudian sense, we can recognize the extent of what might be included in the being of this noise. Not only do I rarely hear a pure noise (rather than the noise *of* something determinate, or a noise that *sounds like* something determinate but is a bit puzzling), I rarely even hear merely the noise of a particular thing. The context usually gives me much more than that. I hear my friend telling, asking, cautioning, or offering me something, but I do not only hear that – I hear overtones of another friend's words, or of a popular TV show, or of the way my brother would say that same thing. I hear echoes of numerous contexts, with various shades of relevance to the current one. My ability

---

[1242] GA 40:37/*IM* 36, trans. mod., his italics. His example is the roar of a motorcycle engine. Cf. GA 10:70-1/*The Principle of Reason* 47: "[W]hat the ear perceives and how it perceives [*vernimmt*] will already be attuned and determined by what *we* hear […]. Of course our hearing organs are in a certain regard necessary, but they are never the sufficient condition for our hearing, for that hearing which accords and affords us whatever there really is to perceive [*zu-Vernehmende*]." For further discussion of *Vernehmen* as receptivity, see the *Zollikon Seminars*, *passim*.
[1243] Heidegger clarifies: "What is meant is that what speaks to us [*sich uns zuspricht*] only becomes perceivable [*vernehmbar*] through our response [*Entsprechen*]. Our hearing [*Vernehmen*] is in itself a responding" (GA 10:71/*The Principle of Reason* 48).

to card those out one from another is never complete, and there are times when the overtones simply overwhelm the present context. I hear my cousin's last words in a song lyric and have to turn off the music; when my friend offers a bit of useful advice, I respond out of weariness over my father's oft-repeated refrain – that is, I respond to my father rather than responding (strictly speaking) to my friend.

At what level are these simply mistakes? When I hear only what I want, expect, or fear to hear from someone, is that in every case *not* what the person really said? It may sometimes not be what he heard himself say – but does he not also hear himself through similar contextual filters? What about when I *mishear* what a close friend literally said because I hear accurately what she *meant* in the situation? We can be mis-attuned precisely because we are always already attuned in some concrete way, else we would hear nothing. Our investments in the situation (and in the contexts that echo through it) enable any hearing of things, rather than of meaningless noise, in the first place. The cost is that sometimes we hear too much, sometimes too little, and rarely just the right amount. Indeed, it is unclear what just the right amount would be.

Freud's psychoanalytic investigations are on behalf of people who find themselves mis-attuned (not only in the realm of hearing, of course) with a frequency and to an extent that cripples their everyday living. His peculiar brand of listening, then, is an attempt to locate the contexts (the "other scenes") that are dominating the current context and to figure out why those echoes are so powerful. Some of the echoing contexts that he comes across reverberate throughout most of a person's experiences; some of them seem to be so wide-reaching and thoroughly incorporated that they appear as unnoticed patterns or stages (in the sense of staging a performance) for the person's every relationship. They also show up in dreams and in conscious imagination, in unwary uses of words, and in bodily affective responses.

Freud eventually gives the name *fantasy* to these psychical patterns of investment, on the basis of which the situation is disclosed to the person. The most thoroughgoing formative patterns

he calls originary fantasies (*Urphantasien*). His model for understanding them is daydreaming, in which something one wants but does not have is staged imaginatively, enjoyed in a certain way, albeit explicitly under the sign of unreality. (Part of the enjoyment is precisely being able to let go of pesky details that would make the scene impossible or less enjoyable in reality.) The difficulty with fantasy is that it is not always a matter of conscious imagination – as we just saw, one does not always have control over the synthesis of different contexts. In fact, Freud discovers that some fantasies start out as conscious imaginative productions, but when they tend in an unbearable direction, the person can repress them, drive them out of conscious imagination, but not necessarily out of their structuring influence on mental life.

If fantasy is a matter of mental structure or patterns of meaningful investment, then, as Laplanche and Pontalis have observed,[1244] fantasy "is not [itself] the object of desire, but [desire's] setting. In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequence of images." Something plays out, either consciously in imagination or unconsciously in his actions, that is not intentional pursuit. "He forms no representation of the desired object" – it is not a matter of believing or not believing in it – "but is himself represented as participating in the scene." In other words, he finds himself invested in the world (whether shared or only imagined) in very particular ways.[1245] Heidegger's thinking of freedom as a kind of investment in the world as a whole, which first enables our encounters with things (chapter 2), can help us here, since that global investment, our relation to beyng, is investment in a particular

---

[1244] The following is from p. 17 of Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," *IJP* **49** (1968): 1-18. The text is a translation of "Fantasme originaire, fantasmes des origins, origine du fantasme," *Les Temps Modernes* **19**.215 (1964).

[1245] Jonathan Lear gives as example Freud's Rat Man, who takes a "stroll along a road on which he expects his lady friend's carriage soon to travel. He sees a boulder in the road and clears it out of the way; a bit later he turns around, goes back to that spot, and replaces the boulder. How are we to understand this? [… H]e is actively holding loved and hated representations of the lady friend apart, while in dynamic relation. […] This activity of holding apart *is* the fantasy," which gets acted out with the boulder. Lear, *Open Minded*, pp. 116-17.

pattern of what is essential and what is inessential, i.e., in a specific clearing. (*This* is given as what matters most about a thing.)

The sense of fantasy as a setting for desire or the staging of a conflict between desires indicates both how closely bound up with the drives fantasy is and the structural role that it plays in a person's life. When one 'acts out' in accord with the fantasy, one cannot recognize what one is doing. As Jonathan Lear puts it, such acting out puts something on display that the person cannot say (to herself or to another) – and that something is part of her psychic structure.[1246] The drama that constitutes *originary* fantasy thus marks out possible and essential ways of relating, beyond which the person cannot see, by providing a sort of stage-setting for life. This does not mean that the person straightforwardly reenacts the drama (although sometimes that happens); rather, the drama stages a limited set of modes of relation, and it is this staging that also structures the person's relationships.

To be clear – and to emphasize the proximity to Heidegger – we should emphasize that the person is not necessarily caught up in the fantasy *as a subject* (i.e., as a character in the drama). Rather, she permeates the entire fantasy, appearing even "in the very syntax" – for instance, a person whose originary fantasy is articulated in the passive voice is constrained to occupy passive or onlooking positions in life.[1247] Claiming that entry into the shared world takes place mediated by originary fantasy is therefore not a description of how someone becomes a subject directed to objects so much as an account of what is philosophically prior to subjectivity: the emergence of a definite shape of possibilities for the exposed relationality that Heidegger names *being-there*. Since, as we have seen (chapter I, section II.B), it is fantasy together with emotion that shapes desire (and thus structures the world for us), we can recognize this definite shape of possibilities as part of what Heidegger names 'disposition' (*Stimmung*), or, more

---

[1246] *Ibid.*, pp. 101-105, 117.
[1247] The quotation is from Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy," p. 17. For an example, see Freud's article "A Child is Beaten [*Ein Kind wird geschlagen*]" (SE **17**).

generally, thrownness. The discussion of originary fantasy could thus be seen as an attempt to *specify* how thrownness bears on projection.

We can then understand thrownness more concretely if we say that this claim about world-entry is an attempt to account for both the emergence of the drive and the motivation for repression. Why do we both want to know (at one level) and *not* want to know (at another)? Why do we both remember and forget the same content, just in different contexts? As we have seen (chapter 6, section II.A.3), repression is a strategy for (in one sense) removing intensely upsetting wishes by refusing to think the particular thoughts in which those wishes get invested. But why do we have wishes that are more than we can bear? Why would even *conscious* fantasies ever tend toward the horrifying or the unbearable? Would I not simply wish instead for something else? Ordinary repression, as we have also seen (chapter 5, section I.D.2), seems to presuppose some conflict in me that was temporarily dealt with by a more originary (*primal*) repression.

As with all conflicts, Freud locates the emergence of this internal struggle in a problem of love. We have seen (chapter 6, section I.C) that the parents' (necessarily sexualized) love for the child invites the child into a shared world enigmatically infused with or even structured by that love, a realm that the child is neither biologically nor experientially prepared to understand. The child *is* excited, and it wants to participate in this love – to belong to that world – but it cannot do so fully right away (if ever). In fact, according to Freud, its desire to participate (by, say, loving the parents in return) runs into what is not simply lack of understanding but positive misunderstanding, an 'understanding' that horrifies it (we shall see why shortly). Further, we saw that emergence into selfhood *requires* primal repression (chapter 5, section II.A.4), the painful giving up of full, immediate union with the object (a union which was never real but emerges in fantasy for the child as an explanation of the sense of loss or incompleteness). Hence the child both deeply wants to know about this adult realm of sexuality and emphatically does *not* want to know any more about it, since the costs of entry seem so high.

The difficulty here is structural: there is only one way into the shared world (through trust of parental figures that is broadened into trust of the world); the child must be invited in; but this invitation can only appear as a seduction. As Freud comments, after pointing out the mother's (unintentional) role in inaugurating the child's sexual drives,

> if the mother understood more of the high importance of the part played by drives in mental life as a whole – in all its ethical and psychical achievements – she would spare herself any self-reproaches even after [she realized what she had done]. She is only fulfilling her task in teaching the child to love.[1248]

Originary fantasy, then, arises as a two-fold attempt: to answer questions about sexual life (which is always concerned with origins) and to replace the lost object that is given up along with the psychical emergence of the self (in primal repression). It is *originary*, according to Freud, both because it is a first attempt to understand one's trusting relation to one's parents as a consistent background for other satisfactions and because it was never simply conscious; it is *fantasy* because it fills in a consistency that may or may not be there (in the parents' real care for the child), marking a qualified withdrawal from and substitution for the confusion of reality. As we saw (chapter 6, section II.A), sexuality emerges auto-erotically, but in response to the solicitations of the worldly situation (including the parents). The questions that need answering – what Freud calls "childhood sexual researches" – are thus universal, and even the answers that shape the fantasy are very common, although the fantasy itself is and must be individually inflected.

These questions regard the origin of the individual (where do babies come from?), the origin of sexual desire (what are adults doing with each other and what do they want of me?), and the origin of sexual difference (is castration possible?). We could follow Laplanche and Pontalis in saying that "[w]hatever appears to the subject as something needing an explanation or theory,

---

[1248] Freud, *Three Essays on Sexuality*, SE **7**:223.

is dramatized as a moment of emergence, the beginning of a history."[1249] I would point out that we can read these as implicating basic philosophical questions: physico-temporal beginning, unity, and differentiation are philosophically at stake in these early researches. Significantly for the present inquiry, Freud points to these researches as a first cultivation of *mistrust*, the first practical emergence of the understanding self as independent of the parents.

> [C]hildren refuse to believe the stork theory [about where babies come from;] from the time of this first deception [*Täuschung*] and rebuff they nourish a distrust [*Mißtrauen*] of adults and have a suspicion of there being something forbidden which is being withheld from them by the 'grown-ups' […]. With this, however, the child also experiences the first occasion for a 'psychical conflict', in that views for which he feels an instinctual kind of preference, but which are not 'right' in the eyes of the grown-ups, come into opposition with other views, which are supported by the authority of the grown-ups without being acceptable to him himself.[1250]

We should note that this first emergence of *psychical* conflict – meaning a conflict that is thought about or minimally reflected on, not only directly lived – is more deeply a conflict of trust and mistrust. *Am I betrayed?* the child is asking, *and, if so, to what extent?* This would be an emblematic moment in the transfer of trust in one's parents to trust in the stability of the world shared with them.[1251] If my trust in my parents turns out to be upheld by primitive trust, then it can survive this first conflict; in the relatively rare case that it is not so supported, there is a psychical experience of abandonment and shattering.

Each of these questions about origins gives rise to a misunderstanding, according to Freud, a childhood theory that is partially correct but hindered by inadequate information about sexual difference. Freud's experience with children suggests the following, although these need

---

[1249] Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy," p. 11.

[1250] Freud, "On the Sexual Theories of Children," SE **9**:213-14. Note that this conflict cannot simply be circumvented by the parents' resolve to use literal language in explaining human sexuality; the child is not yet capable of understanding (and so even the simple truth will be unacceptable), but developmentally she must *try* to understand, and this inevitably bears the weight of her trust in her parents' word.

[1251] More speculatively: perhaps it is this moment that is rendered especially problematic by sexual abuse, in which not only the adults turn out to be in some way untrustworthy, but the world does not provide a stable reality separate from that. Recall Wilma Bovink's claim that it is "the threat and the betrayal that come with [abuse that] feed psychosis. The betrayal of the family that says, 'you must have asked for it,' instead of standing up for you. That […] forces the child to accept the reality of the adults" – or, we could say, reality itself is presented as a betrayal, not only particular people within it as betray*ers* (Bovink, "From Being a Disorder," p. 18).

not be taken as exhaustive or normative: a cloacal theory of birth (babies emerge in the same way faeces does, so anyone can have a baby) due to ignorance of the vagina; a sadistic theory of sexual desire (sex is a violent attack) due to ignorance of genital maturity; and a 'universal phallus' theory (sexual difference emerges through castration – i.e., gender relations are a zero-sum game) due to ignorance of genital differences.[1252]

Such childhood 'theories' arise upon the stage of originary fantasies, giving the latter concrete content. That is to say, these misunderstandings of very basic phenomena come to structure the child's world, although which one is centrally formative for each person depends on the child's contingent circumstances and investments. A concrete fantasy of being sexually seduced can arise from the answer I come to about individual origins (if my parents can have a baby, there is no reason why I cannot have one with them; this also dramatizes the child's entrance into the enigmatic sexual sphere). A concrete fantasy of witnessing parental intercourse can arise from the answer I reach about sexual desire (which remains attractive, even if it is at the same time horrifying). And a concrete fantasy of being threatened with castration can arise from the answer concerning sexual difference (i.e., the castration complex, which may be quite obviously a matter of power, or only more immediately of physical integrity). Note that these three fantasies subsequently come to be elements of the universal Oedipus complex: wanting to have a baby with one parent, the child is both horrified and excited by the implicit sense that this would involve carrying out its sadistic sexual impulses, but this course of action is interdicted by that parent's non-exclusive desire (i.e., the adult also desires objects other than the child). Such an interdiction threatens the child's power and (in its seeming arbitrariness) the child's physical integrity. The individual's eventual solution to the Oedipal problem will thus be closely bound up with the way the problem is shaped for him by whichever fantasy is most formative.

[1252] See Freud, *Three Essays*, SE **7**:194-7, and "On the Sexual Theories of Children," SE **9**:215-23. Notice that all of these are at some level a question of sexual difference.

Freud consistently implies that there are other originary fantasies than these three, but he also consistently refers to these three so as to establish that it is not only *the fact of being shaped by fantasy* that is common to us as human beings but also the very possibilities for that fantasy's content. As Laplanche and Pontalis explain, there are typical fantasies "because the historical life of the subject is not the prime mover, but rather something antecedent, which is capable of operating as an organizer."[1253] Freud takes this antecedent something to be phylogenesis, but we may think of it as the shared human condition. Just as every child has to negotiate the divided desire of the primary caretaker – i.e., pass through the Oedipus complex – so everyone has to sort out problems of origins, especially with regard to sexuality (which, as we saw in chapter 6, is structurally deceptive in this regard). Hence originary fantasy is "a structure, but activated by contingent elements"[1254] – that is, an ontological frame initiated by an *event*. As Freud puts it, these occurrences (*Begebenheiten*) – these originary scenes that are incorporated fantastically, regardless of the degree of historical reality on which they are based – are necessary elements of neurosis.[1255] Or, as I would rather say, are required by any possible response to the emergence of sexuality.[1256]

Earlier (chapter 6, section I.C), I interpreted the emergence of the sexual drives for Freud as the stripping off of a desire for the activity itself (e.g., drinking) from a given desire for the result of a movement (e.g., satiation of thirst). That peeling away is a matter of the drive's aim

---

[1253] Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy," p. 9.

[1254] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

[1255] Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:370.

[1256] Freud's most explicit problem of truth shows up here, but it remains at the ontic level, rather than asking after the *essence* of truth. Namely, he agonizes over whether or not the childhood scenes, whose traces show up in psychoanalysis, really happened or not. He poses the problem in temporal terms – is fantasy only retrospective fantasy (*Zurückphantasieren*)? – and it forms the crux of his argument with Jung. (See especially the Wolf-Man case history, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, SE **17**.) I would prefer to say that understanding of reality is projective, processed fantastically, and so the question of what really happened to the infant is psychologically (and legally) important but not philosophically crucial. There is a continuum between an event that has been "produced from intimations [*Andeutung* can also mean 'overtone'] and supplemented [or organized] by fantasy" and one that has "occurred in reality" and been interpreted by fantasy (*Introductory Lectures*, SE **16**:370). Cf. Freud's own admission of such a continuum, SE **16**:364.

being distorted by the enigmatic influence of the parents' loving provision for the child, a love that is sexually inflected and split by unconscious desires and demands (related to the parents' own fantasies). Since, as we have just seen in more detail, this enigmatic influence is both seductive and overwhelming, the child initially withdraws into its own bodily surfaces, seeking pleasure by stimulation regardless of who provides it (i.e., regardless of the 'object'). Laplanche and Pontalis interpret this as follows:

> The 'origin' of auto-erotism would therefore be the moment when sexuality, disengaged from any natural object, moves into the field of fantasy and by that very fact becomes sexuality. The moment is more abstract than definable in time, since it is always renewed, and must have been preceded by erotic excitation [prompted by the parent], otherwise it would be impossible for such excitation to be sought out. But one could equally state the inverse proposition, that it is the breaking-in of fantasy which occasions the disjunction of sexuality and need. [… H]owever far back one may go[,] they originate from the same point.[1257]

Here we see why I have been alluding to sexual drive and fantasy as belonging to one another. Fantasy both opens up and responds to (by sustaining) auto-erotic desire. In their co-origination, we could say in a Heideggerian register that they are appropriated to one another as well as set apart from one another (dispropriated). The role the parent plays here is crucial, for I have argued (chapter 6, part I) that even auto-erotic drives are shaped in part as responses to the caretaker's desire, where (we now see) that desire is interpreted questioningly, inadequately, and fantastically by the child.

Freud generally characterizes fantasy as freedom *from* (the weight and tyranny of) reality, but originary fantasy seems to be originary in that it is also freedom *for* (a structured) reality. In struggling to articulate just how foundational it is, Freud appeals to both his Kantian and neurobiological backgrounds. These appeals emerge at the very end of the Wolf-Man case history, where he raises them as problems for further research.

First, in a Kantian mode, he characterizes originary fantasies as schematized complexes (here including the Oedipal), "which, like the categories of philosophy, are concerned with

---

[1257] Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy," p. 16.

subsuming [*Unterbringung*] the impressions derived from actual experience."[1258] He specifies

that if an experience does not fit with the schema, it is worked over in fantasy, then continues: "It

is precisely such cases that are calculated to convince us of the independent existence of the

schema. We are often able to see the schema triumphing over the [objective] experience of the

individual." Freud adds that childhood conflicts arise precisely as conflicts between the schema

and individual experience, which I take to mean (in keeping with the foregoing analysis) a

conflict of desires staged according to the schema – i.e., a complex – that runs into problems (i.e.,

into its own limits) trying to integrate individual experience.

Second, since there is an astonishingly complicated response (even if it is necessarily a

misunderstanding) in very small children, Freud appeals to something like animal instinct

(*Instinkt*, for once, not *Trieb*) in the child. He calls it a kind of knowing that is "something like a

preparation for understanding," or, we could say, an *originary* understanding, an understanding of

being that enables understanding of particular entities.[1259] Freud further designates this originary

understanding, conflicted as it is, as "the nucleus of the unconscious […that] would retain the

power of drawing down to it the higher mental processes" in repression.

We can say, then, that originary fantasy is that which most basically structures our

interactions with others and shapes the space in which the drives play out their fates. It organizes

the world by delimiting a set of possible relational positions, which we should understand as ways

of belonging. What happens when none of these positions is accepted (or accept*able*)? Perhaps

this is another way of describing the sense of betrayal in psychosis.

If so, it is significant for my broader argument that the unitary origin of a drive

(sexuality) and of the staging of that drive (fantasy) comes close to the way Heidegger speaks of

the event of appropriation (*das Ereignis*) as the clearing that produces an open region, a

---

[1258] This paragraph and the next from *Wolf-Man*, SE **17**:119.
[1259] Recall here the discussion in chapter 2, section I.C, of primitive trusting as Heidegger's 'originary knowing'.

structured world in which what is can appear. It is the origin of the mutual belonging of world to things and things to world. At a certain point, and among many other names, Heidegger calls this event *Austrag*,[1260] which literally means to carry out or bear out (*aus-tragen*) but also means to stage, as when one holds or stages a competition. The latter sense is most clearly in play when Heidegger specifies that "'what' is staged are 'encounter' and 'strife'," i.e., encounter between gods and mortals, strife between earth and world.[1261] These are articulations of the opening up of world, the happening of originary truth.

To see the range of this word in Heidegger's usage, let us look briefly at some important passages in which he employs it. He explains that *Aus-tragen* "says both to keep in custody until the ripeness of essential decision and to render the decision with regard to essence [....] *Aus-tragen* as preserving and deciding thereby has, as its essential character, the grounding of the abyss that clears."[1262] This is not far from what we have just seen in terms of originary fantasy, which, for Freud, both sustains (i.e., preserves) sexual desire and initially opens it up (i.e., decides a field or direction for it).

Although *Austrag* can also mean 'settlement' and 'discharge' or 'disposal', Heidegger explicitly distinguishes his usage from these meanings, clarifying that it means instead "opening, *clearing the clearing – event* as staging [*Austrag*] *– staging [is] essentially the abyss*."[1263] He adds that "beyng is the abyss [..., i.e.], is the staging that clears."[1264] As we saw much earlier (chapter 2, section I.B), beyng 'is' an abyss because it lacks an independent criterion, a foundation to which it could appeal to guarantee or measure its correctness. Instead, what is in

---

[1260] "Event is *Austrag*" (GA 66:307). Cf. "Clearing is: clearing 'of' the *Austrag*. Truth is clearing 'of' the *Austrag*, i.e., of the event" (GA 66:314).
[1261] GA 66:307.
[1262] GA 66:307.
[1263] GA 66:84. Cf. GA 66:108: "The clearing is never what is empty, but rather the most originary pervasive essencing of the event as the staging of encounter and strife – the abyssal between."
[1264] GA 69:61. Cf. GA 69:25: "The appropriating as beyng itself: the event. The event as staging: the between."

question here is the very giving of such a measure. But our concern about access to things as mediated by the structure of originary fantasy is precisely this abyssal quality: we want a measure for that which grants measure in the first place. Correctness cannot be the criterion for the most originary truth.

Finally, we should not take the giving of a measure to happen once for all of history, even when Heidegger speaks of it as inception or beginning (*Anfang*), since it is a staging or patterning that includes the sense of carrying-out: "[h]istory is the staging of the essence of the truth of being. Therefore, history is the essencing of being itself."[1265] One way to understand this would be that, on Heidegger's account, there is one emergence of being itself into human concern (the event in which we are appropriated metaphysically, which we encounter as ancient, marking the entrance into history), but this is repeated with each philosophical, artistic, or political engagement. Hence, every such repetition includes the possibility of taking up the event properly – of explicitly belonging to it and thinking it more appropriately – which would constitute what he calls *the other beginning*. Every repetition also includes the possibility of metaphysically reifying the event, taking the world to be given once for all, out there over against us, and therefore perhaps impossible for us to reach.

Taken together, these passages indicate that whatever names Heidegger uses for the most originary phenomenon of integration of the human with being (event, clearing, beyng, essencing of being, history of beyng, inception) in his private writings, at some point he equates them with *Austrag* (as staging or carrying-out). Indeed, the whole complex historical (*Geschichtlich*) phenomenon that we explored in chapter 3, including both essential desolation and saving as essential preservation, is here characterized as a changing stage upon which what is real can show

---

[1265] GA 70:180. Cf. GA 70:12: "The inception is staging."

up: "The devastating, the abandoning of being, and the preserving of beyng in itself [that takes place] as the concealed *Austrag* [– this] is the history of beyng (essencing of its truth)."[1266]

These brief, suggestive considerations of Freudian originary fantasy (*Urphantasie*) and the Heideggerian event (*Ereignis*) indicate that both are trying to articulate our originary belonging to the world, the fundamental disclosure (or truth) that allows things to show up as mattering to us in an organized, potentially intelligible way. They do so in different registers, but we can see important parallels, especially if our thinking is guided by the phenomena of trust and betrayal. Originary fantasy shows up obliquely as a consistent betrayal or interruption of self-possessed speech in the context of psychoanalytic therapy, while the event is thought phenomenologically, in response to the world's self-reduction, when we grow existentially distressed about whether being has betrayed our assumptions. We might articulate the relation by saying that Freud has found a way to locate, *within* the life of being-there, the same ontological structure that Heidegger understands by originary truth.

Though I have not defended it sufficiently here, if this turns out to be right, it would have two important ramifications for my broader project. First, if the happening of originary truth takes place as a formative element within the experience of the singular human being, then being-there is not coterminous with the human being, and we have a concrete way to understand what it would mean for the event to fail to happen (namely, psychosis), without losing the constitutive mystery of appropriation. This way of thinking the event would move in the direction of Richard Polt's suggestion that we attend to the numerous re-interpretive events that mark the joints in a singular life. Some of these are more momentous than others, more formative of our very being-there.[1267] Without going that far in rethinking the event for Heidegger, I do suggest that we understand it as taking place (or failing to take place) at the level of the singular person and from

---

[1266] GA 69:45.
[1267] See Polt, *The Emergency of Being*, pp. 222, 248ff.

out of her relating. Heidegger seems to be thinking something like this in 1949, when he writes of his own thinking in *Being and Time*, "[t]hat and how being itself strikes a [particular] thinking [is what] brings this thinking to the leap by which it springs forth from being itself so as thereby to respond to being as such."[1268] He then adds a marginal note indicating that this response, elicited in a person's thinking from the side of being itself rather than being, would be an event. If we follow this line of thought, we could then seek to understand the event by thinking from the experience of belonging to being, a belonging that at the individual level (I have argued) can be thoroughly shattered.

Second, if the very configuration of my belonging to being emerges from my singular activity, albeit only in rare moments and not in a way I can control, then it will be possible to recognize the necessity of particular others to the very structure of my world. This is because my world, understood as my opening onto the shared world, arises only through an initiation by those with whom I belong. Such an initiation is necessarily marked by the peculiar shape of their access to the shared world, a shape that remains with me concretely in language, habits, subsequent fantasies, and neuroses. Not only that, but my very belonging to being, which usually survives transformations of those concrete peculiarities, nevertheless remains marked by its origin in trust of singular persons: it retains the phenomenal structure of personal trust, vulnerable to (but not oriented to) radical betrayal by the world. Should my world radically collapse, what hope there is for me to return to common sense will then lie in the complex, threatening possibility of rebuilding trust with a particular person, a representative of the shared world who may be able to seduce me into globally trusting for the first time. Of the constancy of this possibility there can be no guarantee.

Heidegger understood this event of appropriation – the unifying (that is also a distinguishing) of being and thinking – to be his central thought, the single insight that marked

---

[1268] Heidegger, "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'" GA 9:368/*Pathmarks* 279, trans. mod.

out his course as a thinker, but he also found it an agonizingly difficult (non-)phenomenon to think.[1269] This is part of why we get very different accounts of it at different points in his life, from a sheerly contingent irruption to something like an *a priori* condition.[1270] My proposal for further research, then, is this: far from Freudian psychoanalysis having nothing to say to Heidegger's genuinely philosophical engagement with the world, perhaps the thinking of originary fantasy can aid us in making sense out of Heidegger's most central thought.

[1269] Boss provides this interpretation in "Martin Heidegger's Zollikon Seminars," tr. B. Kenny, *Review of Existential Psychiatry and Psychology* **16** (1978-79), pp. 13-20. Quoted in Richardson, "Heidegger Among the Doctors," p. 57. It is worth noting that Boss here understands (or perhaps misunderstands) the event to mean that being and the human essence belong together "in an indivisible identity." See my discussion of danger in chapter 3, part III.
[1270] Polt has mapped these in "*Ereignis*," *op. cit.*

Conclusion

Let me bring this investigation to a close by briefly recapitulating its course. I shall paint in broad strokes, paying special attention to what we have gained and to the places where further research is needed.

Our task has been to articulate the shape of human receptivity, which is to say the determining characteristics of phenomenality as such. In what way is there anything at all for us, and not rather nothing? The 'for us' qualification here indicates both that things show up as minimally organized and variably important – i.e., in their being – and that our own investments are integrally involved in this showing up. It also raises the problem of who 'we' are and might be, especially as it involves constraints on our possibilities of disclosure.

To catch sight of this invested receptivity, which we have tried to understand as trust, we began by attending to three different levels of betrayal that emerge in experience (chapter 1). These levels or modes of betrayal – which I called *disappointment*, *disorientation*, and *betrayal proper* – are disclosed both affectively and cognitively. But they differ qualitatively from one another, depending on the intrinsic complexity involved in discovering oneself to be betrayed. Experiencing such a betrayal (finding myself betrayed) exhibits the specific way in which I was previously invested in whatever has betrayed me. This is *not* to say that we never recognize trust until it is gone, but it is a way of acknowledging that trust mostly operates in the background, as the condition for the appearance of other things.

Most importantly, this part of the investigation showed that the betrayal belonging to personal trust differs essentially from that pertaining to background assumptions. We found that interpersonal trust (or *trusting proper*) is vulnerable to a radical betrayal, one that can destroy the relationship and disclose even what had before appeared as evidence of faithfulness instead as

---

[1271] Lars Hertzberg, "On the Attitude of Trust," in *The Limits of Experience*, p. 115.

evidence of a more elaborate betrayal. Within this kind of trust, which we understood as the givenness of a certain kind of interpersonal relation, betrayal cannot simply be anticipated beforehand, nor can it necessarily be recovered from, although sometimes such trust turns out to admit of rebuilding.

By contrast, we saw that the betrayal of *assumptive trust* (including fundamental background assumptions) is undergone as disorientation, a sense of being suspended over an abyss. Yet, crucially, one does remain suspended – that is, one can still find a place to stand, a space from which to reorient oneself. Somehow, it is always possible to flee back into one's previous assumptions, to convert to a new set of assumptions, or to step back and grasp a larger picture (a broader set of assumptions) within which one's experience of assuming-and-disorientation now makes sense. Its making sense then allows further such disorientation to be in one way predictable, and so enables a certain comfortable (or cynical) familiarity even with betrayal.

Although this initial foray in our investigation mostly dealt with the characteristics of our self-investments as static, the phenomenological mode of approach opened the door to further research concerning the genesis of those self-investments, particularly the mutual influence of the various levels on one another. Some of this was taken up later, in the discussion of the roots of madness, but much of it remains to be worked out.

I then proposed that what grants a place in which to reorient even one's fundamental background assumptions is precisely a further, more primitive level of trust. This kind of trust (not a thing possessed but a way of being invested) *is* the abyss, as it were – at least, as we saw in part I of chapter 2, it cannot itself be grounded in any external criterion, since it is what first *lets* things *be* criteria for the correctness or incorrectness of our assumptions. It is our primary investment in the world as a minimally coherent, more or less stable place. It is also what

Heidegger names originary truth, or the essence of truth, or our belonging to the givenness of particular arrangements of being (i.e., belonging to beyng).

With this move, the further course of the investigation was set: we wished to determine, first, whether Heidegger is inclined to understand our relation to beyng (i.e., primitive trust) more as a matter of trusting proper (vulnerable to radical betrayal) or more as a kind of background assumption (vulnerable to disorientation, from which recovery is always possible); second, whether Heidegger's interpretation is appropriate to the matter itself, i.e., which kind of trust our basic receptivity more resembles. Is primitive trust, as our most originary openness to an organized, shared world, more like assuming the unity of a phenomenological structure, or more like trusting a person? My thesis was that Heidegger's account leans strongly toward interpreting this relation as one of background assuming, but that consideration of the extent of that relation's experienced vulnerability should lead us to interpret it as more like personal trusting. In other words, I claimed that primitive trust *is* the abyss in a second sense, as well: if this trust is betrayed, one does not hang *suspended over* an abyss, with various possibilities of recovery; rather, something that is no longer coherently oneself plunges endlessly downward, grasping in terror at the oppressive remnants of the shared world. Recovery here – understood as rejoining the shared world – may turn out to be possible, if the trust is somehow rebuilt, but even the possibility of such recovery is never guaranteed.

To show, first, that Heidegger implicitly understands originary truth (or: our relation to beyng) as a kind of background assuming, the rest of chapter 2 involved a detailed treatment of his way of thinking the essence of truth. Here we focused on freedom as an *involved* openness for what is and for being. That is, Heideggerian freedom (as the essence of truth) appeared as the self-investment we previously called 'primitive trust.' By attending to originary truth as a complex phenomenon (as the 'clearing for self-concealing,' or the truth whose essence is un-truth), our reading showed that Heidegger's path of thinking here centrally turns around an

experience of betrayal: everyday unconcealment runs up against the resistance of concealment, which calls for thought, but then thoughtful unconcealment *also* encounters concealment, and at multiple levels. In this way, "betrayal" (as disorientation) comes to be understood by Heidegger as constitutive of the truth-phenomenon itself. But this meant that we recognized in Heidegger's accounts of truth after *Being and Time* precisely an activity of reorientation, or an adjustment of background assumptions by grasping a larger picture. His work accomplishes this reorientation by locating the experience of assumption-and-disorientation within the unity of a complex phenomenon: namely, phenomenality itself, beyng's self-givenness as a clearing for self-concealment.

In chapters 3 and 4, we then put into question Heidegger's move to integrate betrayal into the very structure of phenomenality. This involved a first pass at addressing the question of trust as it arises explicitly within Heidegger's corpus. By attending to Heidegger's critique of Western metaphysics as shaped (ever more thoroughly) by a subject-centered trust in reason as the guarantor of truth, we were able to articulate his concerns about prior philosophy with some precision. Philosophical trust in the once-for-all givenness of being (as the *a priori* for beings, what is constantly present), according to Heidegger, really functions as self-assurance. That is why, he thinks, the essence of truth on the metaphysical picture must eventually be encountered expressly as self-certainty (as in the modern period from Descartes to Hegel), all the while remaining vulnerable to disorientation (in, for example, Nietzsche's writings).

We then characterized Heidegger's own reinterpretation of the relation between beyng and thinking as an attempt to reorient our trusting self-investment toward the very phenomenon of originary truth articulated in chapter 2. This we took to be his philosophical response to Nietzsche and to the history of "metaphysics." We saw that Heidegger understands our belonging to beyng within the framework of beyng's intrinsic hiddenness, a hiddenness that is not simply absence but an essential withdrawal in favor of the disclosure of things. In this way, even our own

metaphysical assumption-and-disorientation is seen as *constitutive of* our relation to beyng, rather than as threatening a radical break from it. While Heidegger's thinking of our being in the truth is indeed a move away from metaphysics – from the straightforward opposition between presence and absence – I claimed that it cannot twist free from some version of the self-assurance that he himself has criticized.

Such a claim is not an obviously faithful interpretation of Heidegger's work, but it is, upon reflection, a fair one, as we established (chapter 3, part III) through an extensive consideration of two conflicting strands of his thought. He consistently tries to do philosophy as hermeneutic phenomenology, but his hermeneutic claims about our situation in history (including the more or less apocalyptic essential danger of that situation) are just as consistently undermined by his phenomenological commitments to the unity of beyng and thinking, danger and saving. This means that the concerns that Heidegger *does* raise at various points about a radical break with being – a betrayal proper, the kind that one otherwise experiences only interpersonally – are in each case softened into promises that reorientation always remains a possibility. His ongoing concern about the lack of urgency in our thinking is compromised by his own way of thinking the possibility of salvation (in which, for example, this lack of urgency itself constitutes the situation's urgency, and not in any merely incidental way).

Since Heidegger ultimately understands our relation to beyng to take place as an event of appropriation (*Ereignis*), in which we emerge into the originary truth (a determinate clearing), we attended to various interpretations of this phenomenon, some more phenomenological, some more apocalyptic. We also returned to the discussion later, quite briefly, with regard to the individual or collective nature of such events (chapter 7, part III). But this difficult thought certainly calls for further research, especially to understand in what way the *ex*propriation (*Enteignis*) that Heidegger finds integral to the event of *ap*propriation (*Ereignis*) can have a

meaning on the individual level. (Does it, for example, simply identify a constitutive human situation: that we must always renew the effort to twist free of metaphysical thinking?)

The first major part of the investigation, then, culminated in an immanent critique of Heidegger's apparent attempts to think originary truth as something like assumptive trust. But we also attended, in chapter 4, to places in Heidegger's texts that – as others have already indicated – point toward a surprisingly specific way to think a radical break with being: namely, as madness. This is not how Heidegger himself understands madness. But in his interpretations of death and anxiety, and to some extent even in his account of originary truth, we found reasons to think that his attention to the matter itself pushes him beyond his own thinking of it. We took this as a call to turn more carefully, in the second major part of the investigation, to the question of how secure our individual relation to beyng – my existential standing in the truth (and in the untruth, as Heidegger always understands it) – genuinely is.

We were guided in this turn to the things themselves by a concern to understand, to whatever degree possible, what takes place (or fails to take place) in madness: whether it involves a kind of death that would be neither owning up to/fleeing from my own finitude ('dying,' as Heidegger understands it) nor physical cessation ('demise'), and in what way anxiety (a mood that for Heidegger discloses our investments in the world as such) might be involved. Above all, we asked whether Heidegger's interpretation of being-in-the-world as the human essence – his interpretation of freedom as exposure both to being and to what-is in its being – necessarily describes human beings, or if there are recognizably human situations in which we are radically cut off from our essence. In other words, having understood that for Heidegger being-away remains a privation or inauthentic mode of being-there, one that still consists of being-in-the-world as he articulated it in *Being and Time*'s existential analytic, we wished to discover whether his account of madness as an extreme form of being-away could characterize the phenomenon appropriately.

We thus proceeded dialectically through various attempts to understand psychosis (psychiatric, phenomenological, psychoanalytic, and philosophical), confronting these theories with various puzzles presented by case studies and by the testimony of sufferers. Our goal throughout was to articulate faithfully whatever intelligibility might be available, without arbitrarily reducing the strangeness of the phenomena. We discovered that medical models can provide a common language for initially organizing the bewildering array of data involved in dealing clinically with psychotics, but that a philosophical understanding requires more insight into the structure of the disturbance than psychiatric medicine can provide. We found that phenomenological psychiatry can take us quite a bit further toward such a structural account, and can do so without losing sight of the meaning of the individual human experience – the collapse of a particular world – that psychosis is. Nevertheless, we found these phenomenological accounts excessively static; apart from pointing us toward the prodromal phase, they proved inadequate to address the *genesis* of psychotic phenomena in an interpretive way. The question of *why* a particular person's world collapses and gets more or less rebuilt in a particular form remained unanswered. Had we left the matter there, our investigation could only have concluded that being dramatically overwhelmed is one possibility of our being-there, a risk of our exposure; but whether this risk is universal or limited to those predisposed by faulty genes, we could not have said. That is, no conclusion with regard to the human relation to beyng could have been drawn.

Although we had already been following Freudian insights, here we found ourselves abandoned wholly to the resources of Freudian psychoanalysis, which attempts to heal through interpretation of the individual's personal conflicts as they emerge in speech (broadly construed), and to understand the universal structures involved in psychic disease and health through a study of these conflicts. On this basis, we were able to articulate psychosis as a multi-step (i.e., inherently temporal) betrayal of primitive trust. We saw that although even endogenous psychosis

may sometimes arise simply due to overwhelming situations (in what is medically called *brief reactive psychosis*), long-term psychosis typically requires a certain kind of prior resolution to childhood conflict. The individual has refused (or could not bring herself) fully to trust the linguistically mediated world; what analysts call *primal repression* has failed to take place. This produces a weak point in the system of language, which system is henceforth used more in the manner of a game than dwelt in as natural habitat, since it is allowed to structure the world only at the cost of (unconsciously) avoiding or excessively shoring up the weak point. In other words, although I may never know whether or not I am predisposed to madness, if I am, then there is some mode of relation (or some account of myself) that the world might demand of me that would radically undo my tentative investment in that world. I am not really all-in, to use an appropriate gambling metaphor, so the truth and falsity of things within the world does not matter to me in the same way as it does to others.

Should that mode of relation or verbal account of myself be required at some point, in a way that I cannot evade, we saw that I defensively flee (regress) toward the point of the last secure psychic achievement. This constitutes the psychotic break, which does not appear to anyone else – nor, in a strict sense, to *me* – in the moment of its taking place, but only in the symptoms produced as desperate attempts to rebuild a place in a (now rigidly) coherent world. That reconstructed world, which is not shared and which cannot grant me stability of self through the appropriate relation to language (i.e., meaning) or to truth and falsity, nevertheless permits a kind of going-on in (severely restricted) life, always under the threat of its imminent collapse. This allows something like a negotiated stability, the non-acute duration of long-term psychosis, in which levels of trust that are not primitive can still take place to a certain, constantly threatened, extent. It is within that space of the patient's conflicted attempt at recovery that treatment is often possible, if tremendously difficult.

I proposed this sketch of the structure of endogenous psychosis as an interpretation of the meaningful essential unity of the experience, despite variations in types (paranoia, schizophrenia, mood disorder, and so forth), although I am not yet fully committed to this. Further work remains to be done on the temporal structure involved here, particularly as it involves a complex failure of primitive trust. At any rate, we saw that this account gave us more insight into the disturbance than several other possibilities (medical, purely phenomenological, or purely philosophical).

But we also saw that it caused problems for Freudian psychoanalysis, and at essential points. Freud himself seems to have been wrong in thinking that analysis could do nothing for psychotic patients, but he was far from stupid to think so. For this reason, in the balance of this second major part of the investigation (chapter 5, part II, and chapter 6), we turned more directly to Freud's texts to take up the task of re-orienting his work toward psychosis. First, we recognized that the difficulties of producing, identifying, managing, and interpreting transference with psychotic patients put on display both the centrality of trust – in a strange configuration – for the functioning of the analytic relation generally, and the extreme vulnerability involved for both parties, but especially for the patient. We located what possibility of cure there may be for cases of psychosis in the rebuilding of the patient's primitive trust through a certain transference: from interpersonal trust in the therapist to primitive trust in the world. Second, we found that Freud's own trusts play a crucial role in philosophically linking his practice to his metapsychological theorizing, since those trusts in part justify his inference to the dynamic unconscious. Third, we saw that Freudian drive theory does not have to interpret either the infant or the (neurotic) adult as closed off from the world, sealed within a Cartesian container, since the drives are initially formed in part as responses to the shared world.

This account of drive, finally, enabled us to take up once more the question of the genesis of psychosis in the individual. For although it is clear simply from the experience of introducing small children to the world that things come to matter to us originally through our dependence on

527

parental figures, nevertheless the ways in which this emergence into freedom can radically fail become intelligible only through the recognition of certain structurally necessary drive-conflicts. In other words, as children, we first come to understand what it means to have coherent reasons for acting or for holding some things as more important than others by trusting those who speak for or against certain things.[1272] But this does not simply proceed smoothly, for any of us. Thus, in the second part of chapter 6, we took up the question of the genesis of trust developmentally, locating the source of the predisposition to psychosis, understood as a refusal of primal repression, in one kind of response to a particular conflict. When trust in parental figures is insufficiently strong to carry over to the world as a whole, then despite those adults' invitations, the shared world is disclosed as untrustworthy. The resolution to this conflict may then be to refuse (or *foreclose*) submission to the laws of language, the laws that provide both coherence of and mediation for our relations to things. For submission to those laws comes at the cost of immediacy, hence of (fantasized) oneness with what is loved, and this may be encountered as too great a price to pay.

Our work on the possibilities for a radical break with the world thus indicated 1) that such a break is, from an existential standpoint, concretely possible for any of us, since our exposure to the world may at any time turn out to be radically overwhelming. I may succumb to reactive psychosis (if called upon to face what no one can face), or I may already have resolved the universal conflict over taking up my relation to the world in such a way that there is for me a weak spot at the core of that relation, a failure of trust that leaves me especially vulnerable to being fully betrayed by the world's demands. Nevertheless, as we saw also to be true of interpersonal trust, in primitive trust we are quite appropriately *not* oriented toward this radical vulnerability but rather toward the object of trust (the person or the world) in its trustworthiness. The second major part of our investigation has also shown 2) that psychoanalysis sheds light on

---

[1272] This point is from Hertzberg, "On the Attitude of Trust," pp. 117-18.

the general problem of primitive trust (i.e., of our standing in originary truth) at two central points: a) in the therapeutic phenomena of transference, which consists of an odd and asymmetric kind of trust; b) in the conflicted root of our relation to the shared world, where we forge (or fail to forge) a trust that must be risked if it is to enable our full emergence into the freedom of being-there. We saw that Freudian thinking provides some illumination of these matters precisely in finding itself challenged by the therapy of psychotic patients, for psychosis centrally afflicts both of these experiences – the capacity for affective openness to another person (transference), and freedom for a structured, shared world over which I have no absolute control. (What I do have, in primitive trust, is the security of a relation to independent yet meaningful things, which carry on even if I get them wrong. I am neither equivalent to the truth nor utterly alienated from it; rather, I live *in* it, as exposed to whatever is.)

Our investigation wrapped up, in chapter 7, by clarifying the extent of my critique of Heidegger's analytic of being-there. There we saw that although the psychotic does seem to have her own being still at issue, and although she still in some way encounters what is, that encounter is no longer structured by the system of language (Heidegger's *logos*), and she does not seem to have an understanding of being in the concrete ways that Heidegger has laid it out. Existentially (i.e., for herself), she in some unstable and infinitely threatened way *is*, but no longer as in-the-world. This claim certainly calls for more research. But if it is right, then we are justified in saying that our primitive trust in the world admits of a radical break – and that would align primitive trust with the phenomen of personal trusting.

So as to attend to Heidegger's own view of personal trust, we considered his trust in his interlocutors (history's great thinkers), as it appears both in his interpretation of the conversation that we are and in his own composed dialogues. There, once again, we saw that his trust lies in being, as a third in the conversation that underlies and inconspicuously guides it, and we were concerned that this does not allow the specificity of the interlocutor to matter in a sufficiently

robust way. The person is important as an expression of or occasion for being's unfolding to appear, and Heidegger the interpreter is the one who decides how it appears, rather than being given over to (hence trustingly guided by) the other *person's* own concerns for what is important.

That discussion of Heideggerian conversation calls attention to another avenue for further work: there was no space to do it justice here, but we would have to fill out the overall argument by close attention to the working of language, especially in psychosis (since this, as structuring the world and splitting us from ourselves, is what is foreclosed). Heidegger's own discussions of ontological danger emphasize the role of language in it, and we would need to consider whether this can account for the disintegration involved in psychosis. He concludes the portion of the lecture course *What Is Called Thinking?* that was actually delivered by asking, "Is thinking enabled to receive this gift, i.e., to take it into its care [*Acht*], so as to entrust it – in *legein*, in a saying – to the originary speaking of language?"[1273] We would have to ask (and we have already begun to do so in this investigation), what would we need to trust in order to undertake such a receptivity? Would it be language, or would it be the givenness of language? Could that kind of trust fail, such that we would be simply unable to entrust the gift to language?

Finally, as a last suggestion for further research, and as a way of addressing the problem of originary truth as it appears obliquely in Freud's work, I offered the following proposal: Freudian psychoanalysis, especially in its concern with originary fantasy, might help us make sense out of Heidegger's most difficult thought: the event of appropriation/expropriation by which we come originarily to stand in the truth. For this fantasy, according to Freud, arises in the context of trusting particular people, by whom we are seduced into appropriating our place in the shared world, a place inevitably shaped by a very particular clearing and thus caught up in the problem of originary truth.

[1273] Heidegger, GA 8:247/*What Is Called Thinking?* 244.

Bibliography

<u>By Heidegger</u> (only works cited in the text)

Basic Concepts. Translated by G.E. Aylesworth. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy. Translated by Robert Metcalf and Mark Tanzer. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic." Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Andre Schuwer. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Basic Writings. Revised, expanded edition. Edited by David Farrell Krell. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993. Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
"The Origin of the Work of Art." Translated by Albert Hofstadter. Pages 143-212.
"The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking." Translated by J. Stambaugh. Pages 431-449.

Being and Time. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962.

Sein und Zeit. 18. Auflage. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001.

Bremen and Freiburg Lectures. Translated by Andrew J. Mitchell. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event). Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Country Path Conversations. Translated by Bret W. Davis. Indianapolis and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010.

"Memorial Address." In *Discourse on Thinking*, translated by John Anderson and E. Hans Freund, 43-57. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry. Translated by Keith Hoeller. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000.

"Metaphysics as History of Being." In *The End of Philosophy*, translated by J. Stambaugh, 1-54. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1973.

The Event. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013.

Four Seminars. Translated by Andrew J. Mitchell and François Raffoul. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.

The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude. Translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995.

Gesamtausgabe. 100+ vols. Herausgegeben von Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975- .

Heraclitus Seminar. Translated by Charles H. Siebert. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993.

Introduction to Philosophy—Thinking and Poetizing. Translated by Phillip Braunstein. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011.

Introduction to Metaphysics. Translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics. Translated by Richard Taft. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.

The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic. Translated by Michael Heim. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Nietzsche. 4 vols. Translated by David Farrell Krell. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991.

"Anaximander's Saying." In *Off the Beaten Track*, edited and translated by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, 242-281. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

"'Only a God Can Save Us': The *Spiegel* Interview (1966)." Translated by William J. Richardson. In *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, edited by Thomas Sheehan, 45-68. Precedent, 1981.

On the Way to Language. Translated by Peter Hertz. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1971. Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
"A Dialogue on Language," pp. 1-54; "The Nature of Language," pp. 57-108.

On Time and Being. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.
        Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
        "Time and Being," pp. 1-24.
        "Summary of a Seminar," pp. 25-54.
        "My Way to Phenomenology," pp. 74-82.
Parmenides. Translated by Andre Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN:
        Indiana University Press, 1992.
Pathmarks. Edited by William McNeill. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
        Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
        "On the Essence of Truth." Translated by John Sallis. Pages 136-154.
        "On the Essence and Concept of *Phusis* in Aristotle's *Physics β*, *1*." Translated by Thomas
        Sheehan. Pages 183-230.
        "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'" Translated by Walter Kaufmann. Pages 277-90.
        "What is Metaphysics?" Translated by David Farrell Krell. Pages 82-96.
        "Postscript to 'What is Metaphysics?'" Translated by William McNeill. Pages 231-238.
        "Letter on 'Humanism'." Translated by Frank A. Capuzzi. Pages 239-276.
        "On the Question of Being." Translated by William McNeill. Pages 291-322.
        "Hegel and the Greeks." Translated by Robert Metcalf. Pages 323-336.
Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason. Translated by Parvis Emad and
        Kenneth Maly. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.
Poetry, Language, Thought. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: HarperCollins Perennial Classics,
        2001. Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
        "What Are Poets For?" pp. 89-139.
        "Building Dwelling Thinking," pp. 143-159.
        "Language," pp. 187-208.
The Principle of Reason. Translated by Reginald Lilly. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana
        University Press, 1991.
The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays. Translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper
        and Row, 1977. Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
        "The Question Concerning Technology," pp. 3-35.
        "The Turning," pp. 36-49.
        "The Word of Nietzsche, 'God is Dead,'" pp. 53-112.
        "Science and Reflection," pp. 155-182.
What is Called Thinking? Tr. J. Glenn Gray. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.
"The Last, Undelivered Lecture (XII) from Summer Semester 1952." Supplement to *What is Called
        Thinking?*] Translated by William McNeill. In *The Presocratics After Heidegger*, edited by David
        C. Jacobs, 171-184. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999.
What is Philosophy? Translated by Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback. New Haven, CT: Yale University
        Press.
Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters. Translated by Franz Mayr and Richard Askay.
        Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001.
Zollikoner Seminare. 3. Auflage. Herausgegeben von Medard Boss. Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio
        Klostermann, 2006.

By Freud

Aus den Anfängen der Psychoanalyse. Herausgegeben von Marie Bonaparte, Anna Freud, and Ernst Kris.
        London: Imago Publishing, 1950.
The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904. Edited and translated by Jeffrey M.
        Masson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Belknap Press, 1985.
Gesammelte Werke: Chronologisch Geordnet. 19 vols. London: Imago Publishing, 1991.
The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. 24 vols. Edited by James
        Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1953-1974.

On Heidegger

Babich, Babette E., ed. *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire: Essays in Honor of William J. Richardson, S.J.* Phaenomenologica 133. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

------. *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006.

Backman, Jussi. "Complicated Presence: The Unity of Being in Parmenides and Heidegger." PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2009.

Boss, Medard. "Martin Heidegger's Zollikon Seminars." Translated by B. Kenny. *Review of Existential Psychiatry and Psychology* 16 (1978-79): 13-20.

Capobianco, Richard. *Engaging Heidegger*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.

Courtine, Jean-François. "Phenomenology and/or Tautology." In *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis, 241-257. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Critchley, Simon. "The Null Basis-Being of a Nullity, or Between Two Nothings: Heidegger's Uncanniness." In *Interpreting Heidegger*, edited by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, 69-78. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Crowell, Steven. "Conscience and Reason: Heidegger and the Grounds of Intentionality." In *Transcendental Heidegger*, edited by Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas, 43-62. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

------ and Jeff Malpas, eds. *Transcendental Heidegger*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Dahlstrom, Daniel O. *Heidegger's Concept of Truth*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

------, ed. *Interpreting Heidegger*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

------. "Transcendental Truth and the Truth That Prevails." In *Transcendental Heidegger*, edited by Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas, 63-73. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Dallmayr, Fred. "Heidegger and Freud." In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, edited by Babette Babich, 547-565. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Dastur, Françoise. "The Critique of Anthropologism in Heidegger's Thought." In *Appropriating Heidegger*, edited by James E. Faulconer and Mark A. Wrathall, 119-134. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

------. *Death: An Essay on Finitude*. Translated by John Llewelyn. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Athlone Press, 1996.

------. "Language and *Ereignis*." In *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis, 355-369. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

------. "Phänomenologie und Therapie: Die Frage nach dem Anderen in den 'Zollikoner Seminaren'." *Daseinsanalyse* 12 (1995): 43-51.

------."Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise." *Hypatia* 15.4 (Fall 2000): 178-189.

------. "Pour une phenomenologie de l'evenement: l'attente et la surprise." *Etudes Phenomenologiques* 25 (1997): 59-75.

De Beistegui, Miguel. *The New Heidegger*. New York: Continuum, 2005.

------. *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.

------. "The Transformation in the Sense of Dasein in Heidegger's *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*." *Research in Phenomenology* 33.1 (2003): 221-246.

------. *Truth and Genesis*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Dostal, Robert J. "The Experience of Truth for Gadamer and Heidegger: Taking Time and Sudden Lightning." In *Hermeneutics and Truth*, edited by Brice Wachterhauser, 47-67. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. "Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology." In *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge*, edited by A. Feenberg and A. Hannay, 97-107. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995.

------ and Charles Spinosa. "Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology." *Man and World* 30 (1997): 159-177.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Mark A. Wrathall, eds. *A Companion to Heidegger*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell
       Publishing, 2005.

------ and Mark A. Wrathall, eds. *Heidegger Reexamined, Volume 2: Truth, Realism, and the History of
       Being*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Faulconer, James E. and Mark A. Wrathall, eds. *Appropriating Heidegger*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge
       University Press, 2000.

Frings, Manfred. "Parmenides: Heidegger's 1942-1943 Lecture Held at Freiburg University." *Journal of
       the British Society for Phenomenology* 19.1 (1988): 15-33.

Gasché, Rodolphe. "Toward an Ethics of *Auseinandersetzung*." In *American Continental Philosophy*,
       edited by Walter Brogan and James Risser, 314-332. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana
       University Press, 2000.

Harries, Karsten. "Authenticity, Poetry, God." In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*,
       edited by Babette Babich, 17-35. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

------. "Martin Heidegger: The Search for Meaning." In *Existential Philosophers: Kierkegaard to Merleau-
       Ponty*, edited by G.A. Schrader, 161-208. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967.

------. "Truth and Freedom." In *Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenological Tradition*, edited by Robert
       Sokolowski, 131-155. Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1988.

Haugeland, John. *Dasein Disclosed: John Haugeland's Heidegger*. Edited by Joseph Rouse. Cambridge,
       MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Henry, Michel. "The Power of Revelation of Affectivity According to Heidegger." Translated by G.J.
       Etzkorn. In *Heidegger: Critical Assessments, Vol. 1: Philosophy*, edited by Christopher Macann,
       354-69. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Holzhey-Kunz, Alice. " '… nicht Herr im eigenen Hause' – Freud und Heidegger zusammengedacht." In
       Freuds Gegenwärtigkeit: Zwölf Essays, herausgegeben von Aron Ronald Bodenheimer, 356-382.
       Stuttgart, Germany: Philipp Reclam, 1989.

Jacobs, David C., ed. *The Presocratics After Heidegger*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999.

Janicaud, Dominique and Jean-François Mattéi. *Heidegger From Metaphysics to Thought*. Translated by
       Michael Gendre. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.

Kearney, Richard. "Heidegger and the Possible." *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1980): 176-95.

------. "Surplus Being: The Kantian Legacy." In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*,
       edited by Babette Babich, 71-87. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Kolb, David. "Raising Atlantis: The Later Heidegger and Contemporary Philosophy." In *From
       Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, edited by Babette Babich, 55-69. The
       Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Malpas, Jeff. *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

McCumber, John. "Language and Appropriation: The Nature of Heideggerian Dialogue." *The Personalist*
       60 (1979): 384-396.

Mitchell, Andrew J. "Entering the World of Pain: Heidegger." *Telos* 150 (Spring 2010): 83-96.

------. "The Exposure of Grace." *Research in Phenomenology* 40 (2010): 309-330.

------. *Heidegger Among the Sculptors*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010.

------. "Heidegger's Poetics of Relationality." In *Interpreting Heidegger*, edited by Daniel O. Dahlstrom,
       217-231. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

------. "*Praxis* and *Gelassenheit*: The 'Practice' of the Limit." In *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*,
       edited by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, 317-338. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

Naas, Michael. "Keeping Homer's Word: Heidegger and the Epic of Truth." In *The Presocratics After
       Heidegger*, edited by David C. Jacobs, 73-99. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999.

Nowell-Smith, David. "The Art of Fugue: Heidegger on Rhythm." *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle
       Annual* 2 (2012): 41-64.

Nwodo, Christopher S. "Friedländer versus Heidegger: A-letheia Controversy." *Journal of the British
       Society for Phenomenology* 10.2 (May 1979): 84-93.

Pippin, Robert B. "Necessary Conditions for the Possibility of What Isn't: Heidegger on Failed Meaning."
       In *Transcendental Heidegger*, edited by Steven Crowell and Jeff Malpas, 199-214. Stanford, CA:
       Stanford University Press, 2007.

Pöggeler, Otto. *Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking*. Translated by Daniel Magurshak and Sigmund Barber. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987.

Polt, Richard. "The Burning Cup: Or, Im Anfang war die Tat." *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 1.4: 1-26.

------. *The Emergency of Being*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006.

------. "*Ereignis*." In *A Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, 375-391. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Polt, Richard. "Heidegger's Topical Hermeneutics: The *Sophist* Lectures." In *Heidegger Reexamined, Volume 2*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, 53-76. New York: Routledge, 2002.

------. "Meaning, Excess, and Event." *Gatherings* **1** (2011): 26-53.

------. "Traumatic Ontology." In *Being Shaken: Ontology and the Event*, edited by Michael Marder and Santiago Zabala. Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.

Raffoul, François and David Pettigrew, eds. *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

Richardson, William J. "Heidegger Among the Doctors." In *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis, 49-63. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

------. "Heidegger's Fall." In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, edited by Babette Babich, 277-300. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

------. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. 4th ed. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003.

Richardson, William J. "The Place of the Unconscious in Heidegger." *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 5: 265-290.

------. "Psychoanalytic Praxis and the Truth of Pain." In *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, edited by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, 339-358. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

Sallis, John. "Deformatives: Essentially Other Than Truth." In *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, edited by John Sallis, 29-46. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

------. *Double Truth*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1995.

------. *Echoes: After Heidegger*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990.

------, ed. *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993.

Schmidt, Dennis J. "On the Memory of Last Things." *Research in Phenomenology* 23.1 (1993): 92-104.

Schürmann, Reiner. *Broken Hegemonies*. Translated by Reginald Lilly. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003.

------. "How to Read Heidegger." In *Heidegger Reexamined, Volume 2*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, 77-82. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Scott, Charles E. "Heidegger, Madness, and Well-Being." *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 4 (1973): 157-177.

Sheehan, Thomas. "Astonishing! Things Make Sense!" *Gatherings: The Heidegger Circle Annual* 1 (2011): 1-25.

------. "Facticity and *Ereignis*." In *Interpreting Heidegger*, edited by Daniel O. Dahlstrom, 42-68. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

------. "Nihilism: Heidegger/Jünger/Aristotle." In *Phenomenology: Japanese and American Perspectives*, edited by Burt C. Hopkins. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1999.

------. "Nihilism and Its Discontents." In *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, edited by François Raffoul and David Pettigrew, 275-300. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

------. "A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research." *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (2001): 183-202.

Sinclair, Mark. *Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Work of Art: Poiesis in Being*. Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

Thomson, Iain. *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

------. "The Philosophical Fugue: Understanding the Structure and Goal of Heidegger's *Beiträge*." *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology* 34.1 (January 2003): 57-73.

------. "Understanding Technology Ontotheologically, or: the Danger and the Promise of Heidegger, an American Perspective." In *New Waves in Philosophy of Technology*, edited by Jan Kyrre Berg Olsen, Evan Selinger, and Søren Riis, 146-166. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

Vail, L.M. *Heidegger and Ontological Difference*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972.

Vallega-Neu, Daniela. "Thinking in Decision." Research in Phenomenology 33 (2003): 247-263.

Wrathall, Mark A. "Heidegger and Truth as Correspondence." In *Heidegger Reexamined, Vol. 2*, edited by Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall, 1-20. New York: Routledge, 2002.

------. *Heidegger and Unconcealment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

------. "Philosophy, Thinkers, and Heidegger's Place in the History of Being." In *Appropriating Heidegger*, edited by James E. Faulconer and Mark A. Wrathall, 9-29. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

------. "Unconcealment." In *A Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall, 337-357. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Visker, Rudi. *Truth and Singularity: Taking Foucault into Phenomenology*. Phaenomenologica 155. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1999.

On Freud and Psychoanalysis

Bernet, Rudolf. "The Traumatized Subject." Translated by Paul Crowe. *Research in Phenomenology* 30 (2000): 160-179.

Bohman, James. "On Empty and Full Speech: Intelligibility and Change in the Public World." In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, edited by Babette Babich, 355-371. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Boothby, Richard. *Death and Desire: Psychoanalytic Theory in Lacan's Return to Freud*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

------. *Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology After Lacan*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

------. "Heideggerian Psychiatry? The Freudian Unconscious in Medard Boss and Jacques Lacan." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 24.2 (Fall 1993): 144-160.

------. " 'Now You See It…': The Dynamics of Presence and Absence in Psychoanalysis." In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, edited by Babette Babich, 397-430. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Bouveresse, Jacques. *Wittgenstein Reads Freud: The Myth of the Unconscious*. Translated by Carol Cosman. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Brakel, Linda A.W. *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and the A-Rational Mind*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Carel, Havi. *Life and Death in Freud and Heidegger*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2006.

Castoriadis, Cornelius. "Psychoanalysis and Philosophy." Translated by David Ames Curtis. In *Freud Under Analysis*, edited by Todd Dufresne, 249-264. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997.

Cavell, Marcia. *The Psychoanalytic Mind: From Freud to Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Cohen, Dodd W. "Freud's Baby: Beyond Autoerotism and Narcissism." *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 88 (2007): 883-93.

Davidson, Donald. "Actions, Reasons, and Causes." In *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 2001.

------. *Problems of Rationality*. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 2004.

Dor, Joël. *The Clinical Lacan*. New York: Other Press, 1999.

Dufresne, Todd, ed. *Freud Under Analysis: History, Theory, Practice: Essays in Honor of Paul Roazen*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997.

Fayek, Ahmed. "Psychic Reality and Mental Representation: Contemporary Misapplications of Freud's Concepts." *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 19 (2002): 475-500.

Fink, Bruce. *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Gardiner, Muriel, ed. *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*. Suffolk, UK: Penguin Books, 1973.

Geyskens, Tomas. *Our Original Scenes*. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2005.

Gomez, Lavinia. *The Freud Wars: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Horowitz, Greg M. "A Late Adventure of the Feelings: Loss, Trauma, and the Limits of Psychoanalysis." In *The Trauma Controversy*, edited by Kristen Brown Golden and Bettina G. Bergo, 23-44. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2009.

Hyppolite, Jean. "A Spoken Commentary on Freud's *Verneinung*." Appendix in Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by John Forrester, 289-297. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1991.

Laplanche, Jean. *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Jeffrey Mehlman. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

------. *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*. Translated by David Macey. Basil Blackwell, 1989.

------ and J.-B. Pontalis. "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality." *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 49 (1968): 1-18.

------ and J.-B. Pontalis. "Fantasme originaire, fantasmes des origins, origine du fantasme." *Les Temps Modernes* 19 (1964): 215ff.

------ and J.-B. Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by Donald Nicholson Smith. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by John Forrester. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991.

------. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses, 1955-1956*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Russell Grigg. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1993.

-------. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Translated by Dennis Porter. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1992.

Lear, Jonathan. *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1991.

------. *Open-Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Leclaire, Marie. "The 'Mad Scientists': Psychoanalysis, dream, and virtual reality." *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 84 (2003): 331-346.

------ and Dominique Scarfone. "Vers une conception unitaire de l'épreuve de réalité." *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* 64 (2000): 885-912.

Levy, Donald. *Freud Among the Philosophers: The Psychoanalytic Unconscious and its Philosophical Critics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Mahony, Patrick J. *Freud as a Writer*. Expanded edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

Pears, David. "Motivated Irrationality, Freudian Theory, and Cognitive Dissonance." In *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, edited by Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins, 264-88. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Ricoeur, Paul. "The Question of Proof in Freud's Psychoanalytic Writings." In *On Psychoanalysis*, translated by David Pellauer. Vol. 1 of *Writings and Lectures*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012.

------. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Translated by Denis Savage. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970.

Shepherdson, Charles. "*Adaequatio Sexualis*: Is There a Measure of Sexual Difference?" In *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy, and Desire*, edited by Babette Babich, 445-471. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995.

Stolorow, Robert. *World, Affectivity, Trauma*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Van Haute, Philippe. *Against Adaptation: Lacan's "Subversion" of the Subject*. Translated by Paul Crowe and Melissa Vankerk. New York: Other Press, 2002.

Weiss, Frederick Larry. *Freud: Knowing and Not Wanting to Know*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Wertz, Frederick J. "The Phenomenology of Sigmund Freud." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 24.2 (1993): 101-129.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. "Conversations on Freud; excerpt from 1932-3 lectures." In *Philosophical Essays on Freud*, edited by Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins, 1-11. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Wollheim, Richard and James Hopkins, eds. *Philosophical Essays on Freud*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

On Psychosis

Atwood, George E. *The Abyss of Madness*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Arieti, Silvano. *Interpretation of Schizophrenia*. 2nd edition. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

Bak, Robert C. "Masochism in Paranoia." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 118-130. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Balestriere, Lina. "The Work of the Psychoanalyst in the Field of Psychosis." Translated by Anne-Marie Di Biasio. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 88 (2007): 407-421.

Blankenburg, Wolfgang. "First Steps Toward a Psychopathology of 'Common Sense'." Translated by Aaron L. Mishara. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 8.4 (December 2001): 303-315.

------. *Der Verlust der Natürlichen Selbstverständlichkeit*. Stuttgart, Germany: Enke, 1971.

Buckley, Peter, ed. *Essential Papers on Psychosis*. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Cameron, Norman. "Introjection, Reprojection, and Hallucination in the Interaction Between Patient and Therapist." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 233- 255. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Corveleyn, Jozef and Paul Moyaert, eds. *Psychosis: Phenomenological and Psychoanalytical Approaches*. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2003.

Cullberg, Johan. *Psychoses: An Integrated Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Cutting, John. "Questionable Psychopathology." In *Exploring the Self*, edited by Dan Zahavi, 243-255. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000.

De Waelhens, Alphonse and Wilfried Ver Eecke, *Phenomenology and Lacan on Schizophrenia, After the Decade of the Brain*. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2001.

------. *La Psychose: Essai d'interprétation analytique et existentiale*. Leuven, Belgium: Nauwelaerts, 1982.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 5th edition. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013. Online at dsm.psychiatryonline.org.

Eilan, Naomi. "On Understanding Schizophrenia." In *Exploring the Self*, edited by Dan Zahavi, 97-113. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000.

Freeman, Thomas. "Narcissism and Defensive Processes in Schizophrenic States." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 78-97. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Geekie, Jim, Patte Randal, Debra Lampshire, and John Read, eds. *Experiencing Psychosis: Personal and Professional Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Geekie, Jim and John Read. *Making Sense of Madness: Contesting the Meaning of Schizophrenia*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Grasser, Fabien. "Stabilizations in Psychosis." Translated by J.W. Stone. *Ornicar?* 85 (February 1999).

Henriksen, M.G. "On Incomprehensibility in Schizophrenia." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 12.1 (2013): 105-129.

Jacobson, Edith. "On Psychotic Identifications." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 131-142. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Jopling, David A. "A 'Self of Selves?'" In *The Conceptual Self in Context*, edited by Ulric Neisser and David A. Jopling, 249-267. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Laing, R. D. *The Divided Self*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

Lysaker, Paul and John Lysaker. "Schizophrenia and Alterations in Self-Experience: A Comparison of 6 Perspectives." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 36.2 (2010): 331-340.

------ and ------. *Schizophrenia and the Fate of the Self*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Minkowski, Eugene and R. Targowla. "A Contribution to the Study of Autism: The Interrogative Attitude." Translated by Salaheddine Ziadeh. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 8.4 (December, 2001): 271-8.

Mishara, Aaron L. "Disconnection of External and Internal in the Conscious Experience of Schizophrenia." *Philosophica* 73 (2004):87-126.

Moyaert, Paul. "Body, Drive, and Affect in Schizophrenia, From the Psychoanalytic Perspective." Translated by Jo Köhler. In *Psychosis: Phenomenological and Psychoanalytical Approaches*, edited by Jozef Corveleyn and Paul Moyaert, 43-58. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003.

Munro, Alistair. *Delusional Disorder: Paranoia and Related Illnesses*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Parnas, Josef. "The Self and Intentionality in the Pre-Psychotic Stages of Schizophrenia: A Phenomenological Study." In *Exploring the Self*, edited by Dan Zahavi, 115-147. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000.

------, Pierre Bovet, and Dan Zahavi. "Schizophrenic Autism: Clinical Phenomenology and Pathogenetic Implications." *World Psychiatry* 1.3 (2002): 137-145.

------ and Peter Handest. "Phenomenology of Anomalous Self-Experience in Early Schizophrenia." *Comprehensive Psychiatry* 44.2 (2003): 121-134.

------, Julie Nordgaard, and Somogy Varga. "The Concept of Psychosis: A Clinical and Theoretical Analysis." *Clinical Neuropsychiatry* 7.2 (2010): 32-37.

------ and Louis A. Sass, "Self, Solipsism, and Schizophrenic Delusions," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 8.2-3 (June/September 2001): 101-120

Ratcliffe, Matthew and Matthew Broome. "Existential Phenomenology, Psychiatric Illness, and the Death of Possibilities." In *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, edited by Steven Crowell, 361-382. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Rieber, R.W. and Harold Vetter. "The Problem of Language and Thought in Schizophrenia: A Review." *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 23.2 (1994): 149-195.

Rochester, S.R. and J.R. Martin. *Crazy Talk: A Study of the Discourse of Schizophrenic Speakers*. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.

Rosenfeld, Herbert. "On the Treatment of Psychotic States by Psychoanalysis." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 147-176. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Sass, Louis A. "The Consciousness Machine: Self and Subjectivity in Schizophrenia and Modern Culture." In *The Conceptual Self in Context*, edited by Ulric Neisser and David A. Jopling, 203-230. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

------. *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994.

------. "Schizophrenia, Self-Experience, and the So-Called 'Negative Symptoms'." In *Exploring the Self*, edited by Dan Zahavi, 149-182. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000.

------. "Self and World in Schizophrenia: Three Classic Approaches." *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology* 8.4 (December 2001): 251-270.

------. "The Truth-Taking-Stare: A Heideggerian Interpretation of a Schizophrenic World." *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 21.2 (Fall 1990): 121-149.

------ and Josef Parnas. "Schizophrenia, Consciousness, and the Self." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 29.3 (2003): 427-444.

Schwartz, Michael and Osborne Wiggins. "Pathological Selves." In *Exploring the Self*, edited by Dan Zahavi, 257-277. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000.

------, Osborne Wiggins, Jean Naudin, and Manfred Spitzer. "Rebuilding Reality: A Phenomenology of Aspects of Chronic Schizophrenia." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 4 (2005): 91-115.

Searles, Harold F. "Sources of Anxiety in Paranoid Schizophrenia." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 98-117. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

------. "Transference Psychosis in the Psychotherapy of Chronic Schizophrenia." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 177-232. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Stanghellini, Giovanni. "At Issue: Vulnerability to Schizophrenia and Lack of Common Sense." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 26.4 (2000): 775-787.

------. "The Phenomenology of the Social Self: The Schizotype and the Melancholic Type." In *Exploring the Self*, edited by Dan Zahavi, 279-294. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2000.

Tausk, Victor. "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia." In *Essential Papers on Psychosis*, edited by Peter Buckley, 49-77. New York: New York University Press, 1988.

Wiggins, Osborne and Michael Schwartz, " 'The Delirious Illusion of Being-in-the-World': Toward a Phenomenology of Schizophrenia." In *Founding Psychoanalysis Phenomenologically*, edited by Dieter Lohmar and Jagna Brudzinska, 269-281. Phaenomenologica 199. New York: Springer, 2012.

Zahavi, Dan, ed. *Exploring the Self*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000.

First-Hand Accounts of Severe Mental Illness

Anonymous. "I Feel I am Trapped Inside My Head, Banging Against Its Walls, Trying Desperately to Escape." *The New York Times*. March 18, 1986.

Anonymous. "On Madness: A Personal Account of Rapid Cycling Bipolar Disorder." *British Journal of General Practitioners* 56.530: 726-728.

Bovink, Wilma. "From Being a Disorder to Dealing with Life: An Experiential Exploration of the Association Between Trauma and Psychosis." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 32.1 (2006): 17-19.

Chadwick, Peter K. "Peer-Professional First-Person Account: Schizophrenia From the Inside – Phenomenology and the Integration of Causes and Meanings." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 33.1 (2007): 166-173.

------. "Psychotic Consciousness." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 47.1 (2007): 52-62.

Green, Hannah. *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964.

Jamison, Kay Redfield. *An Unquiet Mind*. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.

Kaysen, Susanna. *Girl, Interrupted*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Kean, Clara. "Silencing the Self: Schizophrenia as a Self-Disturbance." *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 35.6 (2009): 1034-1036.

McCloskey, Molly. *Circles Around the Sun: In Search of a Lost Brother*. Dublin, Ireland: Penguin, 2011.

Schreber, Daniel Paul. *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. Translated by Ida MacAlpine and R.A. Hunter. New York: New York Review of Books, 2000.

Scott, Anthony. *Is That Me? My Life With Schizophrenia*. Edited by Susan Dolamore. Dublin, Ireland: A&A Farmar, 2002.

Smith, Daniel. *Monkey Mind: A Memoir of Anxiety*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012.

On the Nature of Truth

Davidson, Donald. "The Structure and Content of Truth." *The Journal of Philosophy* 87.6 (June 1990): 279-328.

------. "True to the Facts." In Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, 2nd edition. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2001.

Lynch, Michael, ed. *The Nature of Truth: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Scharp, Kevin. *Replacing Truth*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Tarski, Alfred. "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4.3 (March 1944): 341-376.

Vision, Gerald. *Veritas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.

Woodbridge, James A. "Truth as a Pretense." In *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*, edited by Mark Eli Kalderon. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2005.

On Trust

Adler, Jonathan. "Testimony, Trust, Knowing." *The Journal of Philosophy* 91.5 (May 1994): 264-275.

Ardal, Gry. "Judging About Trustworthiness." In *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, edited by Arne Grøn and Claudia Welz, 115-133. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Baier, Annette. *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1994.
Includes (*inter alia*) the following:
"Trust and Anti-Trust," pp. 95-129.
"Trust and Its Vulnerabilities," pp. 130-151.
"Sustaining Trust," pp. 152-182.
"Trusting People," pp. 183-202.

Baier, Annette. "Trust and Anti-Trust." *Ethics* 96.2 (January 1986): 231-260.

------. "Trusting Ex-Intimates." In *Person to Person*, edited by George Graham and Hugh LaFollette, 269-281. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

Bernstein, J.M. "Trust: On the Real but Almost Always Unnoticed, Ever-Changing Foundation of Ethical Life." *Metaphilosophy* 42:4 (July 2011): 395-416.

Childress, James F. "Nonviolent Resistance: Trust and Risk-Taking." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 1 (Fall 1973): 87-112.

Erikson, Erik. *Childhood and Society*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978.

Figal, Günter. "Trusting in Persons and Things." In *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, edited by Arne Grøn and Claudia Welz, 103-112. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Fukuyama, Francis. *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: The Free Press, 1995.

Gambetta, Diego. "Can We Trust Trust?" In *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, edited by Diego Gambetta, 213-237. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

------, ed., *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

George, Marie. "Aquinas on the Nature of Trust." *The Thomist* 70 (2006): 103-123.

Godfrey, Joseph J. "The Phenomena of Trusting and Relational Ontologies." *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française* 7.1-2 (Spring 1995): 104-121.

------. *A Philosophy of Human Hope*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987.

------. *Trust of People, Words, and God: A Route for Philosophy of Religion*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.

Grøn, Arne and Claudia Welz, eds. *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Hardwig, John. "The Role of Trust in Knowledge." *The Journal of Philosophy* 88.12 (December 1991): 693-708.

Hertzberg, Lars. "On the Attitude of Trust." In Lars Hertzberg, *The Limits of Experience. Acta Philosophica Fennica* 56. Helsinki: The Philosophical Society of Finland, 1994.

Hinchman, Edward S. "Trust and Diachronic Agency." *Nous* 37.1 (2003): 25-51.

Holton, Richard. "Deciding to Trust, Coming to Believe." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 72.1 (March 1994): 63-76.

Horsburgh, J.N. "The Ethics of Trust." *The Philosophical Quarterly* 10.41 (October, 1960): 343-354.

Jones, Karen. "Trust and Terror." In *Moral Psychology: Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*, edited by Peggy DesAutels and Margaret Urban Walker, 3-18. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004.

------. "Trust as an Affective Attitude." *Ethics* 107.1 (October 1996): 4-25.

Lahno, Bernd. "On the Emotional Character of Trust." *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 4.2 (June 2001): 171-189.

Niklas Luhmann, "Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives." In *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, edited by Diego Gambetta, 94-107. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1988.

------. "Trust." In *Trust and Power: Two Works*, translated by G. Poggi. Chichester: John Wiley, 1979.

McGeer, Victoria. "Trust, Hope, and Empowerment." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86.2 (June 2008): pp. 237-254.

Möllering, Guido. "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation, and Suspension." *Sociology* 35.2 (2001): 403-420.

Phillips, D.Z. "On Trusting Intellectuals on Trust." *Philosophical Investigations* 25.1 (January 2002): 33-53.

Simmel, Georg. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Edited by K.H. Wolff. New York: Free Press, 1950.

Solomon, Robert C. "Trusting." In *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Vol. 2*, edited by Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas, 229-244. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

------ and Fernando Flores, eds. *Building Trust: in Business, Politics, Relationships, and Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Steinbock, Anthony J. "Temporality, Transcendence, and Being Bound to Others in Trust." In *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, edited by Arne Grøn and Claudia Welz, 83-102. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Strawson, P.F. "Freedom and Resentment." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962): 1-25.

Welz, Claudia. "Trust as Basic Openness and Self-Transcendence." In *Trust, Sociality, Selfhood*, edited by Arne Grøn and Claudia Welz, 44-64. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Translated by D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

General Bibliography

Arendt, Hannah. "Labor, Work, and Action." Reprinted in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, edited by Peter Baehr, 167-181. Penguin, 2000.

------. *The Life of the Mind, Vol. 1: Thinking*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1978.

Aristotle. *Complete Works of Aristotle*. 2 vols. Edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Baracchi, Claudia. *Aristotle's Ethics as First Philosophy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Descartes, René. "Discourse on the Method for Guiding One's Reason and Searching for the Truth in the Sciences," in *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*, tr. D.M. Clarke. Penguin Classics, 2003.

------. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Edited and translated by John Cottingham. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Hadreas, Peter. *A Phenomenology of Love and Hate*. Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2007.

Hegel, G.W.F. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Herausgegeben von H.F. Wessels und H. Clairmont. Philosophische Bibliothek Bd. 414. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988.

------. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Hölderlin, Friedrich. "Patmos: Dem Landgrafen von Homburg." In *Sämtliche Gedichte: Text und Kommentar*, herausgegeben von Jochen Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2005.

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. 1st edition. Edited by Robert Bridges. London: Humphrey Milford, 1918.

------. *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. Edited by N.H. Mackenzie. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1990.

Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Edited by R.B. Louden. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Sickness Unto Death*. Translated by H.V. and E.H. Hong. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974.

------. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Translated by Carol Diethe. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

------. *The Will to Power*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967.

------. *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Herausgegeben von G. Colli and M. Montinari. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971.

Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Allan Bloom. Basic Books, 1968.

Quine, W.V.O. "On What There Is." *The Review of Metaphysics* 2 (1948/49): pp. 21-38.

Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Translated by E. Buchanan. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Stories of God*. Translated by M.D. Herter Norton. New York: W.W. Norton, 1963.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press, 1956.

Sellars, Wilfrid. "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind." In *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. I, edited by H. Feigl & M. Scriven. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1956.

Sereny, Gitta. *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killings to Mass Murder*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1974.

Shakespeare, William. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Edited by J. Jowett, W.
    Montgomery, G. Taylor, and S. Wells. Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 2005.

Walsh, James, ed. *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981.

Wordsworth, William. *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*. Edited by Jared Curtis.
    Cornell University Press, 1983.